

# Marian Cheek Jackson Center for Saving and Making History

## Oral History Guide



## Table of Contents

Welcome to Oral History at the Jackson Center	4
A.    What <i>is</i> oral history and why do we do it?	5
B.    Some guidelines for MCJC interviews	8
C.    Community-first ethics: “Your Story, Your Rights”	11
Getting Ready for the Interview	14
A.    Interview Overview	15
B.    Before Anything Else: The MCJC Interview Preparation Guide	19
C.    Asking Good Questions	22
D.    Interview Practice Scenarios	29
E.    Setting Up the Interview	32
F.    Recording Logistics and How to Submit Files	35
G.    Forms to Take With You	38
The Interview Agreement Form	38
Life History Form	38
Proper Word Form	39
After the Interview	40
A.    Interview Processing Checklist	41
B.    Processing the Interview: <i>Frame it up</i>	44
Interview Description	44
Tape Log	45
List of Keywords	46
Abstract	46
C.    Processing the Interview: <i>Write it down</i>	48
What is transcription and how to do it	48
Transcription guidelines	50
Transcription software: Express Scribe	55
Reference Support	56
A.    Key Dates in Northside History	57
B.    Suggested Readings and Resources	66
Appendices	67
A.    Forms and Templates	68
Interview Preparation Guide Template	68
Interview Agreement Form	70
	2

Proper Word Form Template	72
Tape Log Template	75
B. Samples	77
Sample MCJC Interview Preparation Guide: Lois Burnett	77
Sample Interview Description	80
Sample Tape Log: Paul Caldwell	82
Sample Abstract	84
Sample Prose Transcript: Paul Caldwell	85
Sample Ethnopoetic Transcript: Rebecca Clark	89
Sample Ethnopoetic Transcript: Harold Foster	90

## Welcome to Oral History at the Jackson Center

## A. What is oral history and why do we do it?

Depending on who you talk to, oral history has its roots in the invention of the tape recorder in the 1930s and the subsequent establishment of the Center for Oral History at Columbia University in 1948 or in the field of popular education spearheaded by such radical leaders as Myles Horton, Septima Clark, Ella Baker, and Paolo Freire.<sup>1</sup> The former tends to emphasize indebtedness to developments in audio recording and storage and the technological ability to “save” living memory from disappearance into time. It leads us to formal interview practices that have resulted in the archival recovery of thousands of life and topical histories that would otherwise have been lost to researchers, communities, and policy makers--or everyone and anyone who might benefit from the rooted lessons of the past and their budding implications for a vital present and future. The latter emphasizes the capacity of people to whom the Columbia program did not originally reach out—people whose histories have been discounted, dismissed, and denied or who do not otherwise have access to “official” means of representation—to claim their place on the stage of history. In the early 1960s historians like Paul Thompson began to see the democratizing potential of oral history and the possibilities it offered not only for filling gaps in official records but for breaking open those records to accounts of people and experiences generally “written off” the pages of history.<sup>2</sup> Oral history could advance accounts of first peoples, immigration, labor, gender, race and wealth and so would soon become a signature part of the new “social history” or history from the *bottom up*.

Oral history disrupts conventional history from the perspective of those who made it. It recognizes that any one story is threaded through with many others<sup>3</sup> and respects multiple ways of knowing and ideas born of experience.<sup>4</sup> It values the perspectives of people whose histories are generally excised from textbooks at least in part because they threaten to change the dominant stories we tell ourselves about ourselves. It allows for the complex, subjective life of historical agents to rise to the surface and tunes in to the tactical politics by which people live every day. It favors *granular* history: “history relieved of pretensions to a

---

<sup>1</sup> See Daniel Kerr, “Allan Nevins Is Not My Grandfather: The Roots of Radical Oral History Practice in the United States,” *Oral History Review* 43 (2): 367-391. Oral history is also part of vernacular traditions including that of the griots and griottes of West Africa who keep genealogical and cultural history in memory and performance and that of family and community memory-keepers who pass on historical narrative and insight from generation to generation.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Schrager, “What is Social in Oral History?,” *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (New York: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Cherrie Moraga on “theory in the flesh,” *This Bridge Called My Back* (Albany: State University of New York, 1981/2015), p 23: “A theory in the flesh is one where the physical realities of our lives—our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings—all fuse to create a politic born of necessity.”

‘master narrative,’ history as a somewhat humbler quilt of many voices and local hopes.”<sup>5</sup> It answers to the danger of a single story with heterogeneity, particularity, partiality, and radical contingency.<sup>6</sup> It respects the authority of the teller even as it draws the teller and listener into a co-creative process of *making history in dialogue*. The oral history interview is a relatively artificial context for telling ideas and experiences that have often already been shaped in other narrative environments—a grandparent’s kitchen, community meetings, a press conference or formal hearing. Still:

The interview involves its participants in a heightened encounter with each other and with the past, even as each participant and the past seem to be called toward a future that suddenly seems open before them, a future to be made in talk, in the mutual embedding of one’s vision of the world in the other’s. The interviewer is him/herself a symbolic presence, standing in for the other, unseen audiences and invoking a social compact: a tacit agreement that what is heard will be integrated into public memory and social knowledge in such a way that, directly or indirectly, it will make a material difference. The oral history interview lifts what might otherwise dissolve into the ephemera of everyday life onto the plane of ongoing exchange and meaning-making, infusing it with the power of shifting relationships among tellers and listeners (and listeners who become tellers to tellers who become listeners) near and far. . . . in these among other ways, the oral history interview is an ignition point, charged by and charging its historical moment, giving so many oral historians the sense that the occasion of the interview—no more and *so* much more than ordinary conversation—is *momentous*.<sup>7</sup>

At the Jackson Center, we prize the relationship at the heart of this encounter. It is the beating heart of our work, the basis of trust, and a micro-image of dynamic community connection. It represents the promise of *more*: more remembering, more connection, more renewal of each to the other across multiple lines of difference in talk. It must thus be approached with openness, humility, and gratitude and protected by rigorous commitment to professional practices and ethics of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility.<sup>8</sup>

At the Center, we aim to *act on listening*. As Hugo Slim and Paul Thomson have argued:

---

<sup>5</sup> Della Pollock, Introduction, *Exceptional Spaces: Essays in Performance and History* (University of North Carolina Press, 1998), p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> See Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story,” TED Talks, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Della Pollock, Introduction, *Remembering: Oral History Performance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> See also Dwight Conquergood, *Cultural Struggles: Performance, Ethnography, Praxis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2013), D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2012), and Hugo Slim and Paul Thompson, *Listening for a Change: Oral Testimony and Community Development* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1995).

The role of the listener comes with certain obligations. A reciprocal exchange is required in which what is heard is both given back and carried forward . . . By applying what is heard in partnership with those who voice it, collecting and communicating oral testimony can become a cooperative exercise in social action. The implications are exciting and far-reaching. It can lead to a critique of development policies, or to improved strategies for responding to famine and refugee crises. It can give rise to a more relevant schools or training curriculum, the evaluation and adaptation of traditional agricultural practices or the mounting of a land rights campaign. It can encourage a more effective response to the particular circumstances of women or improved health care for children or the elderly. Whatever the outcome, it is important that the process of listening does eventually result in acknowledgment and action, and that those who have given up their time to talk, know that their words have been taken seriously.<sup>9</sup>

Moving from *listening in* to *listening out*, we witness to the histories we are privileged to hear and to hold in collaborative action. We aim to carry forward the momentum of any one exchange--as it flows into the current of others--in sustained coalition with our neighbors. We distinguish “history” from the past per se, recognizing that the former is drawn on lines of value and vision driving towards an insurrection of the past in the present that has implications for critical and creative change for the immediate future. Oral histories are legacy-maps for action. If you listen closely enough, you can hear the call for response. Responding is a choice, an obligation, and an adventure. It is part of the beauty of *listening for a change*: of listening for once, instead of talking or assuming; of learning how ordinary people are having an extraordinary impact on the lives of those around them; of taking up their examples of courage, compassion, faith, and ingenuity in allied efforts to create vibrant and just places. At the MCJC, we conduct, receive, preserve, and circulate oral histories to serve our larger mission *to honor, renew, and build community in Northside, Pine Knolls, and Tin Top, historically Black neighborhoods in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.*

---

<sup>9</sup> Slim and Thompson, p. 2. See also Groundswell, a network of oral historian-activists, [www.oralhistoryforsocialchange.org](http://www.oralhistoryforsocialchange.org).

## B. Some guidelines for MCJC interviews

At the MCJC, we practice ethnographic oral history: listening exchanges deeply embedded in cultural practices, values, and history that we are privileged to learn and to bridge. We are also listening to act: to do justice by our tellers by taking up their accounts in strategic advocacy for change.

Below are some recommendations for conducting oral history interviews that reflect the Jackson Center's commitments to deep listening as the basis for community-first organizing (see section I.C. for elaboration). They are intended to supplement the best practices of oral history interviewing stipulated in the UNC Southern Oral History Program's "Practical Guide to Oral History" (2014) at [https://sohp.org/files/2013/11/A-Practical-Guide-to-Oral-History\\_march2014.pdf](https://sohp.org/files/2013/11/A-Practical-Guide-to-Oral-History_march2014.pdf), the Oral History Association's "Principles and Best Practices" at [www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices/](http://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices/), and such excellent introductions to oral history for community development as Hugo Slim and Paul Thompson, *Listening for a Change* (New Society Press, 1995).

### 1. *Follow the narrator's lead.*

Be a listener rather than an asker. Ask concrete questions to elaborate, encourage, support. Do not constrain the teller to an agenda or protocol; be prepared to discern and to respond to the teller's directions and expectations.

### 2. *Focus on relationship.*

Oral history is at the foundation of our organizing model in part because it structures a uniquely co-creative, dialogic relationship. Respect community norms of hospitality and communication. Ensure trust.

### 3. *Sharpen your moral compass.*

Exercise respect, humility, honesty, patience, and love.

### 4. *Accept anger.*

Our community has a lot to be angry about. As interview partners, we may be trusted enough to hear hard feelings. We may also inadvertently "stand in" for university scholars and government officials who community members have long and wisely learned to distrust. However uncomfortable you may find yourself: learn.



**5. *Restore intergenerational continuity.***

Listen in the face of cultural/generational breaks in normative lines of transmission. Know that you are receiving a legacy. Save to make history across generations.

**6. *Emphasize sensuous remembering and reflection.***

An ethnographic oral history interview is not an information gathering session. Make sure basic data is correct and complete but focus on questions that encourage deep, refreshed, particular recall and realization. The particular intensity of the interview can produce “now that I think about it” moments or sharpened reflexivity: witnessing to an event in the act of telling about it often as if for the first time. This can feel risky. Good.

**7. *Be real.***

Say what you mean. Share openly. Listen by heart. Let the narrator know why you’re asking a particularly question or where you’re coming from, for instance: “I just realized that the only time I’ve been in Northside was to party next door. What’s it like to live next to students?” or simply “I honestly never heard of the Lenoir Strike before. Would you tell me more about it?” If you’re wondering “how do I ask ABC?” usually the answer is: like that.

**8. *Have fun.***

Enjoy your neighbor. Enjoy this opportunity for focused, charged conversation. Laugh together. Stoke the fires of abundant community.

**9. *Complete full processing of all related materials with your interview partner in mind.***

Interview processing is a matter of professional, personal, and political responsibility. One of the key “users” of the digitized history will be the narrator and his/her family and community. Be precise, thorough, and to the letter. Interview processing is how your field partner's recollections begin to enter into collective memory and action. Make sure that through your commitment to fully realized documentation your teller knows not only that his/her time and words matter but that he/she has invested trust in you and us wisely.

**10. *Don’t stop there.***

Supplement formal processing with identification of key quotations. Write a letter of personal reflection to the narrator; deliver it with a copy of the interview and transcripts. Find her at a community event and continue the conversation. Get involved in addressing the issues she shared with you. Enjoy the rounds of reciprocity and collaboration your interview has made possible.

### C. Community-first ethics: “Your Story, Your Rights”

At the Jackson Center, we practice *community-first* planning, organizing, and advocacy.

Community-first planning responds to challenges posed by external consultant-led processes and community-based approaches. All too often, planning efforts that rely on external consultants and specialized knowledges run up against the traditions, everyday practices, and the defining sense of place that are at the core of communities "for" whom consultants are ostensibly planning. The result can be a disempowered community group and plans that end up contested or shelved. Community-based processes may claim the community is in the driver's seat and invite community members' perspectives on wishes and needs. But to the extent that these are then turned over to "experts" to analyze and implement, they may similarly fail to engage and realize the deeply embedded values and visions that make for strong, vibrant neighborhoods and that make people proud to call themselves "community members."

Community-first planning flips the script. In community-first planning, the community is first all the way: its members are the primary consultants, the vetting base, the strategic planners. Community-first planning shifts authority to the people whose neighborhoods are on the line: the community member is valued precisely for his/her history in the neighborhoods and investment in seeing community grow. In historically marginalized communities, perspectives have been sharpened on the razor's edge of struggle. Community-first organizing is led by a bottom-up logic entrusted to those who know not only the history and culture of their neighborhoods but who have earned leadership and know policy in practice. We understand that our role is to facilitate and to organize the full expression of community knowledge, wisdom, and vision.

What does this have to do with oral history? Both community-first planning and MCJC oral history recognize that community members are experts on their own history. Community-first planning is nourished by the signposts for change set by Northside oral histories. It is one form of taking up the charge to act on what we have been privileged to hear. And it shares with the kind of oral history we try to practice an ethic of absolute respect for the authority of community participants and the relationship of trust they have invested in us. In community-first advocacy and action we rely on oral histories to understand and to realize our neighbors' visions for *preserving the future* of Northside/Pine Knolls.

This approach alone is a change in a community that, as one resident put, university scholars have “studied the hell out of.” For many years, Northside has been the object of countless research projects, plans, and documentary initiatives. However well-intentioned, many of these have used Northside history and culture for purposes that do not serve its interests.

They have broken trust, made profits, and walked away. Above all, they violated the terms of an *abundant* community, one in which gifts of love, food, care, and history are shared generously as part of deep traditions of interdependence and collectivity. They have not put the community *first*.

In 2010, we produced the following document “Your Story, Your Rights” to support neighbors in their rights to self-determination. It is also a useful reminder to interviewers about *who*’s in charge *how*. At risk of continuing to deny them, we need to remember and to heed our community members’ rights while we do our best to facilitate the *full expression of community knowledge, wisdom, and vision*.

## **Your Story, Your Rights**

*A message from the Marian Cheek Jackson Center for Saving and Making History © 2010*

At the MCJ Center we are committed to learning from oral histories, listening to a wide range of perspectives on public matters, and involving community members in collective storytelling and history-making. We feel extremely fortunate to be able to hear, to preserve, and to pursue action based on community histories.

We recognize that a life story is precious. It should not be treated lightly or without due regard for the interests of the teller. We also realize that Jackson Center staff and friends are not the only ones who want to hear your story and to represent it to others. With whomever you may be talking, here are a few recommendations for making sure that your consent is fully informed and for exercising *your* rights to *your* story.

