

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT FIELD GUIDE

Conducting and Preserving Interviews

Where the past is present **DETROIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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INTRODUCTION

The **Detroit 1967 Oral History Project** collects stories and memories of Metro Detroiters that relate to their lives and experiences before, during and after the unrest of July 1967. The <u>Detroit Historical Society</u> created the Detroit 1967 Oral History Project (OHP) as part of its larger <u>Detroit 1967 community</u> engagement project.

With the arrival of 2017, 50 years will have passed since Detroit and other major cities across America experienced social unrest and change unparalleled in our nation's recent history. Much has changed as a result of what happened during the summer of 1967, but as evidenced by recent events in Ferguson and Baltimore, we still face many of the same challenges today across America and in Detroit. The Detroit Historical Society and its partners will mark this 50 year commemoration with a comprehensive community-wide effort to promote a fuller understanding of Detroit's past struggles with social and racial inequity and its present opportunities for communication and dialogue. By doing so we hope to move forward.

A key aspect of the project is collecting the memories, stories and experiences of the Metro Detroiters who were alive and impacted by the events.

Who can participate?

- **Share your story.** If you have memories about life in or around Detroit in 1967, sit down with a friend, peer or loved one and record a conversation about your experiences.
- Interview someone in your family or community. Arrange to meet with a parent or grandparent, relative, friend or neighbor to record their experiences in 1967.
- Collaborate with other individuals or organizations. Contact the Detroit 1967 project to see if there are individuals and/or organizations in your area that are participating in this project who can get you involved in the process.

This field kit contains all the information you need to participate in the Detroit 1967 Oral History Project, including information on how to prepare, what to ask during an interview, how to submit your interview to the project, which forms are required for submission and which media and recording formats are acceptable.

If you have questions, contact the Detroit 1967 project line at 313-885-1967 or email <u>detroit1967@detroithistorical.org</u>.¹

¹ The Detroit Historical Society staff consulted and borrowed information from the following sources in the creation of this field guide: Library of Congress Veterans History Project, <u>http://www.loc.gov/vets/</u>: Center for the Study of History and Memory at Indiana University, <u>http://www.indiana.edu/~cshm/oral_history_techniques.pdf</u>; Oregon Department of Transportation Research Section, <u>http://www.oregon.gov/odot/td/tp_res/docs/otherpublications/guide_to_transcribing_and_summarizing_oral_histories.pdf</u>

PREPARING FOR AN ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Although it seems like sitting down and recording an interview is a "no-brainer," taking the time to prepare will ensure the experience is positive for both you and the interviewee. Here are recommended steps and tips for preparing for an oral history interview.

- Prepare for each interview by knowing as much as you can about the person you'll be interviewing. At a minimum, take some time to learn about Detroit in the 1960s so you can shape your questions to better capture the history your interviewee lived.
- Set up the appointment for the interview. Confirm the appointment and keep the appointment. Arrange to conduct the interview in a place and time most comfortable for the interviewee, away from noise and distractions.
- Know your recording equipment thoroughly. [For guidelines on the types of audio and video files accepted for the project, see the next section.] Make sure your equipment is in working order before you arrive at the interview. Test it again on site, with the interviewee and you both speaking on the recording to be sure you are both clearly audible. Bring extra batteries, memory cards, etc.
- Review the list of questions for the interview.
 - The simplest questions, like biographical data, should be at the beginning and the most complex or sensitive questions at the end.
 - Ask simply structured, single-topic questions. Compound questions (strings of questions linked together with "and") are harder to answer and harder to transcribe.
 - Ask open-ended questions rather than questions that can be answered by yes or no.
 You want to encourage the fullest response possible to each question.
 - Do not ask leading questions. For example, you should not ask, "Do you feel that the police in your neighborhood were often brutal?" Instead, try: "What relationship did you and your neighborhood have with the police?"
- Send the interviewee a list of your questions ahead of time:
 - The point is to give the interviewee time before the interview to think about people and events that may not have occurred to him/her in a long time.
 - Be sure to explain that the questionnaire is only a framework, and that other questions may occur to both of you during the interview.
- Be aware of your personal appearance before you go to the interview. Your attire tells the interviewee something about how you view him/her and the interview itself.
 - Casual clothes can suggest a more informal atmosphere, but they can also suggest a lack of care or respect to some interviewees; businesslike clothes can suggest a more formal, purposeful atmosphere, but can intimidate some interviewees.

