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The Grace and Leigh Oral History Project

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THE GRACE AND LEIGH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

An Honors College Project Presented to

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James Madison University

By Spencer Law

Accepted by the faculty of the Department of History, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors College.

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PUBLIC PRESENTATION
This work is accepted for presentation, in part or in full, at the Fall 2020 Honors Symposium at James Madison University on December 11, 2020.

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Preface

The Grace and Leigh Oral History Project is an ongoing community history project that documents the history of three interrelated educational institutions: Maggie L. Walker High School, The Governor's School for Government and International Studies at Thomas Jefferson High School, and Maggie L. Walker Governor's School for Government and International Studies. The final project described here is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Honors College Track II curriculum at James Madison University. Initially, the project was slated to include a variety of deliverables: an online database of oral history interviews, a physical museum-style exhibit, an exhibition opening event, a collection of resources for history teachers, and this contextual essay. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and staff turnover in the Governor's School Foundation, the scope and scale of the project have changed accordingly. Now, the deliverables include this essay, providing context regarding the creation of the project , the research and interviewing process, historical background framing the oral history interviews, plans for the future of the project, and a guide to oral history methods and practice for high school students that will aid in the continuation of the project. The heart of the project remains: a digital archive containing 24 recorded oral history interviews and associated materials, including transcripts and biographical headnotes, is now live at graceandleigh.com.

While contextual research yielded some biographical information about Maggie L. Walker that warrants inclusion in this essay and introductory materials for the oral history collection, stories and scholarship of her legacy and that of Black banking in Richmond are not included in this stage of the project. These stories, and other oral history interviews with alumni of the three mentioned schools

will be central to future stages of the project. Completing those future stages will rely on additional in-person research, interviews, and funding from the Governor's School Foundation and possibly other organizations.. It is my plan that the project will not end upon my graduation, but that I will carry out additional stages of the project under the new leadership of the Governor's School Foundation and Maggie L. Walker Governor's School. A detailed plan for the next steps of this project is included at the end of this essay, and I am applying to graduate schools in the hopes of continuing this work in an academic setting.

Acknowledgements

I would like to offer my most sincere thanks to my committee, the members of which have all taught me and offered guidance in the development of my project. To Steve Reich, Mollie Godfrey, Sean McCarthy, and Alex Leidholdt: thank you. The direction and insight you have provided throughout my undergraduate career have been essential to my success and the completion of this project. I am a better writer, a better student, and a better person because of your willingness to invest in me. I owe a debt of gratitude to the staff at the Library of Virginia and JMU Libraries, where I conducted much of the research for this project. Finishing this project would not have been possible without my colleague and friend Emily Martin. I would also like to thank my family and friends who have supported me through the past three and a half years, especially my parents. You have both given me the greatest gifts I could ask for in education, acceptance, and love.

Abstract

At a critical time in examining the bias of our institutions, the Grace and Leigh Oral History Project is collecting and archiving stories of three educational institutions in Richmond, Virginia. These oral history interviews share personal experiences with race and privilege in Richmond Public Schools, the experiment of the Virginia Governor's School initiative, and the legacy of Maggie Lena Walker. An accompanying contextual essay provides background on the author's personal connection to the project, relevant historical information, and detailed plans for the future of the project. Currently, the project includes a total of 24 oral history interviews, roughly an hour each in length: 14 with alumni of the Governor's School at Thomas Jefferson High School, six with alumni and faculty of Maggie L. Walker Governor's School, and four with alumni of Maggie L. Walker High School. These interviews, along with related visual and written materials, are available to the public at graceandleigh.com. This project is to be presented at the Fall 2020 Honors Symposium at James Madison University on December 11, 2020.

Contemporary Context

This project was inspired by research with the Celebrating Simms Project, an oral history and community history project that focuses on the Lucy F. Simms School, a kindergarten through twelfth grade school that served the Black community in Harrisonburg from 1938 to 1965, and now operates as a continuing education center. As a part of the project, I completed a two-semester internship conducting research, interviewing community members, and recording and editing audio for an oral history database. In order to deepen my understanding of the stories I transcribed, I also took every opportunity I could to be in the physical Simms school building. From my first moment stepping into that building, I felt a strong sense of connection between the Lucy F. Simms School and Maggie L. Walker High School, where I went to high school. The same yellow tiles lined the walls, the same wide hallways branched off of common spaces. After noting these architectural similarities and that both of these buildings began as all-Black schools in Virginia, I did some cursory research and found that the two schools both opened between 1938 and 1939. Both Lucy F. Simms and Maggie L. Walker, the eponymous figures of these school buildings, died in 1934. Both women were pillars of their respective communities, had a heart for children, and valued education. They were also the first women for whom a secondary school was named in their respective school districts.[1]

Since 2001, the Maggie Walker building at the corner of Lombardy and Leigh Streets has served as a magnet high school. Unlike students of Maggie L. Walker High School, an all-Black school,

[1] "Welcome," *Celebrating Simms,* accessed March 30, 2020, https://omeka.lib.jmu.edu/simms; "Walker (Maggie L.) High School/Building," Richmond Public Schools, accessed March 11, 2020, https://www.rvaschools.net/site/Default.aspx?PageID=4231; Daisy Martin, "Teaching, Learning, and Understanding of Public History in Schools as Challenge for Students and Teachers," In *Public History and School: International Perspectives*, ed. Demantowsky Marko, 84-94 (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvbkk2pq.8.