- 1. *Know the intended audience.*** Will this interview be used to promote a person or product? Who will see or hear the interview? In what contexts? Who will benefit? Do you approve? If not, simply decline to participate.
- 2. *Find out whether you'll have an opportunity to review and approve your interview before it "goes to press."*** If you want, insist on the right to review your comments in a timely fashion—and to edit them, possibly in consultation with the interviewer. If the interviewer is not cooperative, you may decline to participate. You may also wish to continue cautiously.
- 3. *Get it in writing.*** All interviewers should be able to provide you with a statement defining the aims and nature of a given project and your part in it and should request your written consent. Make sure you understand the details—and are comfortable with all of them. **STRIKE** any elements with which you don't agree. Keep a copy, along with the name, contact information, and business or organization of the interviewer.
- 4. *Set your terms.*** Do you want your actual name used? Do you want parts of the interview to be excluded? Do you want the interview to be made generally public, held in confidence until a certain time, or used for a specific purpose only? During any interview, feel free to tell the interviewer to turn the recorder or camera off or stop the interview. Just saying "I'm not sure about this" should be enough. You don't owe anybody your story.
- 5. *Talk back.*** Do you feel the interviewer is understanding you correctly? Is he/she asking the right questions—or questions you want to answer? Are you getting a chance to say what YOU want to say? Is this what you thought you were getting into and if not, are you OK with that? If you aren't, say so. The interviewer or facilitator will most likely be glad to know. If he/she continues to push in a direction with which you are uncomfortable, cut the conversation short.

This is your story; you run the show!

**6. *Report concerns.*** If at any time you feel that your consent has been violated, or that your rights and interests have not been fully respected, contact the interviewer or his/her organization. If you don't feel like you're getting anywhere, feel free to contact the Marian Cheek Jackson Center, 512 W. Rosemary, Chapel Hill, [contact@jacksoncenter.info](mailto:contact@jacksoncenter.info), 919-960-1670.

## Getting Ready for the Interview

## A. Interview Overview

An oral history includes direct exchange with an interview partner and so much more. You need to do some preparation before you hit the road. Professional-grade follow-up or “processing” is necessary to make the interview fully and easily accessible as part of the MCJC Oral History Trust. This overview checklist introduces items that are elaborated in other parts of this Guide. Use it to familiarize yourself with logistics and the overall flow, to get on top of details, and to mark accomplishments along the way. The process may seem complex. *Use the checklist* to simplify. And remember that at every point you are *listening and learning*. Enjoy.

### ☐ First things first

- Read/review the full MCJC Oral History Guide carefully. Raise any questions you may have with an MCJC staff member,
- Immerse yourself in the history and culture of Northside/Pine Knolls.
  - Take the “Histories of Homes” audio-tour of Northside available to stream at [www.jacksoncenter.info/northside-stories/soundwalk-of-northside/](http://www.jacksoncenter.info/northside-stories/soundwalk-of-northside/).
  - Engage with neighbors in collaborative service and at community events.
  - Listen to a wide range of oral histories held in the MCJC Oral History Trust at [www.archives.jacksoncenter.info](http://www.archives.jacksoncenter.info).
  - Review “Key Dates in Northside History” in section IV.

### ☐ Complete the MCJC Interview Preparation Guide

- Do primary research, develop preliminary questions.
- Draft an Interview Preparation Guide, including an arc of possible questions.
- Review and refine your Guide with an MCJC staff member or informed colleague.

### ☐ Set up the interview

- Arrange to meet at a convenient and quiet location.
- Obtain and practice using recording equipment.
- Review how to upload the interview immediately upon completion.

### ☐ Before you go

- Practice using the recording equipment.
- Make sure you have extra batteries and a pair of ear buds.
- Print out 2 copies of the Interview Agreement Form (1 to leave with the narrator) and 1 copy each of the Proper Word Form and the Life History Form for your use.
- Pack up any photographs, maps, or clippings you may want to use as interview prompts.

- Pick up some food or drink to share as appropriate.
- **When you arrive**
  - Settle in with greetings, news, explanation of your background and interest.
  - Minimize noise as possible.
  - Set up the recorder and check sound levels.
  - Discuss terms of consent. Sign the Interview Consent Form now or immediately after the interview.
  - Invite any questions or concerns.
- **Immediately after you press “record”**
  - Record an introductory “lede” indicating *who’s talking with whom when and where* and basic terms of consent: “This is A. I am talking with B on this date at this time at this location. We have reviewed/co-signed the MCJC interview agreement form. B understands that he/she may stop recording at any time.”
  - Add essential information e.g. “B is so many years old and has live in his/her home for so many years” and anything else that will cue up another listener.
  - If more than 2 people are participating, ask everyone to introduce themselves briefly in order to put names with voices on the recording.
- **Now that you’re ready**
  - Focus your presence.
  - Begin with a question that invites deep, sensuous recall e.g. *Would you tell me about your grandparents? What was your childhood home like?*
  - *Avoid taking notes.* This can be distracting to both of you!. Do fill in the Proper Word Form for later reference.
  - Dive in, following and supporting the narrator with constantly refreshed curiosity. Use and abandon prepared questions as relevant. Emphasize follow-up questions to pick up narrative strands, to fill in gaps, and to prompt reflection.
- **With about 15-20 minutes to go**
  - Ask any key questions that would round out the interview.
  - Set up the narrator for the last word. Ask e.g. *is there anything I should have asked? Is there anything you’d like to add? Is there anything you think I should know or advice you’d like to give?*
  - Offer sincere thanks and a closing comment.
  - Allow for a few informal, “cool down” moments before you turn off the recorder.
- **Immediately after recording**
  - Ask the narrator for any information on the Life History Form that you weren’t



- able to capture in preliminary research or during the interview.
- Check in with the narrator about the spelling of names and places on the Proper Word Form that you can't easily look up.
- Co-sign the Interview Consent Form. Leave 1 copy with the narrator, with your complete contact information.
- With permission, take photos of your interview partner *or of a person, place, or object that the narrator would like to represent him/her in the Oral History Trust*. As possible, with permission, also capture images of photographs, places, documents, or artifacts to which she may have referred.
- Ask the narrator if it's okay to contact him again with any additional questions you may have. If another meeting is expected, arrange it now.

**□ Within 1 hour of the interview**

- Download the interview from the memory card to a computer.
- Scan or take a photo of the completed Interview Agreement Form.
- Write the Interview Description.
- Upload the first set of 6 items (audio file, Interview Agreement Form, Life History Form, Proper Word Form, Interview Description, photos) to the MCJC Dropbox *following the instructions in section II.F: "Recording logistics and how to submit files."*
- Review the MCJC Interview Processing Checklist for next steps.

**□ Within 2 weeks of the interview**

- Send a note of thanks and appreciation to your interview partner (ideally handwritten).
- Complete and submit all processing documents.
- Return the recorder with hard copies of all print materials and confirm that all digital components necessary for full accession to the MCJC Oral History Trust have been received. These include these **11 items**:

Audio file  
Interview Preparation Guide  
Interview Agreement  
Proper Word Form  
Life History Form  
Photos  
Interview Description  
Tape Log  
Abstract  
Keyword List  
Transcripts (2-3 of 2-5 minutes each)

***Congratulations! You have now made a proud contribution to Northside history.***

## **B. Before Anything Else: The MCJC Interview Preparation Guide**

The template for the Interview Preparation Guide can be found in the Appendices. You can also find samples of completed guides in the Appendices.

This Interview Guide is for *you*. It is the basis of a successful interview. It requires you to do *just enough* preparation to be able to engage fully, effectively, and respectfully with your narrator (imagine a stranger coming to talk with you about your life without having learned enough to ask relevant questions or expecting you to do all of the “work” . . . not good). Remember that the interview is neither an interrogation nor a survey. By preparing an Interview Guide, you are setting yourself up to have an especially focused conversation, one that is driven by your own, genuine interest and that gives the narrator both support and room to convey what’s important to him/her.

Remember too that you are talking with someone in part because his/her story has not been fully documented. You may not be able to discover a lot about the narrator specifically in advance of the interview but you can learn about some of the *spheres of influence* or the contexts, events, groups, and organizations that have shaped her life and that she has shaped in turn.

The interview is at the center of a larger process of learning and discovery. Begin by doing some basic research: read materials relevant to key topics in your interview partner’s life; listen to previous interviews with the same individual, family members, or community members; do a keyword search for related topics; raise relevant topics in conversation with neighbors or MCJC staff; review the “Key Dates in Northside History” in section IV; follow a zig-zagging online search until you *really want to know more* and you discover that what you really want to know *you can only learn by asking*. Avoid information overload. You want to be ready to travel to a place you’ve never been but not so “read up” on where you’re going that you might as well stay home! Pack well, pack light. This is an adventure.

Complete this preparation guide as fully as possible well in advance of a given interview. Give yourself plenty of time to revise and to rethink your approach to make the most of the short hour or so you’ll have together with your interview partner.

### **The Interview Preparation Guide**

#### **1. Interviewer/date/bio**

Begin with your name and the date you completed this document. Add a short, personal biography (no more than a paragraph) that includes your own hometown and sense of family roots, and a brief statement about how/why you got involved in the interview

process. What is your experience with oral history? What are some of the aspects of your background you'll be bringing to bear in the interview setting? *Where are you coming from?* This brief exercise will help you reckon with your own positionality in the interview process and will be part of completing the Interview Description after you talk with the narrator.

## **2. Interview Narrator**

Write in the name of interview narrator and briefly describe his/her primary family/community affiliations.

## **3. Research summary**

In 1-2 paragraphs, summarize what you have learned from preliminary research.

## **4. Chronology**

Based on research, prepare a short timeline (10-12 items) of preliminary findings, in broad scope, with relevant details.

## **5. Spheres of influence**

Identify key contexts of the narrator's life experience—what are the historical networks, institutions, or events that likely had an influence on the narrator's life and which he/she may have influenced in turn?

## **6. Sources**

Using proper citational form, list the people/personal conversations, texts, and digital sources on which you based your research.

## **7. Interview protocol**

Now you can begin to think about what you want to learn. Based on research discoveries and the review of "good" questions in II.C/D, create a working list of *questions* in *groups* in a reasonable *order*:

- First, identify possible topical groupings for questions (these may closely follow the spheres of influence or focus in on one or more topics or issues).
- Then, develop possible questions: Emphasize open-ended narrative (what happened?), lyric (what was that like?), and reflective (what did or do you think about that?) questions. Remember that you may not ask these questions exactly but these will help orient the interview and prepare you to ask questions that may be more relevant to the moment. Use skilled knowledge about "good" questions (see II. C.), drawing on research as an informational frame but make sure your questions reflect

genuine curiosity.

- Finally, organize your questions by topic and organize your topics in an order suitable to the arc (beginning, middle, end) of a 1-1.5 hour conversation. It's always good to begin with an aspect of life history that draws the narrator into memory; end with questions that bring you both back to the present and possibly into the future e.g. *What advice would you give someone going into teaching now? How would you like to see the neighborhood grow over the next few years? What else would you like me to know?* Anticipate giving the narrator the last word.

## **8. Prompts**

Consider bringing a photo, news article, quotation, or other document/artifact you found in your research that might spur memories about a particular place, event, or topic.

Finally, despite all of your hard work on this Preparation Guide, remember that it is just that: preparation and a guide. After completing it, you should be ready to enter into a focused and tactical but largely improvised conversation. The interview protocol is not a closed or fixed agenda. It is meant to set you up to honor the narrator's history, to raise informed questions, to have some sense of form and direction, and, above all, to tune in to what the narrator really wants to talk about—which may come as a surprise to both of you.

## C. Asking Good Questions

The interview is a semi-structured but guided encounter. Narrators should feel free to witness to their experience in their own style and on their own terms. As much as interviews seem to be about asking questions, the role of the oral history interviewer really is to facilitate the narrator's journey and craft. This means asking questions that reflect thoughtful preparation, genuinely engaged curiosity, and deep and attentive listening. *Your most important question will be the follow-up*—the question that picks up a thread of the narrator's commentary and elicits elaboration, context, or feeling response. An interview is really an art of the follow-up. Much of the interview will be a “yes and” improvisation: *yes to what you just said and . . .* As Slim and Thompson note:

The ability to keep an open mind which can respond quickly to the unexpected and spot interesting and unusual avenues for further questions is a vital ingredient of good interviewing. An element of lateral listening is required—looking beyond or around evasive replies, and “listening between the lines.” This can help to identify what is being left unsaid and to assess the significance of pauses and silences (p. 76).

A narrator may skip over what may seem an important event—the 1963 Easter hunger strike on Franklin St., for example, or a divorce. You will have to listen closely to determine whether it is appropriate to probe further into areas of experience the narrator omits or only suggests. You may also simply ask whether she is willing to talk more about the incidents. Asking such a question may enhance the narrator's sense that she is the active subject of her account and support her in simply telling you “no,” setting narrow parameters, or offering a cursory response. You may, for instance, notice that the narrator went from talking about meeting the person who would become her kids' dad to talking about her kids. You may want to probe further by asking something like “*Would you mind telling me more about your relationship with . . . ?*” Given this opening, she may say: “*Not today*” or “*We were married for two years and I never saw him again.*” This may feel abrupt. You may want to bite your tongue. Both responses, however, are signs that the interview is going well: the narrator is running the show and you got good information about where you are and are not welcome to enter her storied world.

The less you find yourself saying or asking the better. Remember: put your own agenda aside. Your goal is not to uncover a hidden truth or to meet prior expectations. If anything, expect to be surprised! This may mean abandoning your prepared interview questions altogether. The golden rule “is not to box people in with a rigid set of questions, but to be flexible within an overall plan” (Slim and Thompson, p. 76). Topical groupings based on “spheres of influence” and a rough chronology may be all you need to keep the interview moving forward.

### **General criteria**

A particularly good question is one that is immediately responsive to your narrator. In general, good questions are those that 1) make sense to and animate the narrator 2) guide the direction of the account while giving the narrator plenty of room for self-expression and reflection and 3) ensure that most of the important topics you've identified are addressed.

Good questions tend to be short although they may include some contextualization to let the narrator know where you're coming from, for instance: *"I read that you were the first African-American principal in the district. What does being 'the first' mean to you?"* *"You've talked about strong mentors in your family. I wonder whether you had similar experiences with teachers?"* *"I've never been to that part of South Carolina. What's it like?"*

Take responsibility for asking your narrator to be open with you: be open with him. Physically: Lean in. Nod. Try to avoid blocking your body with crossed arms, the recorder, or a notepad. Let your narrator see and feel that you are available to receive and accept whatever he has to say. Emotionally: Offer simple expressions of empathy, particularly in the form of a question that leaves open your interpretation. It may be slight but think about the difference between saying, for instance, *"That was rough!"* and *"That sounds rough . . . was it?"* Here's another example of a little shift that makes a big difference; compare 1 and 2 with 3:

1.