- Try to match your appearance to what will best put the interviewee at ease with you and the interview process.
- Know your ethical responsibilities as an interviewer.
 - Be prepared to answer any questions the interviewee may have about the interview or the research project.
 - Be familiar with the information in the "informed consent" form that explains the interview process and the rights and responsibilities of both parties. The interviewee should sign the informed consent form before beginning the interview. Have two copies on hand so you can leave one with the interviewee. *Be prepared to comply with any and all restrictions the interviewee requires. If you cannot comply, do not conduct the interview.*
 - Have the interviewee review and sign the "Interviewee Release Form" that states what will be done with the interview, grants the Society permission to use the interview, etc. Have two copies on hand so you can leave one with the interviewee.
- Let the interviewee suggest the interview location, whether that is their home or office or another location. Make sure the place chosen is quiet and away from outside distractions. Background noise can destroy an interview by making the recording unintelligible.

ACCEPTED MEDIA AND FORMAT STANDARDS

Recording equipment can be as complex as professional grade digital recorders or as simple as voice memo applications on smart phones. *Please use the highest-quality recording equipment available to you.* No matter what equipment you use, be sure that you record in the highest quality available on the device.

Uncompressed formats like WAV are preferable to compressed ones such as MP3 or WMA. While we will accept interviews in most any format, the Detroit Historical Society *prefers* video and audio files in the following formats:

- Audio files: WAV Specifications: 96 kHz, 24-bit
- Audio or video files: MPEG-4/H.264 Specifications: at least 3Mbps, with a spatial resolution at the highest your set-up allows.
- Video files: DNxHD or AVCHD
- Image files: TIF/JPG Specifications: 600 dpi

CONDUCTING AN ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

As an interviewer, your role is to put the interviewee at ease. You will also have to make sure your recording equipment is working. Here are some tips for making the most out of your interview:

- If the oral history is audio only, ask if you can photograph the interviewee so we can include the image with the interview for a more complete historical record.
- Place the audio recorder and microphone between you and your subject on a solid surface.
 - Do not hold the microphone in your hand; use a microphone stand or a clip-on mic
 - Be aware that moving objects on the table, shuffling papers or fidgeting (if the microphone is on the person) can cause noises that obscure the conversation.
- Some people are nervous about being recorded.
 - Be sure the interviewee understands before the meeting that you wish to record the interview.
 - Let your interviewee hear or see the playback when you test the equipment.
 - Never start recording until the interviewee is ready to begin, and never record without that person's knowledge.
- Start your recorded interview with a statement of the names of yourself and your interviewee(s), the date and the location. This helps put the interviewee at ease with being recorded and gets the basic information about your subject up front in the interview.
- Focus on the interviewee, and give the machine only the minimum attention necessary to be sure it is recording smoothly.
 - Do not turn off the recording during an interview unless the interviewee asks you to, or the interviewee is called away (by a phone call, for example).
 - The only other time to turn off the recorder would be if the interviewee becomes upset (for example, becomes tearful remembering the death of a close family member) and needs a moment to regain composure.
- Speak at a slow pace, and speak clearly.
- After you ask a question, stop and wait for the answer, even if you have to sit in silence for several seconds. Interviewees often need several moments to think about the questions you ask. Give them quiet time; do not feel you need to leap in right away with a rephrased or different question. The silence is not really as long as it feels!
- Once the answer comes, do not cut off or talk over an interviewee. Some people do like to go on and on, but let them talk to the end of their strand of thought and wait for an opening patiently. Cutting them off gives the impression that what they're saying isn't important to you, or that you are hurrying through the interview.

