

A Guide to the Immigrant Narratives Project Oral Histories, 2020-2022 SdArch.0045

Immigrant narratives project oral histories
2020-2022



Title Statement

A Guide to the Immigrant Narratives Project Oral Histories, 2020-2022 SdArch.0045

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

SdArch.0045

Unit ID

/repositories/4/resources/666

Unit Date

2020-2022

Language

English

Abstract

The Immigrant Narratives Project Oral Histories, 2020-2022 comprises twelve sound recordings and transcripts of oral history interviews with immigrants residing in Harrisonburg, Virginia. James Madison University students in Dr. Allison Fagan's class, ENG 360: Immigrant Narratives, conducted and transcribed the interviews.

source

Fagan, Allison E., 1982-

Extent

3.89 Gigabytes 36 digital files

Repository

James Madison University Libraries Special Collections

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collection open to research. Agreements with the interviewees govern access to Oral Histories. Interviewees have chosen pseudonyms in two of the interviews. Due to the disclosure of sensitive information, the repository has restricted one of the twelve interviews.

Use Restrictions

The copyright interests in this collection have not been transferred to the James Madison University Special Collections Library. Contact the Special Collections Library Reference Desk (library-special@jmu.edu) for more information.

Processing Information

At the time of accession, interviews with Ana Arias and Zee Alkhater existed across multiple MPEG 1 Layer 3 (.mp3) audio files. Special Collections staff merged the audio files and amended the timecodes in the corresponding transcripts to reflect the appended clips, generating linear PCM (.wav) files of the sound recordings for preservation.

Preferred Citation

[Last name, First name], Oral history interview conducted by [Interviewer's First name Last name], [Month DD, YYYY], Immigrant Narratives Project Oral Histories, 2020-2022, SdArch 0045, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA

Biographical / Historical

In the spring of 2020, students in Dr. Allison Fagan's course, ENG 360: Immigrant Narratives, conducted four oral history interviews with immigrants living in Harrisonburg, Virginia. The following spring of 2021, Dr. Fagan's ENG 360 class students conducted five oral history interviews with local immigrants. In spring of 2022, ENG 360 students conducted three oral history interviews. Dr. Fagan selected interview participants, and students attended Institutional Review Board (IRB) training for research involving human subjects. Many of the 2020 and 2021 interviews were conducted virtually amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Students conducted original research, designed treatments and slates of questions, recorded, edited, and transcribed the interviews. Students received informed consent at the time of the interview, and gift agreements were secured upon review and approval of transcripts and recordings by interview participants. The objective of the assignment was to deepen students' understanding of authority and agency in storytelling and amplify the voices of immigrant storytellers. The project culminated in a podcast series entitled "Harrisonburg 360: Real People. Real stories. One Community," accessible at <https://sites.lib.jmu.edu/immigrantharrisonburg/>.

From the Immigrant Harrisonburg website: "Every person deserves a chance to share their story, and we, as a class, are privileged to share these stories with you in hopes of expanding perceptions of what it means to be an immigrant in Harrisonburg."

As of 2019, foreign-born persons comprise 17.1% of the Harrisonburg city population. This collection contains oral history interviews with individuals who emigrated to the United States between 1975 and 2017 and sheds light on the Harrisonburg immigrant experience. Immigrants from Syria, Iraqi Kurdistan, Vietnam, South Korea, Mexico, Brazil, and El Salvador are represented.

Scope and Contents

This collection documents the experience of immigrants residing in Harrisonburg, Virginia. The collection comprises sound recordings and transcripts from twelve oral history interviews conducted in 2020, 2021,

and 2022. Completed by James Madison University students in Dr. Allison Fagan's class, ENG 360: Immigrant Narratives, the oral histories include topics related to the immigrant experience in Harrisonburg, Virginia, such as resettlement, cultural adaptation, xenophobia, and identity. Materials include 36 digital files comprised of audio recordings (.wav and .mp3), and corresponding transcripts (.pdf).

This collection does not include episodes from the "Harrisonburg 360: Real People. Real stories. One Community" podcast series.

Keywords

oral histories (literary works)

Immigrants -- Virginia -- Harrisonburg -- 20th century

Immigrants -- Virginia -- Harrisonburg -- 21st century

Fagan, Allison E., 1982-

Arrangement

This collection is organized into three series. Interviews are arranged alphabetically by last name of interviewee.

- Oral History Interviews, 2020
- Oral History Interviews, 2021
- Oral History Interviews, 2022

Description of Subordinate Components

Oral History Interviews

Unit ID 1

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/25817

Unit Date 2020

Scope and Contents

This series contains four oral history interviews with immigrants in Harrisonburg conducted by James Madison University students in Dr. Allison Fagan's class, ENG 360: Immigrant Narratives, in spring 2020. The repository has restricted one of the interviews due to the disclosure of sensitive information.