Narrator: At that time, I had two little kids and a broken ankle, so that made it even harder to take care of my sister in hospice.

Interviewer: 2 kids and a broken ankle! How did you manage?

2.

Narrator: At that time, I had two little kids and a broken ankle, so that made it even harder to take care of my sister in hospice.

Interviewer: That's terrible! I don't know how anybody does it. When my brother was sick . . .

3.

Narrator: At that time, I had two little kids and a broken ankle, so that made it even harder to take care of my sister in hospice.

Interviewer: What were some of the other problems?

In both 2 and 3, you're likely to see diminishing rapport for different reasons—the equivalent of emotional "TMI" on the one hand and detachment on the other. You're not going to get it right all of the time but clarifying your *intention* to maintain a balanced, engaged, empathic

perspective will help.

In general, avoid the more therapeutic tone of *“I hear you saying . . .”* and the temptation to jump in with your own story. And don’t be surprised if the interviewer asks *you* questions. This can be out of personal interest; it can be a way of setting the terms of reciprocity; it can also be a “gateway” test to determine your investment and willingness to be open in kind.

Above all, be real. Don’t try to be like any other interviewer. Don’t try to be like an “interviewer” at all. Ask from your experience and your heart. Ask questions that make you feel vulnerable. Ask about what you genuinely don’t know and would like to learn. Some of the biggest mistakes of community-based interviewing come from fear. You actually want to be a little nervous (if you’re not, maybe then you should worry . . .) but here are a few thoughts to keep in mind:

Fear of being foolish	<i>You’re not the one on the line here!</i>
Fear of awkward silence	<i>Offer grace</i>
Fear of losing control	<i>This is your chance to sit at the foot of a mentor</i>
Fear of not being objective	<i>Truth is not always the same as facts and this is a person before you anyway</i>
Fear of intruding	<i>No, you don’t want to be invasive but your narrator is relying on you to ask</i>

You are about to have a relatively intimate, unpredictable, possibly exhilarating encounter with someone you’ve barely met. You will need to be nimble and discerning but remember: you’re in this together. Your narrator will be looking to you for guidance and much as you to her.

### **Good questions to ask**

#### ***Open-ended***

An open-ended question encourages a full, meaningful response. While some closed questions (*How many children do you have? Did you enlist or were you drafted?*) may be necessary to clarify and supplement primary questions, they should be considered secondary to questions that cannot be answered with a number, yes/no, or a bit of information. Open, however, is not the same as big and vague. Consider the difference between asking *What was the being in the army like?* and *How did you feel when you received your draft notice? Would you describe one instance of facing enemy fire? How were you received when you came home?* To be generative, even open questions should be pointed.

#### ***Lyric, narrative, and reflective***

These are types of open-ended questions that emphasize feeling and image (*what was it like*



*or how did it feel when . . . ?*), narrative and concrete action (*what happened when . . . ? describe an instance when . . .*) and reflection and theory (*what did you think when . . . or what do you think about . . . ?*). Include a combination of these questions in your interview exchange to encourage the widest possible range of response.

### ***Precision***

These are closed questions that are sometimes necessary to set a chronology (*what year was that?*) or to make sure you have your facts straight (*what was the name of that school?*). Beware, however, of peppering your narrator with precision questions. They can feel like a memory test (depending on the interview, you might consider changing “*what year was that?*” to something like “*about when was that?*”). Most precision questions are informational and can be answered after the interview or by subsequent research.

### ***Prompt and probe***

The oral history interview is really an art of the follow-up question, of which prompting and probing questions are forms. They encourage the narrator to elaborate (*could you tell me more about that?*) and to specify (*how did that work exactly?*). They may involve zooming in on a turn of phrase (*When you say you wanted “justice,” what were you looking for? Do you mind if I ask why you don’t think of yourself as an “activist”? “What’s the difference—and I don’t mean to be deliberately stupid here: what’s the difference between knowing you lacked and being poor?”*) or gently pressing on a theme or response. Valerie Yow gives an example of an “iffy” question from her work on an oral history project about the Carr textile mill in Carrboro, NC. When talking with mill workers, she says they often talked about all of the things that the management did for them: *They had a ball field for the workers. Christmas, gave out a turkey for each family. Picnic in the summer.*” She found herself responding: *Did you feel at the time that was enough or did you wish the mill had done more for the workers?*<sup>10</sup> This question pushes the envelope just a bit to pick up on an undertone of discontent and to invite the narrator to give a less practiced, more complex response.

Prompt questions are meant to stir the pot. They may feature words like “describe,” “compare,” “expand.” Sometimes you may need to guide your narrator back to return to an earlier topic. A simple prompt like “*earlier you were saying that . . .*” can be useful to have in your back pocket.

### **Questions to avoid**

#### ***Closed questions***

If you find that your interview has a stop-and-go quality, you may be asking too many closed questions. While questions that ask for a short answer—a number, a place, “yes” or “no”—may be good follow-up or precision questions, they do not invite the kind of expansive recollection and reflection you want to emphasize.

#### ***Leading questions***

Leading questions are pre-loaded with an answer. They script the narrator’s response,

---

<sup>10</sup> Valerie Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), p. 106.

making it difficult for him to say what he really thinks or feels. Leading questions are often statements turned into questions: *That must have been great?! You saw what he did to her, right?* They often reflect the interviewer's assumptions: *How hard was it for you during the Depression? Do you miss your mother?* (That last one is both leading and closed; it'd be hard to then say: *well, not exactly . . .*) A leading question may insinuate an expectation that a generous narrator may want to meet e.g. *What problems have you had with your landlord?* Or it may be simply offensive: *Why didn't you fight the labor exploitation?* Leading questions tend to be more about the interviewer than the narrator.

### ***Double-barreled questions***

These are simply confusing. They come at the narrator from two directions at once and leave him/her stuck somewhere in the middle. Imagine trying to answer e.g. *How did you make that and where did you learn?* Often double-barreled questions are also closed e.g. *Did you build your house and how long have you lived in it?* Ask one question at a time.

### **Some types of questions that may be useful<sup>11</sup>**

Here are some handy types of questions. Try developing some of these for an anticipated interview. While you may not use those questions exactly, you'll have the form of an "opinion" or "tour" question at the ready.

#### **A.**

1. Behavior or experience question  
Focuses on observable action, asks for descriptive response  
*Could you describe . . .*
2. Opinion or value question  
Asks for an evaluation or personal take  
*Why do you think . . .*
3. Feeling question  
Focuses on how the narrator is affected by a situation  
*How do you feel about . . .*
4. Knowledge question  
Appeals to the narrator's expertise  
*What are the historical roots of . . .* Possibly: *What happened when . . .*
5. Sensory question  
Emphasizes sensation as ground of memory.  
*What was your first kitchen like?*

#### **B.**

---

<sup>11</sup> Adapted from D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2005), pp. 29-33.

1. Descriptive questions

a. Tour question

Asks for guidance through time or place

*Would you take me through your first day on the job? What route did you take to get to school? Would you walk me through the cafeteria: Who's there? What are they doing?*

b. Example question

Asks for a very specific instance of a larger scene or situation

*Can you give me an example of how the protests in Greensboro affected sit-ins here?*

c. Experience questions

Asks for elaboration of a specific situation

*How would you describe the experience that day when . . . What did you do . . .*

2. Explanation question

Pursues deeper understanding esp. by focusing on the “how” of an event or incident or the motivation behind an action.

*Help me understand how . . . Can you explain how . . . Why did . . .*

3. Contrast questions

Uses comparison to get an edge on assessment

*How was this different from . . . e.g. How did this strike compare with the one the previous year? Which was more useful in calling attention to working conditions?*

## D. Interview Practice Scenarios

Below are some actual/adapted examples of particularly challenging interview situations. Most worked out for the best! They are offered here as puzzles worth your attention—not to judge but to consider: based on prior definitions of oral history and ethics, summary of the interview process, and review of “good” questions, what are the problems in each scenario? What might the interviewer have done differently or what could she/he do now? These are offered for training purposes. Working through these situations may help you to develop the interview “muscles” necessary to be appropriately nimble and responsive in a similar situation.

You might also imagine similar situations. *What kind of response might trip you up? In your own experience, when have you found yourself wanting to back away from a question? Have you ever asked a “dead end” question—one that stopped the conversation right there? Have you ever asked—or been asked—a question that seemed to open the floodgates? What was it about the question or the way it was asked that “worked”?*

1. A shy student interviewer is sitting on the corner of the front steps of St. Joseph C.M.E., looking out at the rising condo complex across the street with a congregant, listening to her regale the importance of family and church in her life. After an uncomfortable silence, she asks: “Has anything exciting happened in your life?” “Well,” her narrator says, “there were the marches in Greensboro . . .” Interviewer: *Mmmm-hmmm*.
2. A graduate student in Journalism is talking with a Northside neighbor about local growth. The neighbor grows agitated. She is sure that the university is implicated in the rapid growth of private investment in student rentals. “The neighborhood is becoming a big dorm!” she shouts. The interviewer ceases the conversation on the grounds that she can no longer be objective.
3. A non-profit group is invested in improving the plight of area residents living without affordable homes or permanent shelter. A member of the group invites a Muslim mother of 3, who was living in the women’s shelter at the time, into a recorded conversation: “What’s it like to be black and poor?” she asks.
4. A student service administrator at a small college is committed to raising awareness about increasing homelessness among students. She initiates an interview project but reports becoming frustrated with what she considers non-response among students she had specifically targeted for interviews. When she asked, “where do you live?” they’d answer “in my car” or “I usually sleep on my friend’s couch.” In the next interview, after a similar response, she followed up with “You’re homeless! How do you manage to shower

and get food?”

5. A university faculty member is pursuing an oral history/life narrative project concerned with contemporary birth experiences in the U.S. A participant arrives for an interview. She begins by talking about having just come from the social services office, where she'd been applying for benefits for her newborn but was refused and instead was plied with questions about the baby's father—who had been mysteriously killed before their daughter was born. *They kept asking her what happened; was it drug-related?* She says she tells them again she *doesn't know*, that the police didn't find any drug paraphernalia or other evidence at the scene, that she was just here for her baby. “But you know, the stereotypes of black males being involved in drug transactions . . .”; she trails off. The interviewer brings the conversation back to the topic: “So when did your labor begin?”
6. Talking with the first black elected official of a Southern municipality, an interviewer wants to learn about his role in establishing the landfill that has since polluted waterways and water systems in a low-income, predominantly black area of town. He starts out: “So, I know you were the first black mayor and that you then became renowned for your leadership on the school board and then, it seems, you made a lot of money in private business. All along, you chose not to live in the historically black neighborhoods—and that's cool: you did a lot to integrate white ones. But I'm really concerned about environmental racism and the failure of the town to remove the landfill as you had promised. Why do you think that happened?”
7. A history student is working on a national oral history project re: black land loss. On the phone, he asks two black farmers who have owned their land in Orange County for generations whether they will participate, explaining his connection to their church and the importance of their work. They agree. When he arrives, he duly pulls out a standard consent form that gives rights to the prestigious archive at a major university where the recorded materials will be stored. “This is for them?” they ask. “They have taken the shirt off our backs and you want us to give them our story too?” The interviewer responds by trying to convince them that this is just a formality and that he's really interested in their story. They decline to continue.
8. Two interviewers are talking with an elderly woman who has just recounted how, at age 12, she used to do all of the cooking for 11 siblings while her parents worked to keep the land on which she still lives. After a pause, one interviewer jumps in with “what have been some of your best vacations?” The other asks “So, tell me the most important thing you learned in life . . .?!”
9. An oral historian is talking with one of the leaders of the freedom movement in Chapel

Hill. He asks: "Who was your primary influence?" Leader: "We rallied around issues of Black consciousness and power." Interviewer: "But were you following King?" Leader: "Not exactly." Interviewer: "I've read about Ghandi's influence on King's approach to non-violence. Did Ghandi influence you?" Leader: "We worked with CORE to hold trainings in non-violence and passive resistance in the field over by Lincoln High. Everyone who participated had to sign a contract of commitment and courage." Interviewer: "But what theory of action was most important to you?"

## **E. Setting Up the Interview**

Interviews can be notoriously difficult to arrange, especially with people who have good reason not to trust interviewers, who feel they have already been under the microscope, who may be elderly or very busy, and who don't use electronic means of communication or possibly even the phone. And we're just talking about the first contact. On the other hand, the process of arranging the interview can be critical to building trust and to getting to know the norms of communication and hurdles that are part of the interview partner's daily life. Creativity, persistence, and flexibility will be useful! Feel free to stop by the house with a note or to try to catch someone on their porch. Talk with a relative. Don't wait on response to try again.

### **1. Making the connection**

- a. Identify yourself with the Jackson Center. For interview partners unfamiliar with the MCJC, supplement with "the neighborhood center next to St. Joseph" or "the place that hosts the annual Northside Festival." Based on preliminary knowledge, use whatever coordinates seem most relevant. The point is to make a credible connection.
- b. Indicate that you'd like to talk with the person about her life history or a particular aspect of it, as relevant. For some neighbors, "oral history" may not be immediately legible or may carry negative connotations. Some of our neighbors' history is about having not only their labor but their history ripped off. Consider offering that "the Jackson Center is gathering as many recorded histories as possible to share with other community members and to help preserve the future of Northside. Our conversation is meant for neighbors, family, and future generations to hear." If you continue to meet with resistance, let it go.
- c. In some instances, neighbors will prefer to meet with you with a family member or friend. All the better.

### **2. Planning to meet**

#### **a. Location**

Ask your interview partner where he would like to meet. Indicate that you are willing to come to his home or can meet at the Jackson Center or another quiet place (e.g. a local church) nearby. Let him know that you'll only need about an hour and a half but be prepared for the interview to go long: clear at least an additional hour for yourself to complete and submit the interview and all primary documentation (Interview Agreement, Life History and Proper Word Forms, photos).

#### **b. Equipment**



Secure, review, and supplement your equipment. Bring ear buds and extra-extra batteries! Make sure that whatever was or is on the memory card has been downloaded. Once "on scene," don't feel you need to hide the recorder or be the tech master. In his early days, Studs Terkel found (pretty much by accident) that sharing the recorder, letting any kids hear their voices, and pointing out the "stop" button to the interview partner helped to level the playing field. Don't be afraid to stumble--but also make sure that everything's working, you've got good sound levels, and you're ready to troubleshoot foreseeable problems.

Make sure your camera is juiced up and ready to go.

**c. Food**

Consider bringing food or drink. You may have a better sense of this after making initial arrangements or doing preliminary research. Breaking bread together certainly is part of fellowship in Northside/Pine Knolls and can help you connect, even as a point of initial, tension-easing "small talk". Even if the narrator chooses not to eat during the interview, he may receive the offering as a welcome gesture of honor and respect.

**d. Cancellations and second meetings**

Be prepared for plans to be cancelled for doctor's appointments, just plain bad days, family visits. Persist flexibly.

Be ready as well to ask for another meeting to follow-up on issues raised or key topics you didn't get to; it's much easier to make these arrangements on site!