- When you are audio recording, verify verbally when people make gestures or point out something. For example: "The fish was this big." Interviewer: "About eighteen inches." Or "The bandstand was over there." Interviewer: "Across the street by the pond."
- Keep alert for cues from the interviewee that he/she will expand on a topic if you let them know you want to hear it. For example, if an interviewee says, "Oh, that wasn't much of a problem, although I can think of several times where it was," it is a cue to say, "Would you like to tell me about those times?" This not only shows you are listening and enhances rapport with the interviewee; it can also give you good material the interviewee won't volunteer otherwise.
- Keep alert for clues that the interviewee is uncomfortable with a question or line of **questioning.** This is more often clued in by body language than verbally. Let the interviewee know before the interview that he/she has the right at any time to refuse to answer a question, and that it will not offend you.
- Be alert to your own responses to an interviewee's remarks, taking care not to sound judgmental, impatient or disrespectful. Even if you come away with nothing that you feel is of benefit to your project, you can consider any interview a success if you have maintained a positive, polite, professional stance throughout the interview.
- Keep alert for signs that the interviewee is getting tired. Interviewing is a tiring process; it is emotionally and intellectually challenging for both you and the interviewee. If the person is showing signs of weariness, it is better to stop. You can always reschedule and continue the interview another time.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Your job isn't quite done when the interview is over. In order to make sure it can be used, we need the proper release forms and a full transcription of the interview. Here are some tips to help:

- Do not run right out after an interview.
 - Once the recorder is turned off, there is always time to say thank you and to chat about the process you've just undergone together,
 - Often you'll hear the best stories or most important data after the recorder is turned off.
 That's why it is a good idea not to put the machine away at once; you can always turn it on again (with the interviewee's permission).
- If you didn't do it before the interview, make sure that the interviewee signs the informed consent and release forms.
- Label recordings completely and carefully.
- **Transcribe the interview.** [For guidelines on transcription, see the next section.] Transcription should be verbatim and accompanied by times to approximate their location in the interview.

• Send a thank-you note to your interviewee. If any special arrangements were made between you—for example, for copies of the interview, a follow-up interview, or a copy of the final product(s)—reiterate these promises in the note, and follow up on your promises.

TRANSCRIPTION TIPS

A transcript is a written account of the oral history interview. Transcriptions are created by listening to the audio file and typing what you hear. Written transcriptions create a readable document that researchers and the public can easily access when it is not possible or practical to listen to an extended audio file. On average, the transcription process takes 4-6 hours per hour of recorded interview.

When transcribing, only use the Detroit 1967 Oral History Project transcript template. Only complete sections that you have information for; leave others, like Accession Number, blank.

BASIC TIPS

- Plan your time carefully. Transcribing is a long, painful process (six hours or more for one hour of recorded material).
- Use a media player with slow playback speed, such as Express Scribe (free download)
- Use comfortable headphones (or speakers where you won't disturb anyone)
- Compile list of key terms as you are transcribing
- Some mistakes are inevitable, but the draft transcript should be as clean as possible.
- Look up terms, words, addresses and names you don't know via the Internet.

EDITORIAL GUIDELINES

- Remove umms, ahhs, uhhs (specific details below)
- Correct grammatical errors unless absolutely essential to convey speaker's meaning
- Eliminate repetition and false starts
- Insert missing/inaudible words in brackets
- Include vocalizations in brackets (e.g. [laughter] [coughing] [humming]) if they are meaningful. However, you do not need to include all vocalizations.

Please refer to the Transcription Style Guide for additional information.

SUBMIT YOUR INTERVIEW

Prior to submitting an interview, make two copies. Keep one copy for yourself and give one to the interviewee.