students of Maggie L. Walker Governor's School (MLWGS) are predominantly white and come mostly from outlying counties and suburbs of Richmond City. This is a result of the competitive regional admissions process at MLWGS: 13 different school districts provide a certain dollar amount per student to fund the school's operations, and are allowed a corresponding number of seats in the incoming freshman class, which students then apply for through a series of forms and assessments. The dollar amount per seat varies by district and by year, but it is lower than what districts pay per student at their local schools– for example, a seat at Sample Local High School might cost $10,000 per student per year, but the Sample Local County school district will pay $8,800 for a seat at MLWGS. The school receives less funding per student than traditional high schools, and funding MLWGS is part of what enables school districts to send students there. About two-thirds of the school's annual revenue comes from tuition paid by these 13 districts.[2]

There are a number of issues with this model. For one, it puts pressure on localities to pay into a school that draws their best students out of the district, lowering standardized testing averages which are often a priority for school administrators. It also means that districts with lower budgets, which generally includes districts in lower-income areas, can only afford to send so many students to MLWGS. These districts still don't have the funding to give students the prerequisite courses in middle school that they need to succeed at MLWGS. The remedial math course offered at Maggie Walker is historically one of the few classes where underrepresented minorities make up a majority of the class. Many of these students struggle with algebra because they have never had the opportunity to

[2] Note that the figures provided in this paragraph are examples, not exact dollar amounts. "About MLWGS," Maggie L. Walker Governor's School for Government and International Studies, website, updated 2020; Paige Hawkins, interview by Spencer Law, May 6, 2020, *Grace and Leigh Oral History Project*, graceandleigh.com.

take it before. Redlining in urban renewal meant their locality didn't receive as much funding from income or property tax as mine, so their schools were underfunded, teachers underpaid, students undereducated. This wasn't a universal experience, but it was often at the heart of why students—especially students of color from low income areas-- were struggling to keep up. There were historical patterns of discrimination that kept students from realizing their potential.[3]

Lower-income students at MLWGS drop out at a disproportionately high rate. Each class at MLWGS has boasted a 99-100% retention rate since its establishment nearly 30 years ago. Just outside that 99% lies a handful of students who worked hard to get into MLWGS and progress through graduation requirements, only to get left behind somewhere along the way. Statistics over exact drop out rates and demographics at MLWGS are difficult to locate, but there's broader evidence to suggest that students of color are left out of gifted classrooms or drop out of high school as a disproportionately high rate. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that as of 2016, 7% of Black students drop out of high school, versus 4.5% of their white peers who drop out. Based on anecdotal evidence compiled while conducting oral histories with MLWGS alumni, reasons for dropping out included a lack of preparation from underfunded elementary and middle schools and an unwillingness of the MLWGS administration to prioritize mental health. In recent years, the new administration has begun to remedy this. The school now has summer remedial opportunities for

[3] Rasheeda Creighton, interview by Spencer Law, February 28, 2020, *Grace and Leigh Oral History Project*, graceandleigh.com; Selden Richardson and Maurice Duke, *Built by Blacks: African American Architecture and Neighborhoods in Richmond, Virginia*, Richmond, VA: The Dietz Press, 2007; Harry Kollatz, "Suburban Dreams: A North Side Neighborhood Arose as an Enclave for Successful African-Americans," *R Home* (Richmond, VA), March-April 2017; Adam Fairclough, *A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Victoria Lee and Constance A. Lindsay, "Unequal Access to Calculus Could Hinder Low-Income and Black Students," *Urban Institute*, March 6, 2018, https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/unequal-access-calculus-could-hinder-low-income-and-black-students.

reading, writing, and math as well as a psychologist on staff. But fixing the structural issues with the admissions process has been more gradual. Only this year did MLWGS administration announce that it would indefinitely cancel its admissions test, a notoriously difficult, multi-hour examination that follows in the tradition of white-written and white-developed standardized tests. Several studies assessing race and standardized testing have found that Black students and many students of color are at a unique disadvantage in standardized tests, especially the Scholastic Aptitude Test and those based on that framework. Moving away from this kind of standardized testing as an admissions metric will help MLWGS develop a more equitable admissions process, but it cannot be the only step in this effort.[4]

Parts of this initiative must come from individual counties themselves, which have a degree of autonomy in the MLWGS admissions process. Chesterfield County is one locality leading this charge. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reports that more than half of the county's students are of color, while fewer than 5% of students selected to attend MLWGS have been Black, and fewer than 5% have been Hispanic. Now, Chesterfield will implement a multi-phase admissions process that prioritizes schools that identify fewer students for admission into gifted education. White students from Chesterfield had an approximately 53% acceptance rate at MLWGS, while their Black peers had an acceptance rate just

[4] "About MLWGS;" Jacqueline Fleming, "Affirmative Action and Standardized Test Scores," *The Journal of Negro Education* 69, no. 1/2 (2000): 27-37, accessed November 28, 2020, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2696262; Robert L. Green and Robert J. Griffore, "The Impact of Standardized Testing on Minority Students," *The Journal of Negro Education* 49, no. 3 (1980): 238-52, accessed November 28, 2020, doi:10.2307/2295083; "Why Family Income Differences Don't Explain the Racial Gap in SAT Scores," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 20 (1998): 6-8, accessed November 28, 2020, doi:10.2307/2999198; *National Center for Education Statistics*: Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups, "High School Status Dropout Rates," https://nces.ed.gov/programs/raceindicators/indicator_RDC.asp; Adrienne Hopkins and Kendra Garret, "Separate and Unequal: The Underrepresentation of African American Students in Gifted and Talented Programs," *Black History Bulletin* 73, no. 1 (2010): 24-30, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24759663.