**3. Managing forms**

Corral all of your documents so that you can make the most of your interview time. Know what each document entails so that you can explain each thoroughly but quickly to the narrator. Plan to review the Interview Agreement Form just before recording and either co-sign it then or immediately after the interview. Remember to save time immediately after the interview to get correct spellings for the Proper Word Form, add in details to the Life History Form, clarify any other terms or issues you may have glossed over in the course of conversation, and ask to take a photo of the narrator *or of a person, place, or object that the narrator would like to represent him/her in the Oral History Trust*. As possible, with permission, also capture images of photographs, places, documents, or artifacts to which she may have referred.

**4. Anticipating the length and shape of the interview**

Plan to spend approximately 1.5 hours talking. Add a half hour for travel and final prep beforehand and an hour after to complete all forms, the Interview Description, the

download of the audio file to your computer, and submission of your first batch of 6 items. Be prepared for the interview to go long. You won't want to cut off your interview partner.

In general, an interview will follow a rising and falling course of action:

- Arrive.
- Greet, settle, build rapport.
- Set up the equipment.
- Review the interview forms with the narrator; co-sign the Interview Agreement Form now or immediately after the recorded session.
- Preview the interview process, answer any questions
- Press record, check levels.
- Record the introductory "lede" (names, date, place, consent).
- Open with "warm up" (sensuous recall, deep history) questions.
- Raise topical and follow-up questions following your Interview Preparation Guide and the narrator's path.
- Ask closing questions, hear final comments.
- Turn off the recorder; enjoy the informal exchange that follows.
- Complete the Proper Word and Life History Forms; sign the Interview Agreement Form as necessary.
- Take photos
- Pack up to go, offer thanks, and make any arrangements for follow-up contact.
- Depart; write the Interview Description *now*.

**See section IIIA., "After the Interview: Processing Checklist" for what happens next . .**

## F. Recording Logistics and How to Submit Files

### 1. Recorders

The Jackson Center has four Edirol R-09 recorders and two Zoom H4n Handy recorders that you can check out for limited periods. You may find similar equipment available from other sources. Return any borrowed equipment to the Center *as soon as possible or by the date designated by MCJC staff*.

### 2. How to record

For a quick introduction to sound recording and editing, see the [slideshow, Got Audio?](#) For additional support, make an appointment with a member of the Jackson Center staff at [contact@jacksoncenter.info](mailto:contact@jacksoncenter.info) or on site.

You can also find the user manuals online. For the Zoom H4n Handy, go to: [http://www.samsontech.com/site\\_media/legacy\\_docs/H4n-manual.pdf](http://www.samsontech.com/site_media/legacy_docs/H4n-manual.pdf). For the Edirol R-09, go to: [https://www.roland.com/us/support/by\\_product/r-09/owners\\_manuals/](https://www.roland.com/us/support/by_product/r-09/owners_manuals/)

### 3. Recording specifications

Record your interview as a wave (.wav) file so that the MCJC has an archival quality, uncompressed recording for future use. Use either the 44-kHz/16 bit setting or the 96-kHz/24 bit. Note that wav files, especially at 96-kHz, will drain your batteries more quickly than recording an mp3 file, so plan accordingly! Fully charged batteries should be sufficient for recording a 2- hour interview; be sure to bring extras just in case. Remember that you will also need to bring ear buds to check sound levels and continued recording.

### 4. Taking pictures

With informed consent from your interview partner per the Interview Agreement Form, you are encouraged to take a final photo of the narrator *or of a person, place, or object that the narrator would like to represent him/her in the Oral History Trust*. As possible, with permission, also capture images of photographs, places, documents, or artifacts to which she may have referred to supplement the audio file. Use a high-resolution, fully charged camera. Rename and download the photos for submission with the audio-file.

Also scan or photograph the Interview Agreement Form and completed Proper Word and Life History Forms for immediate, simultaneous submission.

### 5. Submitting your first set of interview materials

- ❖ **As soon after the interview as possible, download your audio file from the recorder to a computer.**

❖ **Rename the audio file**

The basic logic for naming or renaming the primary audio file is: date, the narrator's name (last name first), your name, and a special designation of a series or University course as relevant. Use "In. by" to indicate "Interview by". The new name should follow this form:

Year.Month.Day\_Narrator Last Name, First Name (In. by Full Name of Interviewer)(Special series or course name)

For example:

2008.12.01\_Jackson, Marian (In. by Hudson Vaughan) (COMM 562)

2012.04.16\_Brooks, Carol and Edwards, Keith (In. by Ben Barge) (CHCR)

❖ **Scan or take a picture of the Interview Agreement, the Proper Word Form, and the Life History Form**

❖ **Rename scanned forms and photos**

This is easy: just add "underscore" and the type of document to the end of the name of the audio file.

For example:

2008.12.01\_Jackson, Marian (In. by Hudson Vaughan) (COMM 562)\_Proper Word Form

2008.12.01\_Jackson, Marian (In. by Hudson Vaughan) (COMM 562)\_Photo

2012.04.16\_Brooks, Carol and Edwards, Keith (In. Ben Barge) (CHCR)

\_InterviewAgreement

❖ **Complete the Interview Description Form in Word/.docx.**

Name it using the same style as above, adding \_InterviewDescription to the end of the full audio file name.

❖ **Create a folder**

Put all of your materials in a folder. These should include these **6 items**:

Audio file

Interview Agreement Form

Proper Word Form

Life History Form

Interview Description

Photos

Title it by the narrator's name and your own, followed by a 1 to indicate that this is

the first of two sets of materials you will submit.

For example:

Jackson, Marian (Hudson Vaughan) 1

❖ **Upload materials**

Upload your folder to the MCJC Dropbox folder shared with you (you will need to have or to open a free Dropbox account to access the folder).

Within 2 weeks, complete, name, and similarly upload a folder of these **5 items** and any additional materials (e.g. selected quotations, additional photos) in Word/.docx:

Interview Preparation Guide (this will not be posted online)

Abstract

Tape Log

Keyword list

Short transcripts (2-3, prose or poetic, of 2-5 minutes of recording each)

Title this folder:

Narrator's last name, first name (Interviewer's name) 2

- ❖ **Write** to [contact@jacksoncenter.info](mailto:contact@jacksoncenter.info) to let the MCJC staff know that you have now submitted each batch of materials; ***request confirmation of receipt.***

## G. Forms to Take With You

Yes, the interview is really all about the interaction between you and the interview narrator. But to make the interview fully and fairly accessible to a wider public you must complete contractual, informational, and interview processing forms. In the following pages you'll find three forms you should take with you *in hard copy* to the interview. Easy-to-use templates for these forms may be found in the appendices to this Guide and are digitally linked below. *Print these out.* Bring a pen! These need on-the-spot attention. Familiarize yourself with them before you go so that you can quickly explain each to your interview partner and move on.

### The Interview Agreement Form

The Interview Agreement Form template is included in the Appendices to this Guide.

Be sure to bring 2 print copies. Co-sign both. Leave 1 copy with the narrator for his/her reference; return a scan or photo of the other with the audio file to the MCJC.

This form documents informed consent and stipulates the terms of use of the interview. *It is critical* that the interviewer both understand what he/she has signed on to and that a scan or photo of the signed form is immediately returned to the Center. Return the signed hard copy with recording equipment and all other print materials to the Center *as soon as possible, by the date designated by MCJC staff, or within 2 weeks of the interview.*

A few points to note:

- The narrator retains copyright under a Creative Commons License which requires due credit, restricts commercial use, and allows the narrator to withdraw his/her materials from public access at any time.
- By signing the form, the narrator gives the Jackson Center permission to include the interview in its digital community archive, The Oral History Trust.
- By signing the form, the narrator also gives the Jackson Center permission to use the interview for educational and advocacy purposes consistent with its mission.
- The narrator may place restrictions on the use of the interview as outlined on the Interview Agreement Form.

### Life History Form

The Life History Form template is included in the Appendices to this Guide.

This is the “basic information” form. Complete as much of it as possible before the

interview based on your research. You can ask your interview partner to fill in the rest just before recording or wait until after. Note that some of the information required by this form will be captured by the Proper Word Form or will be on the recording and can be filled in later.

## **Proper Word Form**

The Proper Word Form template is included in the Appendices to this Guide.

Proper words are the names of people and places to which the narrator refers. These may include nicknames, acronyms, titles of books, hymns, institutions or organizations that someone unfamiliar with the narrator's history may not know. This form allows you to jot down a few references for follow up on correct spelling, surnames, etc., after the interview—so that you don't have to stop the flow of talk by asking e.g. "*what was the name of that school again?*" or "*what is his last name?*" Of course, you'll want to ask the occasional precision and clarification question but you don't want to focus on data points. Keep a hard copy and a pen beside you, so that the form is easily accessible but out of the way. Remember that you have an audio recording of the interview: you don't need to write everything down! It is *much more immediately important* to keep your attention on the conversation.

You may want to write a word or two to remind yourself to come back to something the narrator said or to raise a particular topic. Otherwise, proper words should be the only notes you take.

After you have finished recording, run through your list with the narrator pretty quickly (2-3 minutes). Correct spelling, add names, ask a clarifying question or two. But beware: you don't want your dedicated time together to end in a bunch of red tape. To complete the form, listen back to the audio and look up references. As needed, send an email or make a quick call at a later time.

## ***After the Interview***



## A. Interview Processing Checklist

In the minutes and days after the interview—while the encounter is still fresh in your mind, complete this list of processing activities, in two phases. In the first phase, you'll bring the interview proper to a close; in the second phase, you will create the documents necessary for full accession to the MCJC Oral History Trust. Each phase concludes with submission of 6 and 5 items respectively.

### First phase

- ☐ Immediately **download the interview from the recorder to a computer**. Rename the file:

Year.Month.Day\_Narrator Last Name, First Name (In. by Full Name of Interviewer)(Special series or course name)

- ☐ Immediately **scan or take a picture of the Interview Agreement Form**. Rename the document:

Year.Month.Day\_Narrator Last Name, First Name (In. by Full Name of Interviewer)(Special series or course name)\_InterviewAgreement

- ☐ As soon after the interview as possible, **complete the Interview Description (Field Notes) Template** included in the Appendices to this Guide. This includes a brief biography of the narrator, a brief biography of the interviewer, a description of the interview, and information about the recording process. Name it:

Year.Month.Day\_Narrator's Last Name, First Name (In. by your First Name, Last Name)\_InterviewDescription

- ☐ **Complete the Proper Word and Life History Forms**. Name them:

Year.Month.Day\_NarratorLast Name, First Name (In. by Full Name of Interviewer)(Special series or course name)\_ProperWordForm

Year.Month.Day\_Narrator Last Name, First Name (In. by Full Name of Interviewer)(Special series or course name)\_LifeHistory

- ☐ **Name any photos** you may have taken, using appropriate tags, for example:

Year.Month.Day\_Narrator Last Name, First Name (In. by Full Name of

Interviewer)(Special series or course name)\_PhotoPortrait

Year.Month.Day\_Narrator Last Name, First Name (In. by Full Name of Interviewer)(Special series or course name)\_PhotoMarriageLicense

Year.Month.Day\_Narrator Last Name, First Name (In. by Full Name of Interviewer)(Special series or course name)\_PhotoFrontPorch

*If your interview partner has loaned you any photos or documents to scan, immediately scan, download, name, and return the materials for safekeeping. Documents are easily lost. Failing to return a precious artifact is a violation of trust to be avoided at all costs. Rather than borrow items, it may be best to invite your interview partner to meet you at the Jackson Center to scan them on site together.*

- ☐ **Upload this first set of 6 items**—the audio file, the Interview Agreement, the Proper Word Form, the Life History Form, the Interview Description, photo(s)—and any additional materials in a folder titled “Narrator’s last name, first name (your name) 1” to the MCJC Dropbox folder shared with you (you will need to have or to open a free Dropbox account to access this folder).
- ☐ **Send a note of thanks** (ideally handwritten) or call your interview partner to offer sincere thanks and to reflect briefly on the importance of the interview. Let him or her know that it will be available soon as part of the MCJC Oral History Trust.
- ☐ **Write to [contact@jacksoncenter.info](mailto:contact@jacksoncenter.info)** to let the MCJC staff know that you have now submitted your first batch of materials; ***request confirmation of receipt*** to make sure that all is in order!
- ☐ **Return any borrowed equipment** to the Jackson Center.

### **Second phase**

- ☐ **Create a Tape Log** or “index” of the interview recording. The template for an MCJC Tape Log is included in the Appendices to this Guide. You can find an example of a complete Tape Log in the Appendices to this Guide. Name your Tape Log:

Year.Month.Day\_Narrator Last Name, First Name (In. by Full Name of Interviewer)(Special series or course name)\_TapeLog

- ☐ **Create an Abstract** of the interview. A sample of an MCJC Abstract is included in the Appendices to this Guide. Name it:

Year.Month.Day\_Narrator Last Name, First Name (In. by Full Name of Interviewer)(Special series or course name)\_Abstract

- ☐ **Create a List of Keywords** from the interview. These will become tags in the Oral History Trust. For examples, see the tags that accompany each entry in the Trust at [www.archives.jacksoncenter.info](http://www.archives.jacksoncenter.info). Name your list:

Year.Month.Day\_Narrator Last Name, First Name (In. by Full Name of Interviewer)(Special series or course name)\_Keywords

- ☐ **Transcribe 2-3 short excerpts from the interview** (2-5 minutes each) using a prose or ethnopoetic style. For samples, see the Appendices to this Guide. Name your transcripts *with the starting time stamp from the tape log*, for example:

Year.Month.Day\_Narrator Last Name, First Name (In. by Full Name of Interviewer)(Special series or course name)\_Transcript8:10

Year.Month.Day\_Narrator Last Name, First Name (In. by Full Name of Interviewer)(Special series or course name)\_Transcript20:00

- ☐ Within 2 weeks of the interview, **upload this second set of 5 items**—your Interview Preparation Guide (this will not be posted online), the Tape Log, the Abstract, the Keywords List, and 2-3 Transcripts in a folder titled “Narrator’s last name, first name (your name) 2” to the MCJC Dropbox folder shared with you.
- ☐ Bring the hard copy of the Interview Agreement Form and any other print materials directly to the Center.
- ☐ **Write** to [contact@jacksoncenter.info](mailto:contact@jacksoncenter.info) to let the MCJC staff know that you have now submitted your second batch of materials; ***request confirmation of receipt***. Follow up as necessary to make sure that your materials are secure.

**Thank you!**

## **B. Processing the Interview: *Frame it up***

To complete submission of the interview and to make it camera-ready, you will need to ***frame it*** and ***to write it down***. This is what is what is generally known as “processing” the interview. The **Interview Description**, **Tape Log**, **Keywords List**, and **Abstract** described below frame up the interview for the next listener. **Short transcripts**, discussed in the next section of this Guide, make it available in written form. Templates and samples of each are included in the Appendices.

### **Interview Description**

You can find a template for and a sample of the Interview Description (or “Field Notes”) in the Appendices to this Guide.