The Detroit Historical Society accepts the interviews in the following formats:

- DVD-R
- CD-R
- Flash Drive
- File sharing service (i.e. Dropbox, Google Drive)

The Detroit Historical Society requires that the original, signed copies of the release form be included with all submissions. Scanned copies, facsimiles or other non-original formats will not be accepted.

To submit your interviews, enclose the cover letter and necessary forms and use one of the following submission options:

- Option 1 Mail the materials to: Detroit Historical Society ATTN: D67 Oral History Project 5401 Woodward Avenue Detroit, MI 48202
- Option 2 Hand-deliver: Stop by the address above Monday-Friday between 9:00am and 5:00pm, or on Saturday or Sunday from 10:00am to 5:00pm.

Option 3 -File Share: Email the file sharing service link to <u>Detroit1967@detroithistorical.org</u>. Mail the original copies of the informed consent and release forms to the address listed under Option 1.

REVIEW PROCESS

Once your materials are received, they will go through a process that may take up to two months.

- 1. **Review:** Detroit Historical Society staff will review your materials to ensure they are complete. Incomplete submissions will not be included in the project and may be returned to the contributor.
- 2. Acknowledgement: Society staff will acknowledge receipt of your materials via email or letter within four weeks.
- 3. **Cataloging:** Society staff will enter details about the interview into an internal collections database, which is used for research purposes.
- 4. **Archiving:** Society staff will carefully label, preserve and store the interview in a temperatureand moisture-controlled environment to ensure they will not degrade.

5. Addition to the Online Digital Archive: Society staff will create an online record for the interview, accessible through an online digital archive at <u>detroit1967.org</u>. The online record also will include the contributor's name. (*NOTE: The digital archive will launch in late summer 2015.*)

INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

Before you head out for your interview, use this checklist to ensure you have all the equipment and materials you need.

- □ Recording equipment
- □ Memory cards (if needed)
- □ Extra batteries/charger
- □ Microphone
- □ Table stand for microphone (if needed)
- □ Two copies of interview questions (one for you; one for interviewee)
- □ Two copies of the Informed Consent Form (one for the interviewee to sign and return to you; one for the interviewee to keep)
- Two copies of the Interviewee Release Form (one for the interviewee to sign and return to you; one for the interviewee to keep)
- □ A notebook or notepad (for taking notes, as needed)
- D Pens (not pencils) for signing forms
- □ Contact information for interviewee (in case you get lost, run late, etc.)
- □ Address of interview location

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Each interview session will be unique. The following is an outline (not a script) to help guide you through the conversation. Tailor the questions as you and the interviewee see fit.

- Introduction
 - Begin the recording by stating the interviewers name and organizational affiliation (if any), the interviewee's full name, the date and the general location in which the interview is being conducted.
 - Please do not disclose private information such as home addresses or phone numbers.

• Biographical Details

- Where and when were you born?
- Who are/were your parents and what are/were their occupations?
- Who are/were your siblings? Names and genders?
- Where did you live in July 1967? (street address or general intersection)?
- What were you doing in 1967 (working, a student, etc.)? What was your family doing that year?
- Other: _____
- o Other:

• Detroit Details

- What do you remember about Detroit in the mid-1960s?
- What was your community/neighborhood like?
- Where did your family shop?
- What did you do for entertainment?
- How would you describe the relationship between the people in your community/neighborhood and city government? The police?
- o Other: _____
- o Other:

• July 1967 Uprising Questions

- How did you first hear about the unrest that became the riots/rebellion/uprising?
- How did you and/or your family react during the event?
- Some people describe the event as a "riot," while others refer to it as a "rebellion" or "uprising." What term do you think best describes the unrest of July 1967?

