



A REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP



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## History on Location: Uncovering Civil Rights History in our Communities Mapping and Questioning

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### Mapping Invisible Histories

Keeping in mind the idea that hidden civil rights histories are all around us, as you tour Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, use the 8 ½" X 11" map in your packet to add landmarks connected to the people who have lived here.

- 1) How might you "re-map" Fort Vancouver National Historic site?
- 2) How would you connect discussion of this site to the experiences of various groups of people?
- 3) How does placing people into a map change your understanding of place?

### Oral History: Uncovering the Lived Experience

The use of oral history in the classroom dramatically changes how history is taught. Oral history personalizes and enriches our historical understanding, putting "real faces on the past." Hearing about lived experience takes us beyond the classroom, and with other historical materials, allows us to put those faces in historic context. As you listen to Greg Shine and Dr. Millner, use the note cards in your packet to develop 2 or more interview questions for the afternoon interview exercise. Think about ways to personalize history through your questions.

#### **Use these simple interview tips to develop your questions:**

- Ask open-ended questions that will elicit the most descriptive responses, to find out what happened, how, and why. Use words like "describe," "explain," "illustrate," "tell me why," and "discuss."
- Be sure to invite *personal* exploration, based on broad historical information. As you watch the interview exercise, note that further detail typically stems from an open-ended approach.

### Thought Questions: A Regional Overview of African American History

- 1) What forces brought African Americans to the West?
- 2) How did Oregon institutionalize racial exclusion in its constitution?
- 3) How did the experiences of African Americans in various regional communities differ?
- 4) How were they similar?
- 5) What structural issues contributed to those similarities and differences?

### Thought Questions: Uncovering Institutional Racism

- 1) How do segregation and racial disparities persist after the Civil Rights era?
- 2) How does Portland's history with segregation and environmental racism compare to the national history?

*Oral History is both a “window” and a “mirror.” Using oral history allows students to make “textbooks of their lives,” providing reflections of themselves and others.” Margaret Smith Crocco*

### **Defining Oral History**

Oral History interviews are typically well-researched, connect personal experience with past events and ways of life, and are preserved for the future. Oral Histories are not:

- Random
- Recorded speeches
- Personal diaries on tape
- Sound recordings that lack the dialogue between interviewer and narrator
- **Oral History IS dynamic, creative, and systematic**

### **There are many approaches to oral interviews:**

- Topical (can incorporate the following)
- Autobiographical
- Genealogical/family history
- Skills or occupation
- Social history
- Site location
- Folklore

### **Benefits of Using Oral History in the Classroom:**

- Broadens multicultural aspects of history
- Expands and contracts historical understanding. Most social history focuses on the group. Oral history places the individual in historical context
- Acts as an antidote to the textbook
- Students act as historians, using critical thinking skills and learning to corroborate sources
- An active learning process, compatible with many different learning styles
- Extends the range of learning modalities beyond reading to include oral and interactive skills
- Potentially brings families and communities together within the classroom

Ideally, students conduct research and record interviews in audio or visual form. The interviews are then transcribed and maintained in an archive for use by future researchers. Knowing that classroom situations vary, ask yourself:

- 1) How might I use oral history to augment use of the textbook?
- 2) What additional primary and secondary sources can I use with oral history to personalize the past?
- 3) How can I do this within the boundaries of the mandated curricula?
- 4) In what ways might my students document this oral testimony?

### **Oral Interview Tips**

- **LISTEN** carefully.
- **Use common sense and curiosity to follow up when the narrator has subsided by:**
  - truly listening (use prepared questions, but asking new ones too)
  - asking for detail, examples, illustrations
  - probing: Ask why and how
  - keeping the basic six in mind: who, what, when, where, why, how
  - asking one question at a time and/or statement/question format
  - inviting personal exploration
  - allowing digression, but pulling back when needed
  - staying quiet and not interrupting