under 11%. The same article highlights the massive discrepancy present in MLWGS admissions from Richmond Public Schools, a predominantly Black school district. Of the 39 students sent to MLWGS from RPS in 2019, 30 were white. Hanover County Public Schools has not sent any Black or Latino students to MLWGS in the past five years. These glaring statistics are only now entering public conversation as evidence supporting the new diversity and inclusion efforts at MLWGS and other magnet schools in Virginia. Since MLWGS is claiming a strategic focus on institutional history, the school must address how it can be more representative of its community and do justice to its history as an all-Black high school.[5]

Researching the complicated racial and socioeconomic politics of MLGS and selective high school admissions motivated me to look deeper, to seek out stories from alumni, faculty, and other stakeholders. In order to unpack the story of MLWGS, it is important to follow the creation of MLWGS through its beginning as the Governor's School at Thomas Jefferson (GSGIS) and from its legacy as the all-Black Maggie L. Walker High School (MWHS). While no other scholarship has formally addressed the connections between these three schools, my research consists of sources that address each school individually. The following section will address the interrelated contexts of these institutions and provide a brief description of how each school came to be.

[5] Nancy L. Nusser, "Maggie Walker Turns 20: The Short but Tumultuous History of the Regional School for the Super-Smart," *Richmond Magazine* (Richmond, VA), January 2011; *Richmond Times Dispatch*.

Historical Context

Historian Daniel L. Duke notes in the epilogue of *The School that Refused to Die* that institutional history is critical to organizational progress, institutional memory, and a more general understanding of human behavior. While there is relatively little scholarship regarding the histories of individual high schools, an increasing number of historians are looking to the stories of individual public schools to understand broader political, social, and economic dynamics. Part of that expansion comes because of school alumni, faculty members, and neighbors who recognize the value of sharing their stories with scholarly audiences. Developing such "school histories" creates a multi-dimensional challenge. The story of a school includes many moving parts: its purpose, building, layout, alumni, current students, faculty, faculty emeritus, staff, former staff, administrators, governing bodies, extracurricular activities, elective classes, family relationships, friendships, conflict, and tension– not to mention academics.[6]

[6] For a critical overview of student-led, community-based oral history projects, see Erin L. Conlin, "Reports from the Field: Organizing and Executing Meaningful and Manageable Community-Based Oral History Projects," *The Public Historian* 38, no. 3 (2016): 50-77, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26420840; and Linda Shopes, "Community Oral History: Where We Have Been, Where We Are Going," *Oral History* 43, no. 1 (2015): 97-106, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24345925. For more on the impact of community oral history projects, see Michelle Caswel, Marika Cifor, and Mario H. Ramirez., "'To Suddenly Discover Yourself Existing': Uncovering the Impact of Community Archives," *The American Archivist* 79, no. 1 (2016): 56-81, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26356700. Two essential oral history projects concerning the desegregation of individual American public schools are the Celebrating Simms project, see "Welcome," *Celebrating Simms*, accessed March 30, 2020, https://omeka.lib.jmu.edu/simms; and *The First Twenty-Five*, see LaVerne Bell-Tolliver, ed., *The First Twenty-Five: An Oral History of the Desegregation of Little Rock's Public Junior High Schools* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2018), doi:10.2307/j.ctt1wq8z5h. A seminal work of Black, community-based oral history is Timuel D. Black Jr., *Bridges of Memory: Chicago's First Wave of Black Migration* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2003); a complementary photographic essay about constructions and destructions of Black spaces is Wendel A. White, "'Schools for the Colored': Places, Words, Pictures," *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum* 22, no. 1 (2015): 63-89, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/buildland.22.1.0063. A thorough historical analysis of Thomas Jefferson High School and the early Governor's School is Daniel L. Duke, *The School that Refused to Die: Continuity and Change at Thomas Jefferson High School* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 225-226.

This story becomes even more complex as an institution evolves. Maggie L. Walker Governor's School (MLWGS) is an apt example of this phenomenon: once an all-Black high school, the building was abandoned in the 1980s and eventually renovated to become the new home of the Governor's School. Maggie Walker High School (MWHS), the original all-Black secondary school located at 1000 North Lombardy Street, opened in 1938. MWHS met in the same building that now houses MLWGS, a magnet program that relocated from Thomas Jefferson High School in 2001. While Maggie Walker High School and Governor's School never operated simultaneously, these schools share their stories through the building at 1000 N. Lombardy Street and a growing relationship between their alumni. Each of these schools also play a part in the maintaining and sharing the legacy of Maggie Walker herself, the first Black woman to charter a bank. Her living descendants remain involved in the work of MWHS alumni groups and MLWGS functions.[7]