- Do you have any particular moments or memories you would like to share?
- Other: _____
- o Other: _____

Reflections

- \circ $\;$ How did your experiences during the unrest affect your life?
- \circ What was the impact of the unrest of July 1967 on you, your family?
- What was the impact of the unrest of July 1967 on your neighborhood, the city?
- What message would you like to leave for future generations about your memories of Detroit before, during and after the unrest of July 1967?
- Is there anything you feel like we haven't discussed, or should be added to this interview? If so, what?
- o Other: _____
- o Other: _____



INTERVIEWEE INFORMED CONSENT FORM

The purpose of this project is to learn about the events of July 1967 from the many perspectives of the people who lived through them. Interviews are a significant part of this project. You were asked to be a part of this project because you are a person (or the child of a person) who was living in the Metro Detroit area in 1967.

Interview information

If you participate in this project:

- Your interview will last approximately 45 minutes to one hour.
- You will be asked questions about your background, your education, your career, your memories about Detroit and your thoughts about the events of July 1967.
- Your interview will be audio or video recorded. A transcript will be made from the tape. You will be given a copy of the audio or video file and the transcript once it is complete.
- You will be asked to be photographed. You may choose not to be photographed.

Your risks and benefits

If you participate in this project:

- You may find that people disagree with some of your opinions or your interpretations of historical events and that this disagreement could be strong. This could include family members or members of the general public.
- You may have the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping to preserve the history of Detroit, particularly before, during and after the unrest of July 1967. You may also gain some public recognition for your participation in this project.

Your rights

- Your participation in this project is voluntary.
- You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer.

- You may stop your participation at any time during the interview.
- If you do not want to be identified by name, we will assign you a number and you will not be asked specific questions about the identification of your parents or relatives.
- Your contact information such as address and telephone will not be disclosed to the public.

Deposit of materials

You will agree to have the original audio and/or video and final edited transcript stored in the collection of the Detroit Historical Society. You will have to sign a release form before this can be done. The transcript will be available for use by researchers, teachers and students, or other members of the public. Their results may be displayed publicly or published. The materials may also be used for public display or publication by the Detroit Historical Society. Participants may contact the Society's Chief Curatorial Officer, Tobi Voigt with pertinent questions about the project, at 313-833-0481 or tobiv@detroithistorical.org.

Yes_____ No____ I consent to the use of my name.

Yes_____ No____ I consent to be photographed.

Yes____ No____ I consent to the deposit of the audio and/or video and the full transcript in the collection of the Detroit Historical Society and I understand that I will have to sign their Release Form.

I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form and I understand it. I have been encouraged to ask questions and I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to participate in this project and I have indicated above my choices for participation or not in the certain activities of this project. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this consent form.

Name: (Please print)	
Telephone:	
Address:	
Signature:	Date:



INTERVIEWEE RELEASE FORM

I, ______, hereby convey to the Detroit Historical Society (hereafter referred to as "the Society"), legal title and assign all literary property rights, including copyright, which I may have in an interview recorded with me on ______ (date), in ______ (city/state) as part of its oral history project.

The audio or video recording and a full transcript will be housed in the Society as part of its collection, to be available for research, and to be administered in accordance with the Society's policies. The Society shall also have the right to use, reproduce, exhibit or publish this material. It is understood that this agreement covers original recordings and any transcript or other reproduction of the originals made by the Society.

This agreement does not preclude any use I may want to make of the information in the recording itself.

ACCEPTED AND AGREED:

Signature:	Date:
Printed Name:	
Address:	
Telephone:	Email:
Name of Interviewer	
Relationship to Interviewer	



INTERVIEWER RELEASE FORM

I,	, hereby convey to the Detroit Historical Society (hereafter
referred to as "the Society"), legal titl	e and assign all literary property rights, including copyright,
which I may have in an interview I co	nducted with
(interviewee) on	(date), in
(city/state) as part of its oral history p	project.

The audio or video recording and a full transcript will be housed in the Society as part of its collection, to be available for research, and to be administered in accordance with the Society's policies. The Society shall also have the right to use, reproduce, exhibit or publish this material. It is understood that this agreement covers original recordings and any transcript or other reproduction of the originals made by the Society.