Zee Alkhater interviewed by Corinne Martin

Unit ID SdArch45-6

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/25929

Unit Date 2020 March 2

Language English

Creator Alkhater, Zeinab

Creator Martin, Corinne

Creator Carrington, Balser

Creator Liske, Kelsey

Extent 519 Megabytes1 digital file(.wav)

Extent 29 Megabytes1 digital file(.mp3)

Extent 0:31:28 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)

Scope and Contents

Records the reminiscences of Zee Alkhater, an immigrant from Iraq who fled to Syria, emigrating nine years later, on July 29, 2012, from Syria to Modesto, California. Alkhater relocated to Woodbridge, Virginia, and eventually settled with her two children in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Discusses her experience living in Harrisonburg, xenophobia, Bachelor's degree, and foreign education evaluation in the United States. Describes support for immigrants in Harrisonburg, resilience, culture, intimate community relations in Syrian culture, and hopes for better cultural representation in Harrisonburg. Alkhater also comments on plans to visit Syria with her children. Topics discussed include cultural adaptation, maintenance of home culture, and the challenge of sustaining one's native language and culture with children. Alkhater discloses her experience with violence in Syria and the birth of her two children amid the Syrian civil war. Alkhater also discusses her work as an animation writer in Syria and her aspirations

to become a novelist. Finally, Alkhater reflects on what has helped her through hardship and the lessons her experience has taught her.

Keywords

Immigrants -- Cultural assimilation -- Virginia -- Harrisonburg

Xenophobia -- Virginia -- Harrisonburg

Syria -- Emigration and immigration

Group identity

Ana Arias interviewed by Arielle Gick

Unit ID SdArch45-7

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/25932

Unit Date 2020 February 2

Language English

Creator Arias, Ana

Creator Gick, Arielle

Creator Myers, Kara

Creator White, Madison

Extent 262 Megabytes1 digital file(.wav)

Extent 12 Megabytes1 digital file(.mp3)

Extent 1:11:33 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)

Scope and Contents

Records an interview with Ana Arias, who emigrated to Santa Barbara, California, from Brazil, to attend college at the age of seventeen. Arias describes daily life with three sons and her work as a trauma therapist and kickboxing instructor. Discusses culture shock, experience at Westmont College, bilingualism, cultural incongruence, and return to Brazil. Describes transfer to Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, her degree in Counseling Psychology, and working as an interpreter for the Migrant Education Program. Discusses the importance of cultural literacy in counseling relationships and the journey to James Madison University, where she earned a Master of Arts degree and Educational Specialist degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. Recounts work as a crisis counselor for Rockingham County Schools, twelve years spent as a trauma therapist at the Collins Center, eventually serving as Associate Director, and the symptoms that led to transitioning away from sexual abuse counseling. Describes her current position as a School Mental Health Counselor at Harrisonburg City Public Schools. Arias also discusses her parents' background, who married in Panama, joined the Peace Corps, and settled in the Amazon rainforest in Manaus, Brazil, where Arias was born. Describes early life in the Amazon, Panama, and Brasília. Topics discussed include transition to American life and experience living in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Finally, Arias discusses time spent living in Panama, when the de facto ruler of Panama Manuel Noriega was in power, the United States invasion of Panama, her intimate experiences with warfare, and the family's return to Brasília, Brazil. Includes reference to the School of the Americas (now known as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation).

Keywords

Brazil -- Emigration and immigration

Immigrants -- Cultural assimilation -- Virginia -- Harrisonburg

Melissa Menjivar interviewed by Michelle Pineda-Hernandez

Unit ID SdArch45-9

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/25938

Unit Date 2020 February 28

Language English

Creator Pineda-Hernandez, Michelle

Creator Stamm, Anoush

Creator White, James

Extent 141 Megabytes1 digital file(.wav)

Extent 8 Megabytes1 digital file(.mp3)

Extent 0:08:33 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)

Scope and Contents

Records an interview with Melissa Menjivar, who is from San Salvador, El Salvador, and who emigrated

with her family to the United States in 2017. Discusses challenges learning English as a foreign language, cultural differences between the United States and El Salvador, and schooling experiences. Discusses attending school in El Salvador until the 12th grade. Comments on academic success in the United States. Includes reference to danger faced in El Salvador.

Keywords

Immigrants -- Cultural assimilation -- Virginia -- Harrisonburg

El Salvador -- Emigration and immigration

Oral History Interviews

Unit ID 2

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/25818

Unit Date 2021

Scope and Contents

This series contains five oral history interviews with immigrants in Harrisonburg conducted by James Madison University students in Dr. Allison Fagan's class, ENG 360: Immigrant Narratives, in spring 2021.