This thesis project takes the intertwined stories of Maggie Walker High School, the Governor's School at TJ, and Maggie L. Walker Governor's School and shares them through the voices of alumni, faculty, and other community members. Its centerpiece is presently a digital archive of oral history interviews, which will be expanded post-pandemic to include a physical museum-style exhibit to be installed at the Lombardy Street building. This is a crucial moment in the history of both Maggie Walker High School and the Governor's School. In 2018, the former marked 80 years since its 1938

[7] Wendell P. Dabney, *Maggie L. Walker: Her Life and Deeds, or Maggie L. Walker and the Independent Order of Saint Luke: The Woman and Her Work* (Cincinnati: Dabney Publishing Company, 1927); Zeke Alton and Daphne M. Reid, "Carry On: The Life and Legacy of Maggie Lena Walker," Eastern National Omnibus Film and United States National Park Service, 2018, video documentary, 20:15; Mehrsa Baradaran, *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017); Mozelle S. Baxter, Muriel M. Branch, et. al, *A Salute to Maggie L. Walker and Black Banks in America* (N.P.: Grafik Impressions, Inc., July 14, 1985); Maurice Hopkins, interview by Spencer Law, April 2, 2020, *Grace and Leigh Oral History Project*, graceandleigh.com.

opening, and the Governor's School, now MLWGS, will celebrate its first 25th anniversary reunion in the coming year. The time is ripe for reflection as administrators and teachers who assisted in the development of MLWGS have recently or will soon enter retirement, and as many MWHS alumni are aging. MLWGS has also recently invested in more meaningful reflections of its own story, including the painting of a mural honoring Maggie L. Walker and the development of a children's book about her life. Many parts of the institution's history have not been thoroughly addressed, and this project aims to more comprehensively handle those.[8]

The story begins with a brief discussion of the eponymous figure of two of these institutions, Maggie Lena Walker. A legendary figure in Richmond history, Maggie L. Walker is best known as the first Black woman– or woman of any race– to be president of a bank. She made a name for herself as an educator, entrepreneur, and dedicated member of her community. From her service in the Independent Order of St. Luke, she was able to open the St. Luke Penny Savings Bank, found the *St. Luke Herald* newspaper, hold classes for Black Richmonders, and open the St. Luke Emporium shop. Walker was an example of self-improvement and industry in Richmond's Jackson Ward, known colloquially as Richmond's "Black Wall Street." Through all of this, she raised two sons, one of whom killed her husband in a tragic accident and later took his own life. For generations, Walker has served as a model of resilience and strength for Richmond residents and so many Black Americans. Her legacy of valuing education and entrepreneurship led Richmond Public Schools to name a school building after her, and has inspired the thousands of students who walked its halls. She has been honored with a

[8] "About MLWGS;" *Richmond Free Press*.

National Historic Site at her Leigh Street residence and a memorial statue on Broad Street, among other commemorations.[9]

Maggie Walker High School opened in 1938 in order to relieve the overcrowded Armstrong High School, which at the time was the only secondary school for Black students in Richmond. From its first year onward, Walker students prided themselves on having exemplary teachers, a community of accountability, and an unparalleled athletics department. Several alumni recall that students knew better than to act out at school, since in many cases their teachers knew their parents and the principal attended their church. Like Armstrong, it had a tight-knit environment with teachers and administrators who personally knew much of the student body. School pride shone vibrantly at the annual Armstrong-Walker Classic football game. Drawing tens of thousands of fans, football greats like Willie Lanier and Leroy Sledge made their mark on Walker history at the school's most popular event. Students, parents, and alumni gathered to celebrate and come home for the game, which always took place the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Many alumni still meet up to talk about the games, their old friends from school, and the defining experience of attending Maggie Walker High School.[10]

When *Brown v. Board* came, Virginia's governor met federal enforcement of desegregation with a policy of Massive Resistance. After very limited integration and decades of pushback, Virginia schools were finally integrated in the late 1970s, which meant a complete restructuring of zoning

[9]Alton and Reid, "Carry On;" Richardson and Duke, *Built by Blacks;* Baxter, Branch, et. al, *A Salute to Maggie Walker;* Candice F. Ransom, *Maggie L. Walker: Pioneering Banker and Community Leader* (Minneapolis, MN: Twenty-First Century Books, 2009); Calder Loth, ed., *The Virginia Landmarks Register* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1986), 364.

[10] Maggie Walker High School, *The Dragon*, yearbook, Richmond, VA: 1959; Michael Whitt, *United in Rivalry: Richmond's Armstrong-Maggie Walker Classic* (Charleston, SC: History Press, Arcadia Publishing, 2009); Maurice Hopkins, interview by author; Beverly Johnson Hodges, interview by Spencer Law, February 29, 2020, *Grace and Leigh Oral History Project*, graceandleigh.com.

patterns. The school mergers that resulted disproportionately closed formerly all-Black high schools and put their students in unfamiliar and even hostile environments. Restructuring of schools happened on the terms of white administrators and governing bodies without accounting for the needs of all students. Maggie Walker High School merged with John Marshall High School in 1979 under Richmond's "Plan G" to form the Marshall-Walker Complex, losing its mighty Green Dragon mascot in favor of the Cavalier. Students rode the bus to the Marshall building and lost touch with the building at 1000 N. Lombardy. Without the unity of its place, name, and traditions, the identity of Maggie Walker High School faded. The building was used sporadically from 1979 to 1989, housing Richmond's Open High School and Community High School, among other programs, until its eventual abandonment when the city declared it "surplus." Despite ending the school merger system in 1986, the city school board declared the closure of Maggie Walker final. After years of smashed-in windows and vandalism, the once-grand Maggie Walker High School building lost its luster.[11]

