

Oral Histories of Tompkins County

Archival Finding Aid

The History Center in Tompkins County
110 North Tioga St
Ithaca NY 14850
607-273-8284
www.thehistorycenter.net
archives@thehistorycenter.net

2019 - Local Sisters of Change Oral History Project

The *Local Sisters of Change* oral history project includes ten interviews recorded in 2019. This project was organized as a class project for Cornell University's Anthropology 1900 'Global Engagements: Living & Working in a Diverse World' course taught by Sofia Villenas. The recording project was developed in collaboration with the Dorothy Cotton Institute and The History Center in Tompkins County. Interviews were conducted by undergraduate students from the course and explore nine women's work in community organizing efforts, local non-profits, and racial and social justice in Tompkins County.

The project was supervised by professor Sofia Villenas (Cornell University), Kirby Edmonds and Laura Branca (Dorothy Cotton Institute), and Julia Taylor (The History Center in Tompkins County). The interviews were accessioned into The History Center's Oral Histories of Tompkins County Collection in 2019, transcripts and listing notes were completed between 2020-2023.

Trigger Warning(s): white supremacy, anti-Black sentiment, domestic abuse, death, gender-erasure.

Interviews with:

Nancy Bereano - 2019 (interviewer Hayden Stokeley) (55 minutes)

Nancy Bereano talks about her work as a welfare rights organizer and her experience fighting for LGBTQ anti-discrimination legislation to be passed in Ithaca and Tompkins County in the 1990s. She also speaks about her small business, Firebrand Books, a nationally acclaimed lesbian and feminist publishing company headquartered in Ithaca from 1984-1994.

- *Recorded 10/28/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Hayden Stokeley*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-10-28_Bereano-Nancy (Interviewer - Hayden Stokeley)*
 - *Digital Format:*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-10-28_Bereano-Nancy_Transcript*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 Local Sisters of Change project.*

Nancy Bereano - 2020 (Interviewer Sofia Villenas) (01:02:21)

Nancy Bereano recounts her experience participating in anti-war activity during the 1960s and becoming a feminist. She also discusses her relationships with

writers during the fifteen years Firebrand Books existed and her later advocacy in the City of Ithaca.

Trigger warning: gender-erasure.

- *Recorded 3/11/2020*
- *Name of Interviewer: Sofia Villenas*
- *Audio: OHTC_2020-3-11_Bereano-Nancy*
 - *Digital Format:*
- *Transcript: OHTC_2020-3-11_Bereano-Nancy_Transcript (Interviewer Sofia Villenas)*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 Local Sisters of Change project.*

Audrey Cooper (00:48:23)

Audrey Cooper speaks about her work in the community since moving to Ithaca in 1967 at the age of seventeen. Having worked with the Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC), the Southside Community Center, and the Multicultural Resource Center, she has organized events serving marginalized members of the community, including the West End Breakfast Club, GIAC's annual M.L.K. Jr. commemorative breakfast, and Sister Friends.

Trigger warnings: anti-Black sentiment, domestic abuse, death.

- *Recorded 10/29/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer:*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-10-29_Cooper-Audrey*
 - *Digital Format:*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-10-29_Cooper-Audrey_Transcript*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 Local Sisters of Change project.*

Candace Edwards (00:40:47)

Candace Edwards, creator of Qinfock, an Ithaca-based festival that celebrates art made by the QTPOC (Queer and Trans People of Color) community, reflects on her childhood, time in college, and organization of the Qinfock Festival. She speaks about her work with the People's Hurricane Relief Fund in New Orleans during college and her future hopes for Qinfock.

- *Recorded 10/31/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer:*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-10-31_Edwards-Candace*
 - *Digital Format:*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-10-31_Edwards-Candace_Transcript*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 Local Sisters of Change project.*

Marcia Fort Baum (00:47:41)

Marcia Fort Baum reflects on the experiences that have informed her work in the community empowering young people with the Ithaca Youth Bureau and the Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC). She emphasizes the importance of

encouraging others and pointing out their strengths, which put her on the path of serving the community as a long-time leader of GIAC.

Trigger warning: anti-Black sentiment.

- *Recorded 10/22/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer:*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-10-22_Fort-Baum-Marcia*
 - *Digital Format:*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-10-22_Fort-Baum-Marcia_Transcript*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 Local Sisters of Change project.*

Karen Friedeborn (00:50:26)

Karen Friedeborn discusses her work in community organizing since coming to Ithaca in the 1980s. She has worked to address the inequities in the local school district and Tompkins County community as a whole as an Ithaca Youth Bureau employee; working primarily with youth in programs at Beverly J. Martin Elementary School.

- *Recorded 10/24/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer:*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-10-24_Friedeborn-Karen*
 - *Digital Format:*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-10-24_Friedeborn-Karen_Transcript*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 Local Sisters of Change project.*

Leslyn McBean-Clairborne (00:45:56)

Leslyn McBean-Clairborne discusses how her passion for teaching and equity took her from working in the Ithaca City School District to working as a case worker and trainer to working with the Southside Community Center and Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC). She also speaks to her personal philosophy of equity and justice.

Trigger warning(s): experiences of anti-Black racism, discussion of white supremacy in Ithaca City Schools, discussion of homelessness,

- *Recorded 10/24/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer:*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-10-24_McBean-Clairborne-Leslyn*
 - *Digital Format:*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-10-24_McBean-Clairborne-Leslyn_Transcript*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 Local Sisters of Change project.*

Dr. Nia Nunn (00:47:47)

Dr. Nia Nunn, the President of the Board of Directors for Southside Community Center, speaks to the importance of Black spaces in her childhood, Southside in particular. She reflects on her foundation in Ithaca, her work in the Ithaca community surrounding education and the Black community, and the people who inspire her.

- *Recorded 10/30/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer:*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-10-31_Nunn-Nia*
 - *Digital Format:*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-10-30_Nunn-Nia_Transcript*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 Local Sisters of Change project.*

Patricia Rodriguez (00:34:30)

Patricia Rodriguez, an Associate Professor of Political Science, discusses her upbringing in Chile and Brazil and its influence on her interests and areas of study, which focus on social movements and political systems in Latin America. She reports on her research on *campesinos* in Colombia and her work with the Tompkins County Immigrant Rights Coalition.

- *Recorded 10/24/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer:*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-10-24_Rodriguez-Patricia*
 - *Digital Format:*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-10-24_Rodriguez-Patricia_Transcript*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 Local Sisters of Change project.*

Amy Somchanhmavong (00:52:51)

Amy Somchanhmavong speaks on the intersection of creating a space for Asian American studies in academia and connecting this pursuit to community engagement. She reflects on leading the push for the establishment of the Asian American Studies program in Binghamton University and, upon moving to Ithaca, becoming involved with various community-based organizations in order to apply this work.

Trigger Warning(s): experiences of anti-Asian racism,

- *Recorded 10/24/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer:*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-10-24_Somchanhmavong-Amy*
 - *Digital Format:*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-10-24_Somchanhmavong-Amy_Transcript*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 Local Sisters of Change project.*

CITATION FOR THE PROJECT

“Local Sisters of Change” Oral History Project, 10 oral histories recorded between 2019-2020 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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