Hiba Ali interviewed by Jordan Zapp

Unit ID SdArch45-1

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/25914

Unit Date 2021 March 12

Language English

Creator Ali, Hiba

Creator Zapp, Jordan

Extent 40.2 Megabytes1 digital file(.mp3)

Extent 0:47:53 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)

Scope and Contents

Records an interview with Hiba Ali, who was born in Paris, France, and moved with her family to Damascus, Syria at the age of four and a half. Relates her immigration to the United States in 2013 with her then-husband. Describes her childhood in the capital of Syria, Damascus, a city with a rich multicultural history, and her numerous travels, including trips to Paris and the United States. Discusses her cultural identity, Muslim background, and growing up in a Christian neighborhood. Comments on the generosity of spirit and openness of the Syrian people. Ali recounts her decision to relocate to the United States to pursue a Master's degree in pharmacology. Describes her decision to relocate from Fairfax to Harrisonburg and separate from her husband. Includes references to domestic violence. Among the topics discussed are community, assimilation, education, childhood, parents' background, experience as an elder child, career aspirations, women's empowerment, motherhood, maintenance of home culture, and immigration. Ali also comments on her experience reconciling the events in the Middle East with her personal memories.

Keywords

Syria -- Emigration and immigration

Group identity

Immigrants -- Cultural assimilation -- Virginia -- Harrisonburg

Salwa Mahdi interviewed by Candy Foster

Unit ID SdArch45-2

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/25917

Unit Date 2021 March 15

Language English

Creator Mahdi, Salwa

Creator Foster, Candy

Extent 57.7 Megabytes1 digital file(.mp3)

Extent 0:40:00 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)

Scope and Contents

Records the reminiscences of Salwa Mahdi, a refugee from Iraqi Kurdistan. Describes fleeing Saddam Hussein's forces in October 1996 at the age of 31 with her brother due to her work with an organization associated with the United States. Details her experience leaving family behind, the journey from Zakho

to Turkey, five months spent in a refugee camp in Guam, seeking asylum in the United States, and her first residence in the United States in Erie, Pennsylvania. Describes her family and their support of women's education. Discusses her degree in business with a focus on statistics from a university in Iraq. Mahdi describes her assimilation into American society and life in Harrisonburg. Topics discussed include women's rights, education, the Covid-19 pandemic, multilingualism, asylum-seeking, and Iraqi Kurdish resettlement. Recounts learning English as a foreign language and fluency in Kurdish and Arabic. Discusses her multiple careers in Harrisonburg as an interpreter, hairstylist, and business owner. Recounts explosion caused by a natural gas leak at Miller Circle in Harrisonburg, Virginia on October 17, 2020, which decimated Naza Salon and Barber Shop. Mahdi also comments on her dream to become a math teacher and discusses steps to achieve that goal.

Keywords

Kurdistan (Iraq) -- Emigration and immigration

Que Hang Pham interviewed by Jasmine Frank

Unit ID SdArch45-3

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/25920

Unit Date 2021 March 15

Language English

Creator Frank, Jasmine

Extent 11.6 Megabytes1 digital file(.mp3)

Extent 0:48:09 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)

Scope and Contents

Records an interview with Que Hang Pham, whose family resettled in the United States following the fall of Saigon (now known as Ho Chi Minh City) to the People's Army of Vietnam and the Viet Cong in April 1975. Hang Pham, who was eight years old, recounts the dangerous evacuation journey by sea from Vietnam to Hong Kong, time spent in refugee camps in Hong Kong and Arkansas, and eventual resettlement in Richmond, Virginia. Topics discussed include second language acquisition, elementary education, parents' graduate education and teaching careers, scholarships awarded at Virginia Commonwealth University, the value of education, upbringing, cultural adaptation, and traditional Vietnamese foodways and lifeways. Describes travels, fluency in Vietnamese, English, and Spanish, a degree in Business Information Systems, and work for IBM and the Department of Transportation. Includes references to the impact of cultural heritage on identity and self-formation.

Keywords

Vietnam -- Emigration and immigration

Group identity

Mikey Reisenberg interviewed by Patrick Mullaney

Unit ID SdArch45-4

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/25923

Unit Date 2021 March 19

Language English

Creator Reisenberg, Michael

Creator Mullaney, Patrick

Extent 77.6 Megabytes1 digital file(.mp3)

Extent 0:53:58 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)

Scope and Contents

Records the reminiscences of Michael Reisenberg, born in Seoul, South Korea, and adopted in 1986 by parents living in Grottoes, Virginia, at two months old. Describes Reisenberg's studies at Blue Ridge Community College and James Madison University, where he earned a degree in History. Discusses culinary arts and experience as a chef and owner of Mashita, a Korean restaurant in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Describes growing up in a family of entrepreneurs, working for various businesses, and the importance of work ethic. Among the topics discussed are culinary arts training and mentorship, cooking techniques, food preparation, childhood food experiences, Korean cuisine, and implicit bias. Reisenberg also discusses the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Mashita, Mashita's community philanthropy efforts, and the challenges to restaurants posed by the Covid-19 pandemic affecting food supply chain shortages.

