

# Oral Histories of Tompkins County

## *Archival Finding Aid*

*The History Center in Tompkins County*  
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### **Fall 2018 - Global Engagements: Living & Working in a Diverse World - Oral History Project**

College students conducted oral history interviews with local residents about their experiences in Tompkins County for the course “Cornell Anthropology 1900 – Global Engagements: Living & Working in a Diverse World.” Project supervised by Professor Sofia Villenas in collaboration with History Center staff Julia Taylor.

#### *Interviews with:*

##### **Millicent Clarke-Maynard\* (38 minutes)**

Millicent Clarke-Maynard discusses coming to Ithaca after graduate school in 1979 to teach in the Ithaca City School District at the encouragement of Beverly J. Martin, who was the district’s Affirmative Action Intercultural Relations Officer at the time. She reflects on the relationships she has built in Ithaca, especially in Club Essence and the Southside neighborhood; her experiences as a teacher; and her involvement in the Ithaca community, through many different activities and facets of community service.

*Trigger warning: child abuse*

- *Recorded 10/16/2018*
- *Audio File: OHTC\_2018-10-16\_Clarke-Maynard-Millicent*
- *Transcript File: OHTC\_2018-10-16\_Clarke-Maynard-Millicent\_Transcript*

##### **Barry Derfel\* (45 minutes)**

Barry Derfel discusses his background in New Jersey, degrees in teaching and school administration, and the importance of equity and anti-racist work in his life and career. He also speaks on the importance of understanding oppressive institutions and intersectionality and empowering communities through education.

*Trigger warning(s): descriptions of anti-Black racism*

- *Recorded 10/18/2018*
- *Audio: OHTC\_2018-10-18\_Derfel\_Barry*
- *Transcript File: OHTC\_2018-10-18\_Derfel-Barry\_Transcript*

##### **Kirby Edmonds\* (44 minutes)**

Kirby Edmonds discusses what he believes are the two most important issues facing us today, global climate change and income inequality, which threaten survival and peace in interrelated ways. He also speaks to his views on the institutions that uphold conflict and violence and the role of empathy in addressing these issues. Relating these ideas to his work, Kirby Edmonds describes his projects, including the Dorothy Cotton Institute, the Building Bridges Initiative, and Cradle to Career.

*Trigger warning: descriptions of state sanctioned violence*

- *Recorded 10/16/2018*
- *Audio File: OHTC\_2018-10-16\_Edmonds-Kirby*
- *Transcript File: OHTC\_2018-10-16\_Edmonds-Kirby\_Transcript*

**Sachem Sam George (Cayuga Nation, Bear Clan)\* (39 minutes)**

Sachem Sam George discusses growing up on Seneca territory, becoming aware of his connection to the Cayuga people, and the process of taking on a role of leadership within the Cayuga community. He reflects on the struggles that the Cayuga people have recently faced, his experience learning the Cayuga language, and his hopes for cooperation between the Cayuga Nation and other communities groups in the region.

*Trigger warning(s): modern colonial trauma, Indigenous erasure, drug and alcohol addiction*

- *Recorded 10/23/2018*
- *Per request of the interviewee, this oral history is only available for listening in person at our Research Library.*

**June Morse (51 minutes)\***

June Morse discusses her youth in England during WWII, career teaching in England, Germany, and Syracuse, and moving to New York with her husband to settle in Ithaca. She also discusses her impressions of class differences in England and the United States, Ithaca's development as a city, and Cornell's contribution to Ithaca culture.

*Trigger warning(s): war, description of bombs falling*

- *Recorded 10/18/2018*
- *Audio File: OHTC\_2018-10-18\_Morse-June*
- *Transcript File: OHTC\_2018-10-18\_Morse-June\_Transcript*

**John Perko (60 minutes)**

- *Recorded 10/16/2018*
- *Audio File: OHTC\_2018-10-16\_Perko-John*

**Poppy Singer\* (41 minutes)**

(10/18/2018) Poppy Singer discusses her life experiences, including living in Israel with her former husband at age 21, homeschooling her children, and working in art and food production throughout her life. She also discusses her

perception of Ithaca, particularly the changes that have been made to the downtown area and the malls. Finally, she speaks about her interest in alternative education and environmentalism.

- *Recorded 10/18/2018*
- *Audio File: OHTC\_2018-10-18\_Singer-Poppy*
- *Transcript File: OHTC\_2018-10-18\_Singer-Poppy\_Transcript*

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(11/8/2018) Poppy Singer reflects on her experience attending East Hill School, which was a free (alternative) elementary school between 1969 and 1977, and the positive memories it left her with. After high school, she worked as a graphic designer and helped organize Ithaca's first Take Back the Night march, a protest against violence against women, before spontaneously moving to Israel, where she lived briefly with her former husband.

*Trigger warning(s): sexual harassment, violence against women*

- *Recorded 11/8/2018*
- *Audio File: Not held in OHTC records.*

#### **John Wertis\* (41 minutes)**

After graduating from Cornell University with degrees in English and Science Education, John Wertis worked as an assistant archivist at Cornell, science teacher, school principal, cemetery superintendent, and Historian for the Town of Ulysses. He discusses his experience in Tompkins County, having lived in Ithaca, Trumansburg, Ulysses, Newfield, and Enfield at different times in his life, and his family, including his four children and partner.

- *Recorded 10/18/2018*
- *Audio File: OHTC\_2018-10-18\_Wertis-John*
- *Transcript File: OHTC\_2018-10-18\_Wertis-John\_Transcript*

#### **Karen Yearwood\* (37 minutes)**

Karen Yearwood discusses the mission of the Village at Ithaca and her work in the organization, from volunteering after moving to Ithaca in 2005 to becoming the Executive Director in 2014. She discusses the tactics the Village uses to help students succeed and the limitations on their work and the advancement of equity in the Ithaca City School District.

- *Recorded 10/18/2018*
- *Audio File: OHTC\_2018-10-18\_Yearwood-Karen*
- *Transcript File: OHTC\_2018-10-18\_Yearwood-Karen\_Transcript*

*CITATION FOR THE COLLECTION*

“Global Engagements: Living & Working in a Diverse World” Oral History Project, 10 oral histories recorded in 2018 by undergraduate students of the Cornell University Anthropology Department, The History Center in Tompkins County. Oral Histories of Tompkins County Audio Archives, Ithaca NY, 2021.

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