

Latino Oral History Project*

Migration Oral History

Oral histories are created when one person interviews another person about a specific time period in the interviewee's life or a specific topic they can recall. The interviewer takes the interviewee's responses and creates a text of the interviewee's words told through the point of view of the interviewee. This is not an exact transcript of what the interviewee says. The interviewer must edit the transcript – moving parts around, taking parts out, and even adding words here and there (with the interviewee's permission). The final piece of writing should capture the voice and spirit of the interviewee.

Project Objectives

- Conduct interviews to gather first-hand stories about Latino migrant experiences in the U.S.
- Gather first-hand stories about immigrant experiences
- Determine to what extent Latino lives reflect representations presented in the media.

Requirements

1. Text must be at least 7 pages in length, excluding appendices and transcripts (double space, use Times Roman font, 12 pt, with standard margins)
2. You must turn in your interview transcript along with final Oral History Project
3. Your introduction should include necessary background for understanding the person's story. This may include knowledge of the country of origin, historical background, etc.
4. In an appendix to your oral history (which does not count as part of the seven pages), please discuss what you've learned through the interview about Latino migrant experiences, the migration process, and other things related to our coursework.
5. You must obtain either oral or written consent for the interview and turn in consent form with your project.

Procedure

You will be conducting oral histories with first generation Latino migrants. The first step is to select an interviewee. Your interviewee can be a family member, a Professor, a friend, a new acquaintance, or a person you contact specifically for this purpose.

You will need to find an approach a potential interviewee. When you have a person consent to an interview (see form below), you should write a brief paragraph about the individual, for example: name, where he or she is from, how long she or he has been in

the United States, why the person came here, etc.

You may ask your interviewee if they would like to have their name used or would rather remain anonymous. If they wish to remain anonymous, you are to use a pseudonym rather than their real name in creating their oral history.

You will need to develop a set of open-ended questions for your interview. A sample of interview questions is provided below.

Do some background research on your interviewee's homeland and other background information relevant to their stories.

If possible, record the interview; take notes on interviewee's mannerisms, etc. This information will help you present a vivid narrative and representation of your interviewee. After your interview, you will have to transcribe the interview into a Q/A format, word for word. You will work from this transcription to create a final oral history narrative. (See brief samples that follow).

*** Adapted from www.pbs.org/newamericans**

Related Resources

Library of Congress

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammen/ndlpedu/lessons/oralhist/ohguide.html>

Latinos & WWII Oral History Project

<http://utopia.utexas.edu/explore/latino/narratives>

Meet the New Americans

<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/newamericans.html>

Oral History Links

http://www.k12.hi.us/~keaukaha/oral_hist.proj/links.html

Sources of Oral History

<http://www.doingoralhistory.org/sources/>

The Immigrant Experience

<http://www.sonic.net/~kjuarez/immigration/oralhist.html>

Oral History Unit Overview

http://www.youthsource.ab.ca/teacher_resources/oral_overview.html

America: The Great Melting Pot

http://www.thinkquest.org/library/site_sum.html?tname=20619&url=20619/index.html

Oral History, Film & Video

<http://www.chicagohs.org/collections/film.html>

Gathering the Forgotten Voices: An Approach to Oral History

<http://www.tulane.edu/~so-inst/oralhistory.html>

The Institute for Oral History at Baylor University

http://www3.baylor.edu/Oral_History/

Consent Form:

Your interviewee must agree to your interview either verbally or by signing the following form. If they consent verbally, it must be recorded onto your tape recorder. Otherwise use the following consent form.

I, NAME OF INTERVIEWEE give my permission to YOUR NAME to use this interview, or part of it, for research and publication.

Signed_____

Date_____

Interviewer_____

Guiding Questions for Oral History Interview

- What country are you originally from?
- Why did you leave this country?
- When did you leave? How old were at that time?
- * What did you do in your country before you moved here?
- What were the conditions in the country when you left?
- How did you prepare for your trip here?
- Who came with you when you emigrated? Who did you leave behind? What did you leave behind?

- How did you get here? Did you stay somewhere else before arriving here?
- Why did you choose the United States? Why not some other country?
- Who decided you would come here? Did you want to leave?
- Where did you first settle when you came to this country?
- * Did you know English when you came here? What other languages did you speak?
- * How did others in your home country treat you when they knew you were leaving?
- What changes in lifestyle did you make when you came here?
- What was your first impression of the United States? Has this initial impression changed over time?

- What are some of the differences/similarities you've noticed in the cultures here and in your home country?

- What were your hopes for yourself (and/or your family) when you came here? Have you realized these hopes?

- How were you treated when you first arrived in the United States? How are you treated now?

- Were your expectations of America met? Was your idea of America the same as the reality?

Oral History: Q&A Sample and Passage

Q: So you really weren't that excited to be coming here?

A: Well, no, not really. I mean, think about it. Would you be? I mean, you live in one place your whole life and then suddenly your parents tell you, "Look, we've decided it's best for all of us to move to America. Your father has a better job and we'll be much happier there."

Q: Why didn't you want to come here?

A: Well, all of my friends were in Taipei. They were all that mattered to me. I mean you spend most of your younger years in school, so it only makes sense that you'd miss your friends when you have to move away so far. Uh, I guess I might've been somewhat selfish. I mean my father did get a better job when he got here, but for the rest of us in my family it really was difficult. I think I was 12 at the time . . . yeah, 12. I started in middle school here, yeah, and it was a pretty awful experience. It's not like middle school is normally a great time in your life anyway, is it? But coming here at that time and not knowing English all that well, well that certainly didn't make it any easier for me. I was lonely here.

Q: Why were you lonely?

A. Uh, it took me a long time to get to know people. In my school I really didn't know anyone else who was from Taiwan. Most everyone else had either grown up here or they were from Mexico, yeah mostly they spoke Spanish or English. But no one spoke Cantonese – that was the only language I knew then.

Interview Transformed into an Oral History

No, I wasn't all that excited to be coming here. I mean, think about it. Would you be? I mean, you live in one place your whole life and then suddenly your parents tell you, "Look, we've decided it's best for all of us to move to America. Your father has a better job and we'll be much happier there." At that time, all of my friends were in Taipei. They were all that mattered to me. You spend most of your younger years in school, so it only makes sense that you'd miss your friends when you have to move away so far. I guess I might've been somewhat selfish. My father did get a better job when he got here, but for the rest of us in my family it really was difficult.

I think I was 12 at the time . . . yeah, 12. I started in middle school here and it was a pretty awful experience. It's not like middle school is normally a great time in your life anyway, is it? But coming here at that time and not knowing English all that well certainly didn't make it any easier for me. I was lonely here. It took me a long time to get to know people. In my school I really didn't know anyone else who was from Taiwan. Most everyone else had either grown up here or they were from Mexico, and mostly they spoke Spanish or English. But no one spoke Cantonese – that was the only language I knew then.