In September 1991, a new experiment in secondary education was underway at the neighboring Thomas Jefferson High School, located at 4100 West Grace Street. A group of teachers and students with a common goal set out to establish the Governor's School, an application-based regional magnet program. This school would use an enriched curriculum with a variety of foreign-language options, comparative politics courses, and unique electives to teach advanced

[11] Maggie Walker High School, *The Dragon*; *The Complex Gazette,* 1980; Michael E. Taylor, *We Would Wreath Thy Walls with Praise: Remembering Maggie L. Walker High School* (Richmond: University of Richmond Press, 2004); Michael E. Taylor, "The African-American Community of Richmond, Virginia: 1950-1956," Masters thesis (Richmond, VA: University of Richmond Press, 1994), UR Scholarship Repository; "Walker (Maggie L.) High School/Building," Richmond Public Schools; Jane Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Post-Emancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

students government and international studies. Designed to attract students from nearly a dozen school districts in central Virginia, the Governor's School quickly gained a reputation for academic rigor and exceptional performance. Students at the Governor's School, affectionately known as "Govvies," faced a number of distinct challenges. Black students encountered an almost exclusively white student body, and the entire population was at odds with the rest of the students and faculty at Thomas Jefferson High School, or Tee Jay.[12]

Over the years, tensions mounted between the Governor's School and Thomas Jefferson High School. *The School that Refused to Die* describes the critical moment when Tee Jay students and parents realized what the combination of budgetary calls for their school's closure and the need for a permanent home for the Governor's School would yield. As expected, Richmond City had plans to give the building entirely to the Governor's School. Students staged a mass walk out, demanding to stay in their building. Governor's School alumni recall being held in an assembly until the administration could get the situation under control. In the end, the building was given to Tee Jay at the direction of Richmond Public Schools, with a push for the Governor's School to find a new home. The former Westhampton Elementary building had been proposed, but districts were unwilling to fund its renovation. By the late 1990s, the city was developing plans for demolition of the old Maggie Walker High School building after its abandonment. Even so, a few open-minded Governor's School faculty and parents went to evaluate its potential. As Maggie Walker High School alumni protested its

[12] Duke, *The School that Refused to Die*, xxiii; "Walker (Maggie L.) High School/Building," Richmond Public Schools; Melissa Ayers, interview by Spencer Law, May 1, 2020, *Grace and Leigh Oral History Project*, graceandleigh.com; Sada Smith Leonard, interview by Spencer Law, February 28, 2020, *Grace and Leigh Oral History Projec*t, graceandleigh.com.

proposed destruction, a Governor's School parent helped apply for historic landmark recognition for the building, and the community managed to fundraise their way into a full-on renovation.[13]

In 2001, the Governor's School moved into their new space at the corner of Lombardy and Leigh. The change in physical space brought a massive change in attitude, on behalf of students who missed their old classrooms and teachers who had trouble navigating the maze of hallways. The administration's push to "Keep Maggie Walker Beautiful" and remove any sort of decoration only made the transition harder. Teachers like Bear O'Bryan rebelled in their own way, inviting students to sew quilt squares together into tapestries to cover the barren cinder block walls. Within weeks of the building opening came a critical moment in national history, September 11, 2001. In many ways, the grief and solidarity brought out in this moment unified the school amid their reactions to being in a new space. From then on, Maggie L. Walker Governor's School for Government and International Studies was born in all its idiosyncrasies. It carried the nerdy stubbornness of the Governor's School, the outsider resilience of Tee Jay, and myriad new traits from incoming classes of freshmen.[14]

For the past 30 years, the Governor's School in all its iterations has established a reputation for excellence in the Richmond area. The school regularly ranks among the best in the nation, with innovative curriculum, almost a dozen languages offered, and eclectic student organizations. It has certainly kept its character over the years. But the school still struggles with issues from racial diversity

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[13] Duke, *The School that Refused to Die*, 167-170; *Alabaster: A Response to 9-11-01,* literary magazine, 2001; Richardson and Duke, *Built by Blacks;* Mary Jo Sisson-Vaughan, interview by Spencer Law, May 1, 2020, *Grace and Leigh Oral History Project*, graceandleigh.com.

[14] Sarah Vannoy Witthoefft, interview by Spencer Law, May 16, 2020, *Grace and Leigh Oral History Project*, graceandleigh.com; Jonathan Miyashiro, interview by Spencer Law, May 14, 2020, *Grace and Leigh Oral History Project*, graceandleigh.com; J. Anderson Gould, interview by Spencer Law, February 29, 2020, *Grace and Leigh Oral History Project*, graceandleigh.com.

to funding. Exploring the history of these institutions, beginning with the story of Maggie Walker and the original high school, can shed light on their place in Richmond history and uncover ways for the school to grow in its next 30 years and the decades that follow.

Research and Interview Reflections

While I have not yet conducted enough oral history interviews to draw any overarching conclusions, the body of research I have compiled is an important starting point to consider the complex and intertwined institutional legacy of these three schools. To reflect on the process of conducting original oral history research, I will offer my personal thoughts on the process of completing this phase of the Grace and Leigh Oral History Project, discuss a few provisional themes, and outline the research questions and significance that has emerged from the first stage of this project. Given the unprecedented circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, I believe this digital collection of interviews reflects a meaningful intervention into the field of community-based oral history.