This agreement does not preclude any use I may want to make of the information in the recording itself.

ACCEPTED AND AGREED:

Signature:	Date:	
Printed Name:		
Signature of Parent/Guardian (if interviewer is a mino):	
Printed Name of Parent/Guardian:	Date):
Address:		
Telephone:	Email:	
Name of Interviewee		
Relationship to Interviewee		

SUBMISSION COVER LETTER

Date:	
Contributor's Name:	
Organization (if applicable):	
Address:	
Phone:	
Email:	

Dear Detroit Historical Society Staff:

Enclosed, please find a total of	Detroit 1967 Oral Hist	ory Project interviews for th	е
following interviewees:			

Materials Enclosed

I have enclosed the following materials with this cover letter:

- □ Photograph of the interviewee(s)
- □ Original, unedited interview recording(s)
- □ Transcript of the interview recording(s)
- □ Completed audio/video recording log(s)
- □ Completed informed consent form(s)
- □ Completed interviewee release form(s)
- □ Completed interviewer release form(s)

Signed,

Signature

Date

Printed name

AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDING LOG

Name of Contribut	or/Interviewer			
Address				
City		State	ZIP _	
Telephone ()	E	mail	
Organization affilia	tion (if any)			
Name of Interview	ee			
Recording format	(please check)			
VIDEO type: DVD-R Flash Drive File Sharing		DIO type: CD-R or DV Flash Drive File Sharing	D-R	L FILE type WAV MPEG4/H.264 DNxHD or DV
Estimated length of recording (in minutes) Date of recording				
Location of recording (City, State)				
Please log the topics discussed in the interview in sequence. You may estimate the minute marks. Example below:				
Minute Mark 1:00 2:30 4:50 10:00 22:40 26:00	Topics introduction grew up on Pingre was a teenager in experience during impact of the eve message for futur	1967 the uprising nt on neighborhoo	d/city	

Minute Mark Topics

(add additional sheets as needed)

TRANSCRIPTION TEMPLATE

Detroit 1967 Oral History Project

Detroit, MI

[Interviewee Name]

Interviewed by

[Interviewer NAME]

[DATE]

[City, State]

Brief Biography:	[SAMPLE:] Alee M. Darwish was born May 20, 1955 and grew up in Highland Park, MI where he lived during the 1967 disturbance. Darwish worked for the Ford Motor Company for thirty-two years. Darwish identifies as Muslim and Arab American. He currently lives in Dearborn, MI.	
Interviewer:	[SAMPLE:] Mohammad Beydoun is an undergraduate student at Wayne State University	
Description:	[Interviewee name] Interview	
Access:	No restrictions.	
Abstract:	[SAMPLE:] In this interview, Darwish discusses growing up in a multi-ethnic community in Highland Park and the causes and effects of the 1967 disturbance, including the closing of the Highland Park Ford Plant and race relations. He also discusses changes in the Muslim and Arab-American community in Detroit since the 1960s.	
Cite As:	[Interviewee Name] oral history interview, Detroit 1967 Oral History Project, Detroit Historical Museum.	
Subjects:	[SAMPLES:] <u>82nd Airborne Division—US Army</u> <u>1967 riot—Detroit—Michigan</u> Arab American community—Detroit—Michigan	
Added Author:	[Interviewee last, first] interviewee.	
Original Format:	[SAMPLE] M4A on iPhone; converted to WAV; 1hr17min	
Transcription:	[YOUR NAME]	
Transcript of interview conducted [DATE] with [INTERVIEWEE] in [CITY, STATE]		

[Start of Track 1] [INITIALS OF INTERVIWEE:] [INTIALS OF INTERVIEWER:] [REPEAT INITIALS EACH TIME EACH PERSON SPEAKS] [TIME STAMP END OF INTERVIEW ##:##] [End of Track 1]