Keywords

Korea (South) -- Emigration and immigration

Paloma Saucedo interviewed by Olivia Comer**Unit ID** SdArch45-5**Unit ID** /repositories/4/archival_objects/25926**Unit Date** 2021 March 16**Language** English**Creator** Saucedo, Paloma**Creator** Comer, Olivia**Creator** Hennessey, Kevin**Creator** Landrum, Corinne**Extent** 75.5 Megabytes1 digital file(.mp3)**Extent** 0:52:26 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)**Scope and Contents**

Records an interview with Paloma Saucedo, who emigrated to Greenville, Virginia from Saltillo, Mexico, with her then-husband at the age of twenty. Describes childhood, cultural traditions and protocols, and ancestors. Topics discussed include cultural adaptation, collectivist and individualist cultures, and xenophobia. Saucedo recounts the decision to emigrate to the United States and the experience of acclimating to rural Virginia. Discusses the birth of her daughter, the September 11 attacks, attitudes toward immigrants, and returning to Mexico. Describes moving to Waynesboro from Mexico and the birth of her second daughter. Includes references to experience as an undocumented immigrant and permanent resident. Saucedo also comments on her university experience, bilingual education, Blue Ridge Community College education, and administrative work at a hospital. Discusses move to Harrisonburg, political and civic engagement, naturalization, and citizenship. Describes experience as Executive Director of the Valley AIDS Network and innovating the food pantry to serve the community. Describes operating an inclusive childcare center, Arcoiris Day Care, that centers social and environmental justice and anti-racist education. Recounts planning Spanish language public programming, children's services, and collection development for the Waynesboro Public Library. Describes community organizing in Harrisonburg and running for Harrisonburg City Council in 2018. Discusses gender identity, perspectives on early childhood education, teaching English in Mexico, and community.

Keywords

Xenophobia -- Virginia -- Harrisonburg

Mexico -- Emigration and immigration

Oral History Interviews**Unit ID** 3**Unit ID** /repositories/4/archival_objects/28076**Unit Date** 2022**Jaime Cañas interviewed by Charlotte Lawrence-Hovey****Unit ID** SdArch45-10**Unit ID** /repositories/4/archival_objects/28077**Unit Date** 2022 March 12**Language** English**Creator** Cañas, Jaime**Creator** Lawrence-Hovey, Charlotte**Creator** Saunders, Alayna**Extent** 10 Megabytes1 digital file(.mp3)**Extent** 22:00:00 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)**Scope and Contents**

Records an interview with Jaime Cañas, conducted on March 12, 2022, by Charlotte Lawrence-Hovey using Squadcast. Recounts Cañas' early life, emigration from El Salvador at age three, his family life, and family history. Recounts the realities of language barriers and experience serving as an interpreter for his parents. Discusses the value of independence and self-sufficiency. Includes references to immigration status, post-secondary education, and lack of financial aid availability. Cañas also discusses support from friends and comments on his experiences with discrimination.

Heber David Figueroa interviewed by India Williams**Unit ID** SdArch45-11**Unit ID** /repositories/4/archival_objects/28079**Unit Date** 2022 March 11**Language** English**Creator** Figueroa, Heber David**Creator** Williams, India**Creator** Bruno, Sarah**Creator** Beddow, Jessie**Extent** 19 Megabytes1 digital file(.mp3)**Extent** 00:21:08 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)**Scope and Contents**

Records an interview with David Figueroa, conducted on March 11, 2022, by India Williams at Showker Hall, James Madison University. Recounts Figueroa's student life, family origins in Honduras and West Africa, and childhood in Harrisonburg, Chicago, New Jersey, Boston, and New York. Describes parents' emigration from Honduras to the United States. Discusses family life, notions of home, educational experiences, and language barriers. Includes references to racial discrimination. Figueroa also comments on his interest in rockets and spacecraft. Discusses career decisions. Recounts challenges as a college student.

Izabella Pezza interviewed by Emily Graff**Unit ID** SdArch45-12**Unit ID** /repositories/4/archival_objects/28558**Unit Date** 2022 March 11**Language** English**Creator** Pezza, Izabella**Creator** Graff, Emily**Creator** Lublin, Zoe**Extent** 50 Megabytes1 digital file(.mp3)**Extent** 00:54:07 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)**Scope and Contents**

Records an interview with Izabella Pezza, conducted on March 11, 2022, by Emily Graff at Carrier Library, James Madison University. Recounts Pezza's experiences in the Cambodian community in Rhode Island. Discusses cultural traditions, foodways, representation, and biracial identity.