My first few interviews were held at the Maggie Walker Governor's School building and the main branch of Richmond Public Libraries in February 2020. I had planned to hold all of my interviews in person and conduct a few remote phone interviews, but circumstances quickly changed. I had scheduled additional interviews for Friday, March 13 at Maggie Walker– the day a national state of emergency was declared in the United States, and two days after the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. I knew immediately that my project would change as a result, and quickly started the process of scheduling all of my interviews over the phone. Since I had gone through much of the necessary reading and initial research for this project from November 2019 to January 2020, library closures were not as devastating as they could have been. Over the first few months of the pandemic, I conducted roughly 15 phone interviews and began to code the Grace and Leigh website.

By the end of the summer, I had completed 24 interviews: four related to Maggie Walker High School, 14 related to the Governor's School at TJ, and six related to Maggie Walker Governor's

School. I had hoped to reach more MWHS alumni and emeriti, but I was only able to interview four people in total. This is partially due to the fact that I reached out to potential interviewees through Facebook, which has a higher engagement rate for the millennials in the Governor's School at TJ crowd, and lower engagement among the older Maggie Walker High School crowd. I was thankfully able to interview Maurice Hopkins, MWHS class of 1965, who is an invaluable asset in the preservation of MWHS history. He has served as a liaison to the existing MLWGS faculty and staff, ongoing community history projects, and a one-man alumni networking resource for MWHS. While we cannot characterize an institution with 40 years of history from the perspective of a single alumnus, Mr. Hopkins has perhaps had more contact with alumni and faculty of MWHS over the years than any other individual. Despite my failure to gather a more complete and representative history of MWHS through this first stage of the project, making a close connection with Mr. Hopkins and recording his story is a crucial step in the development of this project, as he has already provided me with leads that will contribute to future plans.[15]

Several preliminary themes have emerged throughout the research and interviewing process, but perhaps the most overarching is an understanding among students at all three institutions that they were held to a high educational standard. In the case of Maggie L. Walker High School, Mr. Hopkins spoke to the idea that many students in a segregated MWHS felt they had to be "twice as good" or "twice as educated" as their white peers to be considered their equals. Even then, he noted, Black students were still considered undereducated and less qualified than white students. Mr. Hopkins and all three of the other MWHS alumni I interviewed had family members who attended,

[15] Maurice Hopkins, interview by author.

taught, or worked at the school, which contributes a unique "culture of accountability". Unlike the Governor's School at TJ or MLWGS, MWHS had zoning-based admissions instead of application-based admissions. In general, students lived in the neighborhoods surrounding the school building and had grown up attending school together. Many of them also attended church in the area. All of the MWHS alumni I interviewed and several others I've spoken to informally have all discussed how this close-knit social environment promoted accountability at school and tended to keep students out of trouble. Of course, there were many exceptions– students who fell outside of that social network– but this "culture of accountability" tends to hold true.[16]

On the other side of nostalgia for this close community is a sense of resentment for what broke it apart. Some of the MWHS alumni I've spoken to, like Beverly Johnson Hodges, were more direct with their disdain for the local government and school board in Richmond. In our interview, we discussed the loss that came with the city's decision to combine Maggie Walker and John Marshall high schools to form the Marshall-Walker Complex. Ms. Hodges said,

> "I grew up down the street from Maggie Walker's house. I've known her legacy forever. With the bank stuff and the school stuff and all that she did. And it just seemed like we were burying her. It just, it just felt that way to all of us. Most of the teachers, counselors, lunch ladies, custodians, they all went to Maggie Walker, or they might have went to John Marshall, they might have went to Armstrong, but the community was so tight. You couldn't get away with a whole lot at school 'cause somebody your mom's somebody mean your dad, somebody knew you some way or another."[17]

It was hard to hear that, knowing that Ms. Hodges had been in the last class of MWHS to meet in the building at Lombardy and Leigh. The joy in her voice was apparent when she talked about how the

[16] Maurice Hopkins, interview by author.

[17] Beverly Johnson Hodges, interview by author.

building was saved in the 1990s and preserved in its original capacity. Her daughter applied to the school, and while she didn't end up attending, that process reminded Ms. Hodges how glad she was that the building remains. At the same time, she acknowledged the tension among many Black Richmonders who feel that their children's access to the school is inhibited by its funding structure and admissions process.[18]

Governor's School students expressed feeling a similar sense of community at TJ, but it took a very different shape. This group was unique because they attended a "school within a school," learning in the same physical space as students at Thomas Jefferson High School and yet rarely sharing anything with them. One of the few non-alumni I interviewed was Paige Hawkins, who began work in her early 20s as a coach for women's sports for the Governor's School. By district mandate, sports teams at the school were open to both Governor's School and TJ students, so Ms. Hawkins' teams were occasionally split between the two populations. More often than not, though, she recalls that students would self-segregate by sports: field hockey was almost all Governor's School students, and football was almost all TJ students. The small amount of overlap between the student populations that happened in sports would have likely been the most meaningful interactions happening between Governor's School and TJ students. Outside of sports, the students started school at different times, changed classes on a different schedule, and had separate classrooms.[19]

This "outsider" status created an even more complex social environment for Black students at the Governor's School, who were a minority within a white majority magnet school inside a school in a

[18] Beverly Johnson Hodges, interview by author.