The Interview Description introduces the listener to the scene of the interview. It includes a brief biography of the narrator, a summary of who you are and what brought you to the narrator, a description of the interview itself, and notes on recording that will be helpful listeners and MCJC Oral History Trust managers.

The Interview Description includes 4, short sections:

- ***Narrator***  
Relying on biographical details from your prior research, the Life History Form, and the interview, briefly summarize the narrator’s life.
- ***Interviewer***  
In a few sentences, say who you are and why you’re here. Identify any relevant background (e.g. live in Northside, student at UNC, training and experience in oral history, your relationship—if any—with the narrator).
- ***Description of the Interview***  
The Description of the Interview itself should begin to answer the question: *what happened?* It should include all aspects that someone who wasn’t there couldn’t glean from a short transcript or even the audio recording. This includes background noises and interruptions, personal interactions including gestures and non-verbal expressions, and qualities of the immediate environment—the space, day, and specific arrangements—that may have influenced the interaction. The Description of the Interview may also include your own reactions and general observations. *When did the tone shift? What did the narrator’s face or body convey? What could you see, hear, feel that someone just listening in can’t? What did you notice about how the narrator communicated her*

*experience and thought? Was a moment, pause, gesture or turn of phrase particularly striking? What was the nature of your interaction with the narrator? Were there any aspects of the broader historical context that seemed salient?*

The Description of the Interview should be short—no more than 1-2 well-crafted paragraphs. It should also be . . . descriptive! As best you can, make the Interview Description both informative and evocative. Bring your reader into the scene of the interview with you.

**Draft the Description of the Interview as soon after the interview as possible,** certainly within the hour, even if this means writing in the car before you head home. The ephemeral qualities of the interview will quickly fade. Those qualities are essential to a full understanding of what the narrator chose to say when and why.

For recordings of special events or projects, use the **Special Project Description Form** included in the Appendices to this Guide.

- ***Equipment/recorder information***

This is the place to say what kind of recorder you used and the recording format (.wav is preferred) and to add any comments about the technical aspects of the interview that may be important to understanding the recording e.g. *I had to change batteries halfway through and lost a portion of the conversation. The distance of the recorder from the narrator made it difficult to maintain consistently strong sound levels.*

## **Tape Log**

You can find a template for and samples of a Tape Log in the Appendices to this Guide.

The “tape” in Tape Log is a vestige of recording on magnetic tape threaded through spools on analog machines. The “log” part remains the same: it is a time-based index of the interview conversation that tracks primary emphases and changes in topic. The Log is a navigational tool that is especially useful for MCJC Oral History Trust listeners who may want to tune in to what someone has to say about a particular issue, topic, or person (e.g. *school desegregation, the sit-in at Colonial Drug, Granny Flack*) without benefit of a full transcription.

The Tape Log contains brief summaries of interview content, including direct or paraphrased quotations. It may also include note extra-verbal elements of the scene or context (e.g. *an especially long pause, laughter, the phone call in the background*). It uses “time stamps” or minute markers to show precisely where in the digital recording the interview shifts course.

To create the log, you'll want to listen to the whole interview, then go back and mark off short sections. With each time stamp, start a new paragraph.

## List of Keywords

A “keyword” is any topic, name, or short phrase that is significant in the interview and that a visitor to the Oral History Trust may be likely to search. It is a “key” to the content of the interview. Your Keywords List will help the MCJC staff cross-reference topics in the Oral History Trust. See the tags included with each interview entry at [www.archives.jacksoncenter.info](http://www.archives.jacksoncenter.info).

Choose approximately 10-15 words or topics that are both specific and generally recognizable. Instead of *civil rights leader* use *Harold Foster*, for instance. Continue to honor the narrator's emphases e.g. *famous pound cake* or *grandmother's house*. Select for prominent local references like *Lincoln High* or the *Lenoir Strike* but don't miss the forest for the trees: does the narrator also refer e.g. to national events like the passage of the *Fair Housing Act, 1965* or *WWII* or to an issue, idea, or phenomenon like *the Black church* or *environmental racism*?

### ***Example for Ms. Janie Alston:***

Certified Nursing Assistant, childhood, Civil Rights, family, gentrification, Hargraves family history, Ku Klux Klan, marriage, Mitchell Lane, Northside, nursing

### ***Example for Minister Robert Campbell:***

Activism, Chapel Hill High School, church, Comic Book Exchange, environmental justice, faith, food service, Graham Street, integration, Lincoln High School, military, military draft, NAACP, Northside neighborhood, Rogers Road, U.S. Navy, Vietnam War

## Abstract

You can find a sample Abstract in the Appendices to this Guide.

The Abstract is a distillation of the whole interview in a paragraph. It introduces a potential listener to the full array of people and topics discussed in chronological order. An abstract can be challenging to write because it must be precise and comprehensive at once. Like the Keywords List, it is best prepared after completion of the Tape Log: by then you will have the interview in your bones! Be sure to use full names (this is where your Proper Word Form and Life History may come in handy) and to spell out all acronyms so that all visitors to the site will feel welcome.

*Done?* On to transcription . . .

## C. Processing the Interview: *Write it down*

### What is transcription and how to do it

Transcribing is the work of translating speech from sound to print. It produces a written complement to oral expression called a transcript. It is also an act of love. While it may be tempting to think that interview transcription is mindless or rote work, it is anything but. Transcribing will need your full and careful attention to *what* is said and *how* it is said. The transcription process will require you to make numerous, thoughtful judgments about how best to reflect the dynamic, expressive, and highly contingent qualities of the interview in written form. *You will be a listening scribe.*

For the MCJC Oral History Trust, *you are asked to create only a set of 2-3 short transcripts of selected portions of the interview (2-5 minutes each).*

***How to select a portion to transcribe?*** Find a relatively self-contained section in which the narrator is particularly pointed or emphatic in her comments. This may be a section that is particularly compelling to you or that strongly relates to listed keywords or the designated series for the interview, for instance: Civil Rights in Chapel Hill or A Place at the Table (foodways). It may also correlate directly to a section marked in the Tape Log.

***How to transcribe?*** You can do this in two ways: in a prose or “ethnopoetic” form. You may be more familiar with the prose form. It provides an accurate record of the interview in sentences and paragraphs. The ethnopoetic form also provides an accurate record of the interview but relies on lines and line breaks to show how the narrator’s thoughts and feelings move in time and to emphasize those images, word choices, and structures of meaning that might otherwise disappear under the rush toward the end of a sentence. Ethnopoetic transcription focuses more intensively on those qualities of voice—rhythm, pause, tone, pace, tempo, diction—that convey the power, beauty, and nuance of what was said *as* it was said. In ethnopoetic transcription, you’ll try to catch spoken word *on the pulse* of expression.

Note that “ethnopoetic” is a variation on “ethnography” or what may be literally translated as the writing (*graphy*) of culture (*ethno*). It emphasizes the way in which any one story contains multiple stories and how each of these embodies a whole world of norms, practices, values, and vision in intimate detail.

***Why ethnopoetic transcription?*** Because sound and silence matter. Combined with the nature and order of words, they make up the music of spoken communication. And in the most minute details of that music you can hear life—past, present, and future—coming into being. *How do you hear what’s not said in words? How do you put into print what comes to you on currents of sound and feeling? How do you capture the everyday beauty of the way a*



*narrator creates a picture or makes a point?* Working through ethnopoetic transcription may be helpful in answering these questions.

**For examples of prose and ethnopoetic transcripts**, see the samples in the Appendices to this Guide.

**For guidelines on prose transcription**, see the next section III.C.2. For more detailed support, see the Baylor Oral History Institute Style Guide at [www.baylor.edu/oralhistory/doc.php/14142.pdf](http://www.baylor.edu/oralhistory/doc.php/14142.pdf).

**For poetic transcription**, follow the same basic guidelines for prose transcription but use line breaks, line length, and spacing to show moment-by-moment nuances. Take a minimalist approach. You want the narrator's voice to shine through; do not clutter the page with fonts, formatting, or special characters. Here are your basic tools:

Line break	slight or sharp shift in thought or tone
Line spacing	long pause or silence
Indentation	a new or subordinate thought or additional emphasis
Italics	strong emphasis
Cascading lines	rising cadence
Long line	single thought or quick pace
Short line	Quick stop or pointed emphasis

Either way, plan to spend some time transcribing. In general, transcribing 1 hour of audio recording in prose will take 6-8 hours. If you are working with lines and images, you may find yourself reviewing and refining 1 minute of audio recording for several hours. You'll know you're done when you've gotten it *just right*.

## Transcription guidelines

Adapted from the Southern Oral History Program, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, "Practical Guide to Oral History," [https://sohp.org/files/2013/11/A-Practical-Guide-to-Oral-History\\_march2014.pdf](https://sohp.org/files/2013/11/A-Practical-Guide-to-Oral-History_march2014.pdf).

These guidelines pertain to all transcription, with variations as indicated for prose and ethnopoetic styles. See the Appendices to this Guide for samples. In general, whatever else you do, **be accurate and consistent and produce clean copy**. This is a public document.

### Format

- *Spacing and font*  
For prose transcriptions, double space throughout. For ethnopoetic transcriptions, use 1.15 line spacing. For both, use Times New Roman, 12 point font.
- *Margins*  
Use standard 1" margins on the top, bottom, and right; increase the left margin to 1.5" to leave room for possible binding.
- *Page numbers*  
Put page numbers in the upper right corner of the header, starting on the second page.
- *Running titles*  
Put the name of the interview in **bold** in the header, flush to the left margin. Put the interview series (if there is one) and "Marian Cheek Jackson Center" in **bold** to the left and right edges of the footer. Headers and footers should start on the second page and continue on all successive pages.

Example header:

**Paul Caldwell**

**2**

Example footer:

**CR/Civil Rights**

**Marian Cheek Jackson Center**

- *Indentation*  
Indent each time a new speaker enters in. Use the whole name the first time the speaker appears; use initials only for every subsequent reference.

- *Title*  
At the start of the transcript, list the narrator, interviewer(s), interview date, interview location, transcriber or interview processor (you!), the length of the interview, and the exact time at which the transcript begins. Follow this model:

Narrator: Paul Caldwell

Interviewers: Morgan Beamon, Paul Blumberg, and Jacob Lerner

Interview Date: November 21, 2013

Location: Chapel Hill, NC

Interview Processor: Joshua Trower

Length: 01:11:36

START 8:10

Peter Blumberg: Briefly going back to when your father passed away and then you were mostly raised by your mother, what did what did she do?

For a unit of ethnopoetic transcription, you may also choose to use a phrase from the “poem” as a title. Put it in the center of the page in bold above the text as in the samples that follow.

## **Content**

- *Spelling and proofreading*  
Check all names against the Proper Word Form and Life History Form. Look up any questionable spellings; consult the narrator as necessary. Carefully proofread the transcript for typos, grammar, formatting, spelling, etc. Make sure that your transcript is clean, consistent, and accurate.
- *Can't hear?*  
Where a word or a phrase is inaudible, type ( ). Do not type “inaudible,” or (?). In some cases, you may be able accurately to infer content from context. In such cases, add it in brackets. In the first example of ethnopoetic transcription in section III.C.4 of this guide, you'll see, for instance: *They can't [sell it], So he got the Food Bank/[to make us] a food agency, and [Reverend Harrison] went to a food course.*
- *Incomplete sentence*  
To indicate that a speaker has left off in the middle of a sentence, use two dashes, the first dash flush with the last letter of the last word spoken. After the double dash, add an appropriate punctuation mark (period, question mark, etc.), as in “Well, you see there was nothing more I could do--.”
- *Digressions*

When a speaker interrupts him or herself mid-sentence to add a supplementary or clarifying remark—a strong parenthetical digression—precede and follow the remark with dashes flush to the words on either side, as you can see in this sentence! Set off a weaker or less pronounced digression with commas. In general, do not use parentheses.

Beware of using too many dashes. These can be distracting in print. Use your judgment to determine whether it's important to know that the speaker paused because e.g. he was in a quandary or she took some extra time to measure her words. If not, simply end the sentence with a period or a question mark. Use exclamation points sparingly, if at all.

- *Interruptions and breaks*

For telephone calls, moments when the recorder is turned off, or just laughter, use brackets and a brief explanation of the sounds or break, for example:

[Front door slams; nephew enters]

[Laughter]

[Recorder is turned off and then back on]

Use a similar form to indicate a short break in the conversation:

[Pause]

- *Speaking vs. writing*

Few people speak in so-called standard English, especially when they are open, engaged, and talking about something close to their personal or cultural experience. In everyday talk, we often drop the “g” in “ing” endings, say “and” by the “n” sound only, or shorten up several words into one so that, for instance, “I’ve got to go to the store” becomes “I gotta go to the store.” In general, keep abbreviations, customary language, and special phrases but use proper written form, for instance: substitute “going” for “goin’” and “and” for “’n”.

Omit sounds like “uh” and “mmm” unless they indicate some sort of emotion, a real quandary, or intentional use by the narrator or interviewer. Similarly cut the vocal patterning of “you know” and repetitive phrases that may be a familiar part of everyday speech but that distract from the speaker’s meaning on the page.

On the other hand, for ethnopoetic transcriptions in particular, you may feel that the colloquial style is important to the meaningfulness of what the narrator has to say and

to how she chooses to say it. See, for instance, this excerpt from the sample interview transcript of Mr. Robert Revels. Mr Revels is talking about how to help others:

You want to say  
*“Well ya need ta do it”*  
 No. You don’t.  
 You gotta  
*be* there for that person  
 and  
 a lotta times  
 it  
 it means  
 that you have to just listen.

Here, Mr. Revels shifts from the more formal *“You want to say”* to the more informal *“Well ya need ta do it”* to emphasize how much we want to just tell someone what to do. The transcriber kept *“gotta”* and *“lotta,”* the sounds of which create an internal rhyme that helps build the momentum towards his final point: *“you just have to listen.”* At this point, moreover, the vernacular style seems true to the call to just *“be there for that person”*: this is how we talk when we’re just *“there,”* as Mr. Revels and the interviewer are for each other in this moment. The sound and meaning of what Mr. Revels has to say are inseparable. You have to make many decisions in the process of transcribing. In this case, including these transcription choices seem to be justifiable exceptions to the rule. What do you think?

*\*\*Beware of how trying to copy dialect can result in caricature.* Do not sacrifice the dignity of the speaker or his/her speech to an overly literal repetition. A so-called verbatim transcription may not reflect how the speaker believes he/she sounds or wants to be seen/heard. Careful editing is part of our ethical obligation to serve the interests of the narrator. To the extent that the page is a kind of mirror of the speaker, be sure to hold the interview narrator in the best possible light.

- *Numbers and characters*

In general, spell out numbers through one hundred, fractions, years, “percent.” If a narrator refers to an era as the “60s” or “70s,” use numerals; do not use an apostrophe before the “s.”

Use roman numerals to indicate World War I and World War II. If you have any question as to whether a word should be capitalized, check online; when in doubt, use lower case.