[19] Paige Hawkins, interview by author; Liz Kolonay, interview by Spencer Law, February 28, 2020, *Grace and Leigh Oral History Project*, graceandleigh.com; Sada Smith Leonard, interview by author.

predominantly Black neighborhood. My interview with Rasheeda Creighton speaks to the complexities of these dynamics. She is one of two alumnae who led the charge in surveying current and former Black students at the Governor's School and MLWGS about their experience with race and racism there, and she is also serving on a task force for diversity and equity appointed by the Commonwealth of Virginia. Ms. Creighton is a local activist, advocate, and entrepreneur, and an alumna of the very first graduating class of the Governor's School. She told me about arriving at school on her first day.

> "I walk in, and there's a class of a bunch of white students. And at the first table is two Black students. Andrea Bridges, now Reed. And Ryan Leslie. So Ryan Leslie is like a big recording artist and producer now. But Ryan was in our class. And he moved to Belgium at the end of our freshman year., that's why he didn't graduate with us. But they were the only faces that looked like me. So I was like, "Cool, sitting here." And I just, I had never been in that environment or had that experience."[20]

Ms. Creighton grew up in Richmond Public Schools and was one of the few Governor's School students who played on the school's sports teams that were mostly comprised of TJ students. She talked about the experience of moving from the majority to the minority population, and what it was like to be in such an unusual school environment. She shared distinct memories of racial profiling of her peers, microagressions from fellow students, and the handful of teachers who made it their humble mission to ensure Black students had a place at the Governor's School.[21]

Many of these teachers remained at the school as it moved from Thomas Jefferson to Maggie Walker. What a symbolic transition that could have been: moving from a space named for a slave

[20] Rasheeda Creighton, interview by Spencer Law, February 28, 2020, Grace and Leigh Oral History Project, graceandleigh.com.

[21] Rasheeda N. Creighton and Sarah Acree, "Black @ GSGIS/MLWGS: Survey Results of the Black Experience at Maggie Walker," October 2020; Rasheeda Creighton, interview by author.

owner to a space named for the daughter of an enslaved person. And yet, the undercurrents of implicit racism and overt demographic discrepancies in admissions remained a staple of the Governor's School. Certainly, changing this wouldn't happen overnight, but nearly 20 years later progress is still slow. Two of the MLWGS alumni I spoke to attended high school with me, which encouraged me to and I reflect on my own experience as they spoke of their memories. One of these young women was Fionnuala Fisk, who spoke about the "pretentious" and often elitist environment at MLWGS that not only contributed to racial tensions, but also created a dangerous culture of overachievement.

> And then there were just a lot of people sacrificing their mental health further. I feel really lucky that I was able to kind of get out of the jet stream… My mental health was terrible, and I knew so many people whose mental health was terrible. Like, Ava Woods, she was not sleeping, she was getting like four hours of sleep a night. That's just insane. You're killing yourself.[22]

At the same time that the Governor's School, now MLWGS, had built an innovative community of scholarship, it had manufactured toxic levels of stress that weighed on students and faculty alike. This stress-fueled environment represents a marked departure from the environment discussed by MWHS graduates. I fully expect that I will hear more about this as I continue the project and work with younger alumni–especially since alumni I spoke with said that this environment began in the halls of TJ and has never left.[23]

Addressing the culture of stress at MLWGS, race at the Governor's School at TJ, and the effects of the closure of MWHS are three of several topics on which this next stage of the project will

[22] Dabney, *Maggie L. Walker: Her Life and Deeds*; Alton and Reid, "Carry On;" Fionnuala Fisk, interview by Spencer Law, June 8, 2020, *Grace and Leigh Oral History Project*, graceandleigh.com.

[23] Tanim Islam, interview by Spencer Law, May 6, 2020, *Grace and Leigh Oral History Project*, graceandleigh.com; Mala Kumar, interview by Spencer Law, May 15, 2020, *Grace and Leigh Oral History Project*, graceandleigh.com; Fionnuala Fisk, interview by author.

focus. At this time, I have more than 60 individuals who have reached out and offered their time to contribute to the project, and I have only used one platform to reach people. In order to complete as many interviews as possible and illustrate a more complete picture of these three institutions, the following section outlines my plans for the future of the Grace and Leigh Oral History Project.

Future Plans

Now that I have established a framework for the Grace and Leigh Oral History Project and a better sense of the story it will tell, I can outline the direction and deliverables for future stages of the project. The following is a chronological list of plans I have to continue developing the project and specifics for its implementation. An important note here is that community conversations and contributions to the telling of these stories have gained traction among Maggie Walker High School, Governor's School at TJ, and Maggie Walker Governor's School alumni in recent months and years. Alumni from MWHS have been meeting regularly for reunions and celebrations to reminisce and share memorabilia with the help of organizers like Maurice Hopkins and Selia Fillmore, as have GSGIS and MLWGS alumni with the assistance of the Governor's School Foundation. Since mid-2020, many of these conversations have related to the role of race and class in these institutions. A recent survey sent by two GSGIS alumnae to Black students and alumni of GSGIS and MLWGS received dozens of responses from individuals who reported feeling tokenized, discouraged, and victimized at the predominantly white magnet school. I joined a number of groups on social media to connect with alumni from these three institutions, and talk about this survey has circulated among those groups for months. Uncovering a more nuanced history of MWHS, GSGIS, and MLWGS is fresh on the minds of many alumni, faculty, and staff– there is energy and support for the continuation of this project.