- *Editing for sense*

Reread your transcript. Are you stumbling over words or missing the sense that seemed perfectly clear when you were listening? While, in general, you want your transcript to include everything the narrator says how she says it but an oral history transcript is not a court record. Oral history transcription is a kind of translation, from the language of the voice to the language of the page. If gentle editing--cutting or adding a word or two or using punctuation to define clauses—may help the reader appreciate the narrator’s meaning, do it. Consider the difference between the following two versions of prose transcription of the interview with Paul Caldwell. He is talking about his mother.

*The original:*

She did finally end up working at a fraternity house, Chi Phi, the Chi Phi fraternity. Never will forget it because a lot of times she’d get off about 7 o’clock and you know with the time change and stuff, at 7 o’clock it’s dark you know. And she walked, she never had a car. And I would go meet her and walk her home but [pause] and she was a hard worker.

*A slightly edited version:*

She did finally end up working at a fraternity house, Chi Phi, the Chi Phi fraternity. Never will forget it because, a lot of times, she’d get off about seven o’clock and, with the time change, at seven o’clock it’s dark you know. And she walked. She never had a car. And I would go meet her and walk her home. She was a hard worker.

The second version does not cut out all repetitions. It maintains some of the flow of speech and much of Mr. Caldwell’s style, including a “you know” that adds emphasis. It does split “And she walked, she never had a car” into two sentences. It also cuts out the slight stumble that seems more incidental than meaningful—“but [pause] and”—in order to get to what seems Mr. Caldwell’s descriptive and emotional point: “She was a hard worker.” What do you think? Would you call this a hard or gentle edit? Would you keep the comma splice: “And she walked, she never had a car”? Would you make other changes? The only way to judge your choices is to ask whether you are getting closer to or further away from the speaker’s meaning and style. Transcription has to balance both. Carefully.

**Transcription software: Express Scribe**

We recommend using *Express Scribe*, a free software for transcribing audio interviews available at <http://www.nch.com.au/scribe/> (download the free version).

You can transcribe in the Express Scribe window or split your screen and have Word or another program open at the same time.

To add an audio file, just drag and drop into the Express Scribe window. It will not move the file from the original location; it will just copy it.

**Hot Keys**

F2	Play slow speed
F3	Play fast speed
F4	Stop
F5	Open Express Scribe
F6	Minimize Express Scribe
F7	Rewind
F8	Fast forward
F9	Play
F10	Play real speed

You will frequently need to stop and rewind to re-listen to the audio for transcription. In Express Scribe the rewind will take you back in very small segments, which is helpful.

**Time stamps:**

At the bottom of the screen you will see the time. It goes to the millisecond, but we don't need that information for the tape log or transcription, so just round up or down to the second. For example, 56 minutes and 17 seconds will be labeled as 56:17. An hour and 56 minutes and 17 seconds will be 1:56:17.

## **Reference Support**



## A. Key Dates in Northside History

- 1780s      What is now called the Rogers-Eubanks neighborhood is founded by freed slaves.
- 1800s      The first Free School, grades 1-7, is established in Carrboro/Northside in the Quaker Building next door to St. Paul's A.M.E. (established 1864, erected 1892).  
  
Hackney High School is privately established on the west side of Merritt Mill Road.
- 1832      UNC President Joseph Caldwell uses enslaved labor to build the first rock wall on UNC's campus, surrounding the University Burial Ground (Old Chapel Hill Cemetery).
- 1838      With the support of University President, David L. Swain, Geology Professor and slave owner Elisha Mitchell embarks on a project to surround the UNC campus with rock walls.  
  
Prominent stone masons on construction spanning the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> and early-late 20<sup>th</sup> c. include Alfred David Barbee, Sr. and brother Willis (Wilson Library, Morehead Planetarium), Alfred Sr.'s son, Alfred Jr., and his son Ezra; Dee Baldwin and Thomas Lewis Booth, Jessie H. Jones and his son Jessie (Forest Theatre) and James Blacknell, his son James Blacknell, Jr., and his son, Norman; Richard Johnson (under the tutelage of Jessie Jones Sr.) and William E. "Smitty" Smith.
- 1898      2 days after the election of a Fusion Party mayor and a biracial council, Democratic white supremacists initiate a coup generally known as the "Wilmington "race riots" that included the massacre of as many as 60 Black residents and the widespread destruction of property in predominantly Black neighborhoods.
- 1900      Per U.S. Census, Chapel Hill population, total 3,874: 62% white, 37% Black  
  
Northside and Pine Knolls emerge as segregated service communities for the University.
- 1916      "Hack's High School" and the Free School are consolidated into the Orange County Training School, which operated on the Hackney site until it was destroyed by fire, 1923.

1924 The new building for O.C.T.S. is erected on 6.5 acres of land bordering McMaster and Church Streets donated by Mr. Henry Strowd; it is one of 800 Rosenwald Schools in NC, schools conceived and designed ca. 1910 by Booker T. Washington and staff at the Tuskegee Institute in partnership Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears Roebuck and Company, as part of a massive effort to improve Black schooling across the South.

1929 Orange County turns the control of its schools over to Chapel Hill; CH resolves to defund O.C.T.S. to the 6-month annual minimum required by the state.

1930 Black residents (already paying property taxes in part for schooling) vote to tax themselves to make up the difference and sustain an 8-month school year.

Kennon Cheek, Mrs. Marian Cheek Jackson's father and son of a freed slave from Warren County who came to UNC at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to work as a mason for the University, establishes the Janitorial Association, a predecessor to the first labor union on campus.

Frank Porter Graham is installed as UNC President, ushering in a period of New Deal liberalism, including support for union organizing of campus workers resulting in Local 403, SCMWA (State County and Municipal Workers of America). UNC CH library is opened to Black users in 1932; the first interracial meal on campus commemorates the opening of Graham Memorial.

1939 CH Black residents apply for and receive federal, WPA construction funding requiring matching state and municipal funds to support development of a local recreation center based on collective/private purchase of 5 acres of land on what is now Roberson St.

Construction begins on the Negro Community Center, largely through the donated services of local masons and carpenters.

1942 The Roberson Street Center is completed with town funds to house the members of the all-Black B1 Navy Band participating in the Navy's PreFlight School on UNC's campus. Known for "color busting" the Navy (previously, Black service members could only serve as cooks and porters), the band members—including 4 Chapel Hill residents—were not accommodated on campus due to segregationist policies. The band remained in Northside until its members were shipped out to Pearl Harbor in 1944.

- 1943      SCMWA workers at UNC achieve a wage victory, resulting in an increase from 29 to 37.5 cents/hour for janitorial staff and from \$10 to \$14/week for housekeepers.
  - 1946      Former teacher Mr. “Mac” McDougale is appointed principal, replacing Harold Holmes, during whose tenure O.C.T.S. faculty ranked first in the training of secondary schools in NC. Mr. McDougale was subsequently appointed Principal of Lincoln High and, after desegregation, Assistant Principal at Chapel Hill High School.
  - 1947      The Journey of Reconciliation, generally known as The First Freedom Ride, intended to test the Supreme Court 1946 ruling that Jim Crow bans on interstate travel on buses and trains are unconstitutional, stops in Chapel Hill. Bayard Rustin and other CORE leaders are mobbed and arrested; Rustin is sentenced to 22 months of hard labor.
  - 1948      O.C.T.S. students vote to rename the school Lincoln High, after Abraham Lincoln, and rally to gain the school board’s support.
  - 1951      A new Black high school is erected on Merritt Mill, retaining the name Lincoln High; the former O.C.T.S./Lincoln High becomes Northside Elementary.
  - 1951      Thurgood Marshall successfully sues UNC Law School for admission of 5 students, including Floyd McKissick, Sr., who would become head of the Durham CORE office and emerge as a national civil right leader.
  - 1953      Charlie Mason builds Mason Grocery Store on the corner of Rosemary and Graham Streets.
  - 1954      The Supreme Court rules in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, KS that “segregation has no place in public education.”
  - 1955      The Montgomery Bus Boycott begins the day Rosa Parks is indicted for refusing to yield her seat in the front of the “colored” section of a bus to a white passenger; it continues 381 days until the U.S. Supreme Court declares segregation on public buses unconstitutional in November 1956.
- Mamie Till Bradley holds an open-casket funeral in Chicago for her 14-year-old son, Emmett Till, who was brutally murdered in Missouri, where he was visiting

relatives; his killers were acquitted by an all-white jury largely on the defense that the boy's body was so mutilated that it could not be positively identified.

1956 The NC Pearsall Plan effectively delays/denies desegregation by deferring to local rule, with the result that, in Chapel Hill, parents had to petition individually for school transfers.

1957 Rev. Douglas E. Moore of Asbury Temple United Methodist Church (a classmate of Martin Luther King at Boston U) leads the first sit-in in NC at the Royal Ice Cream Parlor in Durham; a lawsuit and subsequent appeals take the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, which upholds the separate-but-equal decision in *Plessy v. Fergusson* in public places.

1958 Mrs. Tempe "Granny" Flack, a formerly enslaved Northside resident renowned for imparting lessons from ancestors on her front porch on Cotton St., dies.

The Campus Y Human Relations Committee launches a campaign to open restaurants and theatres to the 26 Black students at UNC. All but 3 Chapel Hill restaurants—Harry's, the Rathskeller, Danziger's—were segregated at the time.

1960 3 weeks after 4 A&T students sit-in at the Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, Lincoln High teens stage the first sit-in in Chapel Hill that results in arrests. Nine students are indicted on charges of trespassing at Big John's" Colonial Drug: Harold Foster (18 yo), William Cureton (18 yo), John Farrington (17 yo), Earl Geer (16 yo), David Mason Jr. (17 yo), James Merritt (16 yo), Clarence Merritt (17 yo), Douglas "Clyde" Perry (17 yo), Albert Williams (16 yo); 2 participants, James Brittian and Thomas Mason, are heard in Juvenile Court.

Terry Sanford is elected governor, inaugurating a period of moderate-progressive southern leadership.

Mrs. Lattice Vickers successfully sues the Chapel Hill School Board for the admission of her son, Stanley Vickers, to the all-white Carrboro Elementary school.

Martin Luther King Jr. visits Hargraves Center to meet with Black leaders.

Charlie Mason opens the Mason Motel (and the Starlite Supper Club), where James Brown, Ike and Tina Turner, Dinah Washington, Cab Calloway, Ella

Fitzgerald and other stars of the so-called “chitlin’ circuit” stayed while on tour.

- 1963 Harold Foster, Northside son, Lincoln High alum, and NCCU undergrad, forms COB, the Committee for Open Business, to press for public accommodations ordinances.

COB joins forces with the Chapel Hill Freedom Committee, the Committee of Concerned Citizens, and representatives from Durham-based CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), creating a coalition of local residents and UNC faculty and students dedicated to non-violent direct action.

The NC General Assembly passes the Act to Regulate Visiting Speakers or the “Speaker Ban Law,” which barred anyone with communist or alleged “subversive” affiliations to speak on a UNC campus, to halt the presumed role of “outside agitators” in Black justice protests in Raleigh and across the state.

34 people are arrested at the Chapel Hill/Carrboro Merchant’s Association sit-in.

While friends and clergy picket outside, Louis Graves tells his white boss at the College Café, Max Yarborough, that he can no longer work at a segregated restaurant; Yarborough voluntarily desegregates.

MLK delivers his “I Have a Dream” speech at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

President John F. Kennedy is assassinated.

Lincoln High student, Charlie Cotton, is arrested with UNC student protestors and sentenced to 30 days in jail.

A protestor is doused with ammonia at a sit-in at the “Rock Pile” at the start of 3 weeks of intense protesting and legal reprisal.

- 1964 Hundreds march from Durham to Chapel Hill (including national civil rights leader James Farmer) in a “Walk for Freedom” to boost passage of a local public accommodations ordinance.

The Chapel Hill Board of Aldermen fails to pass the proposed ordinance banning discrimination in places of public accommodation by a vote of 4-2.

CORE leadership issues an ultimatum, putting Chapel Hill on notice unless it fully integrates by February 1.

On February 8, protestors form human chains and enact a massive “lay-in” on Raleigh St., blocking traffic after a UNC-Wake Forest basketball game.

2 UNC students and 2 Lincoln High students initiate an 8-day Holy Week fast in front of the Franklin St. post office. The KKK rallies in opposition.

Over 1500 demonstrators are arrested; 15 leaders are sentenced to 6-month prison terms; the UNC student movement is effectively dissolved.

On July 2, President Lyndon Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964 making open access to places of public accommodation federal law.

Governor Terry Sanford commutes the sentences of the Chapel Hill demonstrators but does not erase their convictions.

- 1966 Chapel Hill/Carrboro formally desegregate schools, 12 years after *Brown v. Board*. Lincoln High is closed; Black and white students move to the newly constructed Chapel Hill High School. Most Black teachers lose their jobs or are demoted. The intensive involvement of Black parents’ involvement in the school and PTA disappear along with Lincoln High’s colors, trophies, photos, and traditions.
- 1968 Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated.
- Town of Chapel Hill Fire Department hires its first, full-time Black firefighter, Rev. Albert Williams.
- 1969 Howard Lee is elected the Mayor of Chapel Hill by a margin of 40 votes, due in large part to Northside resident, Rebecca Clark’s, renowned efforts to secure voter turnout. He is the first Black to be elected mayor in any predominantly white city in the South (preceding Maynard Jackson, Atlanta, elected 1973).
- Black students’ demands for racial equity at Chapel Hill High result in a “riot” that closes CH High for 2 days.
- Black cafeteria workers at UNC, supported by the Black Student Movement (Black students comprised 1.5% of the UNC student body) and Campus Y

leaders, begin what will become known as the UNC Food Workers Strike or the Lenoir Strike, a 9-month protest of discriminatory practices and policies eventually including thousands of protestors. Governor Scott calls in the National Guard to quell the resistance in March; in December, the dispute is temporarily resolved by successful negotiation with the new UNC Non-Academic Employees Union.

1970 Northside son James Cates is murdered in UNC's "pit" by members of a white biker gang; despite numerous eyewitnesses, the all-white jury finds the defendants not guilty.

early 1970s The Town of Chapel Hill initiates Comprehensive Redevelopment Program with HUD "urban renewal" funds; most of the homes in Pine Knolls and some in Northside are condemned, displacing residents; neighbors organize with JOCCA (Joint Orange-Chatham Community Action Agency) to replace and restore existing homes.

1973 Roberson Street Center is renamed for William M. Hargraves, a Northside resident and former Parks and Recreation Commission member, after his death in a car accident.

1996 2 UNC Social Work students establish the neighborhood's first CDC, EmPOWERment, Inc.

2004 Northside/Pine Knolls are designated Neighborhood Conservation Districts.

2007 Chapel Hill Town Council unanimously approves a special use permit for the mixed-use development, Greenbridge, located next to Knott's Funeral Home in the former Black business district.

A coalition of students, clerical leaders, and community members launch UNC NOW (United with Northside Community Now) in order to address gentrification and displacement in Northside.

2009 UNC students and community members establish the oral history-based Marian Cheek Jackson Center for Saving and Making History, to be located in an upstairs office of St. Joseph C.M.E.

2010 The Black population in Northside decreases to 690 from 1159 in 1989, in direct proportion to the rise in white residents, generally UNC student tenants.

2011 Property taxes rise 100-400% due to rising property values; of 26 new building permits, only one is submitted by a homeowner/non-investor; 50% of approved building permits are for demolition/new construction.

The S.O.S. (Sustaining OurSelves) Coalition achieves a historic moratorium on development in Northside.

The O.C.T.S./Northside Elementary school is razed to build the first LEED Platinum-certified school in North Carolina. After intensive neighborhood pressure, the school is renamed Northside Elementary.

2013 The Town of Chapel Hill approves the Northside Market Action Plan or MAP, developed by the Northside Compass Group in collaboration with the town, the Center for Community Self-Help, CZB Consultants, the Jackson Center, and over 40 resource partners.

The Jackson Center, formally incorporates in 2012, moves to the former parsonage of St. Joseph C.M.E. at 512 W. Rosemary.

2015 UNC Chapel Hill makes a \$3 million dollar, 0 interest loan to the Center for Community Self-Help to initiate land banking in Northside in collaboration with the Marian Cheek Jackson Center.

The town, university, and community launch the Northside Neighborhood Initiative to preserve the future of Northside.

2017 Northside sees the first increase in its Black population in 40 years; 20 at-risk properties are secured in the NNI land bank; Orange Habitat builds 12 new affordable homes in Northside; student nuisance complaints decrease by 60%; the first of 4 Northside gateways projected in the Northside MAP is constructed and dedicated, in honor of Northside's Freedom Fighters.

*Chrononology developed in direct consultation with Northside residents and with the support of:*

Ed Caldwell, "History of Lincoln High School," 1973, <http://lincolnhighalumni.org/history>  
John Ehle, *The Free Men* (Press 53, 1965/2007).

John Kenyon "Yonni" Chapman, "Second Generation: Black Youth and the Origins of the Civil Rights Movement in Chapel Hill, NC, 1937-1963," Thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1995.



Joe Schwartz, "Greenbridge: A New Chapter in a Tense History," <http://theindyweek.com>, June 16, 2010.

Jim Wallace and Paul Dickson, *Courage in the Moment: The Civil Rights Struggle, 1961-1964* (Dover, 2012).

Dwana Leah Waugh, "From Forgotten To Remembered: The Long Process of School Desegregation in Chapel Hill, North Carolina and Prince Edward County, Virginia," Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2012.

The Jackson Center Oral History Trust, [www.archives.jacksoncenter.info](http://www.archives.jacksoncenter.info)

The UNC Southern Oral History Program Interview Database

Wilson Library and the Southern Historical Collection

## B. Suggested Readings and Resources

### Method

- Loose, Sarah K. *Groundswell: Oral History for Social Change – A Synthesis* (January 2012), <http://www.oralhistoryforsocialchange.org>.
- Oral History Association. “Principles and Best Practices,” <http://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices/>.
- Oral History for Social Change, [www.oralhistoryforsocialchange.org](http://www.oralhistoryforsocialchange.org) Oral History in the Digital Age, <http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/>
- Slim, Hugo and Paul Thompson. *Listening for a Change: Oral Testimony and Community* (Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1995).
- Southern Oral History Program. “Practical Guide to Oral History,” University of North Carolina- Chapel Hill (2014), [http://sohp.org/files/2013/11/A-Practical-Guide-to-Oral-History\\_march2014.pdf](http://sohp.org/files/2013/11/A-Practical-Guide-to-Oral-History_march2014.pdf).
- Yow, Valerie. *Recording Oral History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).

### History

- Caldwell, Edwin. “History of Lincoln High School,” June 1973, Lincoln High School Alumni, <http://lincolnhighalumni.org/history.shtml>
- Chapman, John K. (Yonni). “Second Generation: Black Youth and the Origins of the Civil Rights Movement in Chapel Hill, N.C., 1937-1963.” Master’s thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1995.
- Digital North Carolina, <http://www.digitalnc.org/> (Includes African American newspapers: *The Carolina Times* (Durham, NC), *The Future Outlook* (Greensboro) and *Black Ink* (Black Student Movement, UNC), Chapel Hill city directories).
- Ehle, John. *The Free Men* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965/2007). Jansen, Katie. “Making History: Teachers Reunite after More Than 50 Years Apart,” *Chapel Hill Herald*, January 10, 2016.
- UNC Libraries, “I Raised My Hand to Volunteer,” <https://exhibits.lib.unc.edu/exhibits/show/protest> Wallace, Jim and Paul Dixon. *Courage in the Moment: the Civil Rights Struggle, 1961-1964* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2012).
- Waugh, Dwana Leah. “From Forgotten to Remembered: The Long Process of School Desegregation in Chapel Hill, North Carolina and Prince Edward County, Virginia,” PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2012, <http://pqdtopen.proquest.com/doc/1024428071.html?FMT=AI>

## **Appendices**

## **A. Forms and Templates**

### **Interview Preparation Guide Template**

Complete this preparation document as fully as possible well in advance of a given interview, in light of preliminary research. Preliminary research may include reading relevant materials, listening to previous interviews with the same individual, family members, or community members topically related, and consulting with MCJC staff about key orientations and neighborly knowledge.

- **Interviewer/date**

*State your name and the date you completed this document. Add a short bio, a sense of your own hometown and family roots, and a brief statement about how/why you got involved in the interview process. Include a short statement about your experience with oral history and note any aspects of your background and interests that may be particularly salient to the interview exchange.*

- **Interview Narrator**

*Identify the interview narrator and his/her primary family/community affiliations.*

- **Research summary**

*Summarize what you have gathered from preliminary research in 1-2 paragraphs.*

- **Chronology**

*Create a working dateline of preliminary findings, in broad scope, with relevant details (10-15 items).*

- **Spheres of Influence**

*List 5-10 key contexts of the narrator's life experience—the historical networks, institutions, or events that likely had an influence on the narrator's life and which he/she may have influenced in turn.*

- **Sources**

*List of the people (personal conversations), texts, and digital sources on which you based your research; please use proper citation format.*

- **Interview protocol**

*Based on your research, develop possible questions for the interview. List them here in topical groupings arranged to support the arc of an interview (from beginning to end).*

**Possible prompts**

*Consider bringing a photo, news article, or other document/artifact you found in your research that might spur memories about a particular place, event, etc.*

## Interview Agreement Form



The Marian Cheek Jackson Center  
512 West Rosemary St • Chapel Hill, NC 27516 • 919-960-1670  
[contact@jacksoncenter.info](mailto:contact@jacksoncenter.info) • [www.jacksoncenter.info](http://www.jacksoncenter.info)

**From the Rockwall**  
*Living Histories of Black Chapel Hill/Carrboro*  
[www.fromtherockwall.org](http://www.fromtherockwall.org)

### Interview Agreement

Please carefully read, review, and revise the following before providing your signature for consent. *You are invited you to scratch and substitute or add any text that will make the terms of this agreement satisfactory to you.*

**I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand that:**

The Marian Cheek Jackson Center is located at the gateway to the historic Potters Field and Sunset neighborhoods of Chapel Hill, NC. Its mission is to honor, renew, and build community in what has come to be known as “Northside” and “Pine Knolls.” Its primary aim is to do justice by the many oral histories of community members near and far who have entrusted their accounts of the past, present, and future to the Jackson Center. The visions, values, and examples of creative and courageous leadership conveyed in oral histories are the Center’s guiding lights for initiatives in organizing and advocacy, youth leadership and education, and connection and celebration. **To the best of its ability, the Jackson Center will share and promote my oral history towards these ends only.**

**I will retain rights to my interview under the terms of a Creative Commons License**, which allows others to use, share, and build upon my materials as long as they give due credit and do not use my materials for commercial purposes. I may withdraw my materials from public access at any time.<sup>12</sup>

**I have authority over the course of the interview.** I may stop the recording or choose not to address questions at any time. I may also direct the interviewer to topics and issues of my choosing.

As part of developing a digital, community archive, **Jackson Center staff will prepare and post some or all of these materials to accompany my oral history:**

- A summary of basic information, including my name and the date and location of the interview
- A summary description of the interview
- A tape log, indicating topics discussed at different points in the interview
- A list of keywords and references
- A short biographical introduction, possibly to include reference to ethnicity, occupation, date of birth, and/or other information relevant to the oral history
- A partial transcription, in prose form or a poetic style meant to reflect the spoken style of the narrator

**My oral history may be used, in whole or part, for educational and advocacy purposes** in such contexts as project planning, public programs, witness performance, documentary projects, radio broadcasts, exhibitions,

---

<sup>12</sup> See <https://creativecommons.org/licenses> re: Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

k-12 and university curricula, and publications in all formats and media, including on the Internet. (See the Jackson Center website, [www.jacksoncenter.info](http://www.jacksoncenter.info), for examples.)

**Restrictions:**

I hereby place these additional restrictions and permissions on my interview and accompanying materials:

\_\_\_\_\_ None/no restrictions

\_\_\_\_\_ The interview shall be closed to public access until this date \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ The Jackson Center will provide me with an opportunity to review any transcription of my interview before making it public in any way. I understand that only part of the interview will be transcribed.

\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Multimedia Permissions:**

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to have one or more photos taken at my discretion at the time of the interview.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to donate photos, documents, records, and other archival materials for digital scanning to accompany my oral history and understand that any such materials are subject to the same terms of use as those for the interview.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to video recording of the interview.

**Miscellaneous Permissions:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Agreement:**

Fully aware of the terms and options above, I voluntarily agree to be interviewed and for my interview to be held in the Jackson Center Oral History Trust, this day \_\_\_\_\_ (date).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full name of Interviewee (print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City State Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
Preferred contact (email, phone)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full name of Interviewer (print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City State Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
Preferred contact (email, phone)

I have signed two copies of this document and retained one for future reference. The other will be held by the Jackson Center. **Should I have any concerns or questions about this process, I will immediately contact the Jackson Center, [contact@jacksoncenter.info](mailto:contact@jacksoncenter.info), 919-960-1670, 512 W. Rosemary, Chapel Hill, NC, 27516.**

**Proper Word Form Template****Proper Word Form**

Full (complete) Name of Narrator: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Interview (town/county/state): \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list below, in order recorded, the proper/place names and all idiomatic words/phrases which you think a researcher might have difficulty spelling or understanding. Note the digital time marker next to the word. Print legibly or type.




--	--	--

**Life History Form Template****Life History Form**

Narrator's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last first middle

Current Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Secondary Address (as applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (home/mobile) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Birthplace \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse/partner's name (as applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Children's names/years of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Education \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Work history \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Interview Description Form Template**

Narrator:

Interviewer:

Interview date:

Location:

NARRATOR:

INTERVIEWER:

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW:

RECORDER/RECORDING INFORMATION:

## **Tape Log Template**

Narrator:

Interviewer:

Interview Date:

Location:

Length:

Tape Log completed by:

Date Tape Log completed:

Comments:

### TAPE LOG

Time

Topic

## Special Project Description Template

### MCJC Oral History Trust Special Project Description Form

The MCJC occasionally hosts forums and panels that may be recorded with permission. The Center may also record or keep recordings of public presentations (talks, sermons, municipal hearings, etc.) relevant to its work and mission. Use this form to provide the necessary context for saved materials and photo, audio, and video files.

**Special project or event name:**

**Date(s):**

**Host(s) or Participants(s):**

**Location:**

**Descriptive Summary of the project or event:**

*What is the backstory? Who planned the event and why? What happened at the event? Who was part of the event? What context will help the public understand the archival materials that were collected/created?*

**Materials collected or created:**

*These may include photos, audio, video, brochures, flyers, programs, etc.*

**List of file names:**

**Statement of permissions and restrictions:**

*Attach an Interview Agreement Forms as relevant. Indicate the nature of consent given orally and any restrictions on use.*

For Office Use Only

**Special Project Unique ID:**

*Assigned by archival specialist*

**Archive storage location:**

*Audio/video recordings and related materials should be preserved in Dropbox - Oral History Archives Working Copy – Special Projects, with a backup copy in the Dropbox- Oral History Archives-Do Not Use folder. Consent forms, a copy of this Description, and duplicates of directly related photographs, should be stored together in the MCJC Dropbox.*

## B. Samples

### Sample MCJC Interview Preparation Guide: Lois Burnett Interview Preparation Guide

- Interviewer/Date/Bio  
Jacob Lerner is a graduate of UNC, Chapel Hill and a social justice organizer living in Durham. At the time of this interview, he was serving as a VISTA volunteer at the Jackson Center.  
Spring, 2015
- Interview Narrator  
Lois Burnett grew up on a farm in Chatham County and moved to Graham Street in Chapel Hill's Northside Neighborhood sometime in the 1940s or 1950s. Lucy Fearington is her sister and Joseph Fearington is her brother-in-law.
- Research Summary  
Ms. Lois Burnett was born in the first half of the 1920s. Based on a previous conversation with her, I know she grew up on a farm, I believe in Chatham County, and her family farmed in order to be self-sustaining. Mama Kat thinks it was the Hickory Grove neighborhood and Ms. Burnett came to Chapel Hill, sixty-seventy years ago onto Graham Street, where she has been ever since. She moved here before they even had paved roads and she vividly remembers the dirt roads that existed. Her sister and brother in law live right down the block from her. Joseph Fearington, the brother in law, built many of the houses on their block. He was a wood worker, not a mason. He served in the army during World War II and was drafted. Her daughter still comes by to take care of her in her old age. Her husband died probably around sixty years ago, but Mama Kat was not sure exactly when. She only has one daughter.

Her sister, Lucy Fearington, went to many Civil Rights marches, and even heard Martin Luther King Jr. speaking at the Hargraves Center. Joseph Fearington also worked at the Carolina Inn and did not go to school past seventh grade. Ms. Burnett was a big fan of the food ministry and her favorite things to eat, according to Mama Kat, were potatoes and cake. She drove until she was ninety-one.

- Chronology  
1920-1922- Birth  
1924 - Orange County Training School in Chapel Hill  
1930s - Great Depression  
1940s - World War II  
1940s - Hargraves Community Center built, under a different name though.  
1950s - Brown vs. Board of Education  
1960s - Sit-ins, etc. The rock wall in Chapel Hill
- Spheres of influence  
Great Depression  
Orange County Training School  
Building of the houses on Graham Street  
World War II

Civil Rights Movement  
University of North Carolina

- Sources

Interview with Joseph Fearrington, her brother-in-law Yonni Chapman's dissertation  
Conversation with Mama Kat (Katherine Council)

- Interview Protocol

Life History Questions

- Now, would you tell me a little bit about your growing up? We heard you were from the country, the hickory grove area, is that true?
- Tell me about the house you grew up in. What were your parents like?
- Can you talk a little about how you ended up in Northside? I think I remember you telling me that you initially grew up on a farm and moved here later. Why did you move here?
- What was it like moving into the Northside community? What was it like when you first moved in?
- Did you have much family in Northside? I know your sister and brother in law still live across the street.
- How did Northside interact with the rest of Chapel Hill when you first moved here? How does that compare to now?
- Looking back, how big of an impact on your life was moving onto Graham Street?

Depression and World War II

- You were growing up during the great depression, correct? How did that affect your life, or your parents?
- I heard in an interview with Mr. Fearrington that he and his brothers were drafted to fight in the war. Did any of your family members or friends get drafted? What did they think about the war?
- Can you tell me about your experience hearing about the bombing at Pearl Harbor? How did you respond to the news?
- What are your strongest memories of the war?
- When you were growing up, what types of jobs did you have? How old were you when you started working?

Family

- What did your grandparents and parents do for a living? Farm? Did they own farm or sharecrop?
- How many siblings do you have?
- Can you tell me a little bit about what they do and where they are?
- How did you meet your husband, now remind me of his name?
- What did your husband do for a living?
- Do you have any children? Are they still in the area?

- Did your daughter (maybe other kids) go to Northside Elementary school before it closed down? How do you feel about it reopening? Did you know it was reopening?

#### UNC Chapel Hill and Northside

- I have heard that this was a very tight knit community. How did you feel about Northside, living here and raising children here? Has it changed significantly?
- Living so close to UNC-CH, what was your interaction with the University and with the students?

#### Civil Rights Movement

- I heard from an interview with Mr. Fearrington that your sister, Ms. Lucy, went to many of the civil rights marches in Chapel Hill and even saw Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. speak at Hargraves in 1960. Were you active at all? Your kids or husband? What did your sister tell you about her experiences?
- What was your perception of the Civil Rights Movement and could you feel the changes happening as the fighting was occurring?

Carrboro versus Chapel Hill (also an opportunity for her to talk about the difference between city and country. . . if she indeed grew up in Hickory grove).

- I have heard that there were often more racial tensions in Carrboro than Chapel Hill. Living in Chapel Hill, what was your perception of the difference between the two areas? Did you experience much of the problems yourself?
- How did this compare to living in the country where you grew up?

#### Life

- When you look back on your life here, what do you remember most fondly?
- Who are you still close to in the neighborhood? (maybe what do you hope for in this neighborhood)
- How is it having so many new student neighbors?
- Have you felt that it has affected the neighborhood? If so, how?
- Is there anything you might like to add?

## **Sample Interview Description**

Narrator: Christian Jacobi Foushee-Green

Interviewer and Processor: Abigail Kaufmann

Interview Date: February 16, 2017

Location: Living room of Christian's family home on 105 North Roberson Street, Chapel Hill, NC

NARRATOR: Christian Jacobi Foushee-Green is the lead singer, songwriter, and keyboardist for the "Chit Nasty Band" which he created in 2011, one year after graduating from the Berklee College of Music in Boston. Born on April 26 in 1988, Christian (or "Chit" to some of his fans) has been involved in both church and choir ever since his mother and biological father parents began their own church choir when he was just two years old. Although his mother currently lives in Durham, his great grandfather Garland Foushee still resides in Northside. In 2016, Christian moved from Raleigh to live in the same home that Garland previously lived in that was built by his other great grandfather, Jacob James. Christian currently rents out one room of the house. He makes his living doing what he loves: teaching piano during the day and performing with his band at night. Christian continues to be involved in multiple church choirs to this day but prefers to attend Sunday worship at the A.M.E church when possible.

THE INTERVIEWER: Abigail Kaufmann is an undergraduate student studying both Communications as well as Hispanic Literature and Cultures at UNC Chapel Hill. She was introduced to oral history and Northside Neighborhood in a course taught by Professor Della Pollock that ultimately resulted in this interview. Abigail was loosely acquainted with the narrator prior to the course; she conducted two informal, introductory interviews with Christian in order to adequately research and prepare for the final interview.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW: The interview was conducted while sitting on one of the couches in the living room of Christian's home on North Roberson Street. Almost every inch of the walls is covered in pieces of art, some pieces Christian purchased while others are gifts from fans. He got up from the couch two or three times to stretch his legs but continued to talk while standing in front of the fireplace, occasionally gesturing out towards the street. His new dog, Lyric, roamed the home as we spoke so, at times, the sound of her nails clicking on the hardwood floors is audible on the recording. There was light jazz music coming from a radio in Christian's bedroom throughout the interview and is occasionally noticeable on the recording.



The recording had to be stopped twice due to two separate interruptions: the first occurred when Christian's handyman rang the door to let him know he would be working in the yard; the second was when his roommate returned from work. Christian spoke freely and with excellent detail, so much so that he answered the majority of my follow up questions I had planned. Before we began, I asked that he look over a family tree diagram to ensure the correct spelling of the family members' names that he mentioned in previous conversations. Prior to beginning the recording, I informed him that I may mention or ask about certain comments he shared in previous conversations. He seemed perfectly content with the notion of revisiting these stories in more depth. Christian is an engaging speaker; he frequently shifted his voice to do slight "impressions" and even sang at more than one point during the interview.

CONTENT OF THE INTERVIEW: The interview was structured around five main themes, each of which provide a way to link Christian's own life story and experiences with those he heard from family members while growing up in Chapel Hill. The main topics of the interview include the a) family home in which the interview took place b) Chapel Hill roots, specifically during desegregation, c) hopes and fears for Northside Neighborhood going forward and lastly, d) the role of the black church, not only in Christian's own life but the entire community, specifically in terms of education and music.

NOTE ON RECORDING: I used a digital recorder on an iPhone. The quality is decent but the volume is lower than would be ideal; headphones are necessary at certain points in the interview.

**Sample Tape Log: Paul Caldwell****Paul Caldwell****Tape Log**

Narrator: Paul Caldwell

Interviewers: Morgan Beamon, Peter Blumberg, Jacob Lerner

Interview Date: November 21, 2013

Location: Paul Caldwell's home

Interview Processor: Joshua Trower

Length: 01:11:37

Comments: Only text in quotation marks is verbatim; all other text is paraphrased, including the interviewer's questions.

**TAPE INDEX**

<b>TIME</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>
0:00	Introduction: "This is Peter Blumberg et al introducing Paul Caldwell..." Interview to focus on Mr. Caldwell's life in Northside and his various occupations in Chapel Hill.
0:30	Mr Caldwell's early life, birth near his current residence: the early death of his father, the names of his five siblings.
2:20	The demographic and societal make-up of the Northside neighborhood of Caldwell's childhood contrasted with its current state; privilege disparity between the black neighborhood and the white neighborhood during his childhood.
3:30	Caldwell and the other Northside children would swim in the creek near the current FPG school because of the lack of a swimming pool for African Americans; memories of cottonmouth snakes and the frequent visits to the swimming hole during the summer.

**Life Histories****Marian Cheek Jackson Center**

**Paul Caldwell**

**Tape Log**

- 5:10            Schooling experience: Orange County Training School through the third grade, then Northside Elementary, and Lincoln High School are mentioned. Caldwell was never allowed to attend school with other races.
- 6:00            Mrs. Belinda Caldwell distributes drinks. Caldwell's education history continued; Northside Elementary school until the 7th grade, then Lincoln High School. The location of Lincoln High School on Merritt Mill Road is mentioned and freedom of choice is discussed.
- 8:12            The experience of Caldwell's mother having to raise all of the children by working various domestic jobs. He learned how to cook for himself because of his mother's job.

## **Sample Abstract**

### **Emily Banks**

### **Abstract**

Narrator: Emily Banks

Interviewer Hudson Vaughan and Maggie West

Interview date: February 17, 2011

Location: Banks' residence on Kingston Trace, Chapel Hill, NC

Length: 2:00:44 hours

Interview Processor:

### **Abstract:**

This interview is part of the Marian Cheek Jackson Center's Life History Series. Emily Banks, a current member and leader of St. Joseph CME Church, was born in 1946 in New York and migrated south to North Carolina in 1970. She has spent the last few decades in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. She reflects on her pride in her family history, the immigration stories of her parents and their families, life lessons she has learned, her views of the Civil Rights Movement, the importance of education and faith, and her dedication to her four children through many tribulations. Also discusses her family history, especially her father's service as a Tuskegee Airman. She shares the important lessons that her parents taught her, such as the significance of receiving a good education. She recounts being in an abusive marriage and how she got the courage to leave. She also remembers migrating to North Carolina and finding a job at East Chapel Hill High School. The interview includes discussion of the foundation of her faith. She shares other anecdotes of her romantic life, such as leaving her second husband for fear that he would soon get physically abusive, like the first. She recounts memories of being in New York with her family, meeting Malcolm X, and facing prejudice from within her own race. Furthermore, she recounts experiencing racial issues in America for the first time. The interview concludes with discussion of traveling to Europe, the importance of faith, monumental events in history that she has witnessed, hitting rock bottom, her children and their accomplishments.

**Sample Prose Transcript: Paul Caldwell**

**Paul Caldwell**

**Transcript**

Narrator: Paul Caldwell

Interviewers: Morgan Beamon, Paul Blumberg, and Jacob

Lerner Interview Date: November 21, 2013

Location: Chapel Hill,

NC Interview Processor: Joshua

Trower Length: 01:11:36

START OF INTERVIEW [START 8:10]

Peter Blumberg: Briefly going back to when your father passed away and then you were mostly raised by your mother, what did what did she do?

Paul Caldwell: My mother did domestic work, and, you know, sometimes I look back now and I can remember when she was making maybe 25 bucks a week. She had six boys and some way or another she knew how to make ends do. Because we never went hungry. A lot of times, we had to cook for ourselves, because [of the] tight work schedule she'd be doing. It used to bother me sometimes. Here she is cooking for this white family and . . . but she [pause] she really took care of us. She lived long enough for all of us to be grown, and that was one of her goals: to see that we were able to get out and take care of ourselves. She did finally end up working at a fraternity house, Chi Phi, the Chi Phi fraternity. Never will forget it because a lot of times she'd get off about seven o' clock and with the time change, at seven o' clock it's dark you know. And she walked, she never had a car. And I would go meet her and walk her home. She was a hard

**Paul Caldwell****Transcript**

worker. She taught all of us boys how to cook! I can cook anything except fried chicken. I can *grill* chicken but I cannot fry chicken. It always turns out just as pretty and brown on the outside but around that bone it's red! But anything else: I pretty much consider myself a grill master. I love outdoor cooking. Me and a couple of my sons have a catering business that we don't advertise. We do it by word [of mouth].. Football season, we do a lot of pig-pickings for fraternities and sorority houses. And—it's pretty good. An old man taught me, must have been somebody's father—he taught me how to cook a pig. First pig I cooked by myself, I burnt it up. Then I realized that you can't have it too hot, with that grease dropping. Eventually you learn, and it turns out good.

Morgan Beamon: When did you and your sons start doing that?

PC: Oh God, it's been some years back. Eight, ten years, at least. And how that came about: I worked, after I retired I worked part time at the Chi Omega sorority on Franklin or Hillsborough Street, that big, two-story one. Yeah, I worked there for about seventeen, about seventeen years. But what happened: we had students that would come in for the dinner meal and they would wait on the tables, on the girls. I got to know a group of the guys, and most of them actually were from fraternity houses, you know. Word got out about pig picking or cooking a pig or whatever, chicken or barbeque you name it, we did it. And word got around pretty good and we started doing real good. The only reason I didn't advertise was because I shared thirty years of my salary with Uncle Sam and I said: he doesn't have to know about this.

MB: Sorry to keep jumping around in time so much, but other than you, your brothers and your mom, did you have much family in Northside when you were growing up?

**Community Routes****Marian Cheek Jackson Center**

**Paul Caldwell**

**Transcript**

PC: Actually, not very much. Most of my town parents had passed on. I never knew my grandfather or my grandmother on my mother's side. I did know my grandfather on my father's side, but other than that... This street right here, Caldwell Street, actually, we're related but it's a different set of Caldwells. They came from the Caldwell side that was sort of well-off and we came from the Caldwell side that was, you know, a little on the poor side.

MB: So, where were your parents from?

PC: Right here in Chapel Hill. And it's interesting. My mother's great-grandfather was a slave of Professor Caldwell here at the university. You know, there's a building on campus, Caldwell Hall, which actually used to be, if you go way back, the medical school. I did some researching when I was working there and I found that out. They had a basement, a sub-basement under the basement in that building and it had some weird stuff in it. As a policeman, we pretty much had keys to everything and we used to go down there at night and-- "*man, what in the world is this?*" If you go into the pathology department at UNC, you'll probably see jars of body parts, livers, what have you. Well we used to see stuff like that. There were a few caskets in the basement but we wouldn't dare open them. You didn't know what would jump out at you. But he was also president, if I'm not mistaken, of the university at one time and he owned the property from, let's say, where the planetarium is now probably all the way to Eastgate shopping center. And he had—they were free-, what'd you call them? Free-ranging slaves. They pretty much could come and go as they'd want.

Benita Caldwell: An indentured slave?

Jacob Lerner: Were they indentured servants?

**Community Routes**

**Marian Cheek Jackson Center**

**Paul Caldwell**

**Transcript**

PC: Yeah, yeah. And they worked with him. That's where the Caldwells got their name from, was from Professor Caldwell.



**Sample Ethnopoetic Transcript: Rebecca Clark**

Speaker: Rebecca Clark

Situation: Conversation after viewing a condo complex marketing video including excerpts of interviews with Ms. Rebecca Clark, Ms. Velma Perry, and others.

Location: Sanctuary, St. Joseph C.M.E.

Date: May 29, 2008

Transcriber: Hudson Vaughan

Notation: Words in regular font are all those of Rebecca Clark, italicized are those of Patricia Jackson, also a native Northside resident. Also present: Marian Cheek Jackson. Conversation recorded with permission.

**It's Not for Us**

I don't see where that building is adding to or uplifting this neighborhood.

*It's not for black people.*

It's taking from this neighborhood.

They are putting up these big buildings,

Moving homes,

Moving black businesses

And it's not, [it] hasn't contributed anything to what we were brought up with!

And I, and I don't know how they blended that into that [area] like that--

*You guys gave that interview?*

Well we, I thought that we were doing that for--

Let me see, who did that-- I thought, well who did that?

I thought that was the

Chapel of the Cross or was that another (background noise)

I thought that was . . .

I didn't think that was gonna be that we would say "*oh yes we want this*"

*Come in and done . . . Misinformed*

In other words, they used us for the film!

used us for the film!

**Sample Ethnopoetic Transcript: Harold Foster**

Narrator: Harold Foster (bold text)

Interviewer: Hudson Vaughan (italicized text)

Interview Date: 2010

**The Struggle Continues**

**So how  
how y'all been?**

*Sorry? How we been?*

**Yeah.**

*Things are going well,  
you know, it's a struggle but*

**oh, all right**

*but it's umm. . .*

**as long as it's a struggle  
I know you're trying,**

**As long as you're struggling  
just keep at it.**

*mmm*

**Don't give up.**