Spring 2021

I will begin the process of following up with individuals who initially completed the interest form for interviews, but who did not respond to my first few interview scheduling requests. I will also meet

with the new Executive Director of the Governor's School Foundation to determine in what capacity the Foundation can support the ongoing nature of this project. My goals are to secure funding from the Governor's School Foundation for the hosting of the website and management assistance from one of their support staff members or student assistants. Once management of the website is built into a support staff or student assistant job description, the viability of the project is no longer reliant on my ability to continually work on it during my continuing education. I plan to connect with the director of mentorships at MLWGS, Les Cook, who coordinates experiential learning opportunities for students. If he is willing to partner with the Foundation to formalize a mentorship opportunity there, we could have a senior student each year contribute to the management of the project. That student could coordinate further interviews, contributions, and any additional elements of the project as it evolves. To my knowledge, Les Cook also coordinates the volunteer service hour requirements for all MLWGS students and approves activities to count as service hours. In my meeting with him, I will ask if project contribution opportunities, especially transcription and interviewing efforts, can be offered to current students to meet service hour requirements.

If management of the project falls solely on a Foundation employee instead, I will ask if the Foundation would allocate some funding to have their staff periodically check the website for broken links and update it with new material. I will also continue the process of soliciting more material items and photographs for inclusion in the digital archives. At whatever point it becomes possible for me to meet with people in person, pending the widespread release of an effective COVID-19 vaccine, I will coordinate with Maurice Hopkins so I can meet and interview more MWHS alumni. If possible, I will

acquire a scanner or similar device that will allow me to digitize photographs and other materials when I meet with people. Alternatively, I may ask people to meet me at a public library so we can digitize their materials together if that is an option. Once I have more visual materials in the archive, I can continue to tag these items with appropriate metadata and further develop the collections and exhibits available on the website.

Summer 2021

Ideally, I will be able to complete the handful of interviews that were priorities for me that I was unable to complete during the first phase of the project. These include interviews with additional MWHS alumni such as Linda Hutson, Selia Fillmore, Susan Scott, and Irvin Charles, as well as any living former MWHS faculty and staff I can find. I would also like to interview people who contributed to the early process of developing the Governor's School at Thomas Jefferson, including Phil Tharp, Pat Taylor, John Wilkes, Phil Sorrentino, and Bob Mooney. Finally, I plan to interview two current teachers and one former teacher at MLWGS who are Governor's School at TJ alumni. Once I've conducted those 12-15 additional interviews, transcribed the total 26-29 interviews, and taken notes on them, I will be more prepared to draw themes and make arguments based on my research. At that point, I will begin the process of writing and designing museum-style panels to be installed at the Maggie Walker building.

In the event that the Governor's School Foundation has identified a senior student to work as a student assistant in their office for the 2021-2022 school year, I will work with that student in the late

summer months to identify how they can help with the progression of this project. If such a student is not identified, I will determine if the Foundation has hired additional support staff who might be able to assist. After meeting with Les Cook to determine how MLWGS students can earn service hours or credit for working on the project, I will formally establish guidelines for student participation. These will include the guide to oral history interviewing for high school students appended to this essay and whatever stipulations Mr. Cook sets for student involvement. At that point, I can begin the process of pairing students with interviewees to promote engagement and relationship building between many generations of MWHS, GSGIS, and MLWGS students.

Ongoing

By the fall of 2021, again pending an effective and widely available COVID-19 vaccine, I plan to print and install the museum-style panels I will design at the Maggie Walker building with the assistance of student volunteers and Foundation funding. This allows ample time for me to continue gathering interviews, visual and physical materials, and multimedia content for a highly professional exhibit. While many students may view capstone projects with finality, I believe that this project has a living quality and longevity that mandates its continued progress. As the MLWGS administration and alumni network push for increased diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, we must reflect on the history of our space and our institution and make that history known. Having both a digital and physical space to tell this story will be essential for students and faculty as we reimagine the value of physicality and material culture in a post-pandemic world, and as we understand the importance of accessibility through digital media. As I bring MLWGS students and MWHS, GSGIS, and MLWGS

alumni into this project, I fully expect it to take new turns and grow in ways I cannot yet imagine. From the outset of this project, it has been my goal to establish something that will continue for many years to come, and with this specific plan I can see that dream realized. I believe in this project as a meaningful opportunity for intergenerational learning through public history and the digital humanities. The foundation I have created for the Grace and Leigh Oral History Project through the completion of this Honors Capstone project is firm.

Appendix

Oral History Methodology and Practice for High School Students
Adapted from JMU Libraries "Oral History Collection" presentation

Oral history involves the process of researching, interviewing, and recording a conversation with one person about historical events, individual memories, a lived experience, or any other personal reflection. It also refers to the final product of this process, which can be referred to as an oral history. This entire process is educational and cooperative between yourself and the person whom you're interviewing. On occasion, you may interview more than one person at once about the same topic, but this is unusual. To begin the process of documenting an oral history, make sure you know your subject matter. Consider:

- Have I read at least a few books and articles on the topic we'll be covering?
- Have I explored the section of the library or digital collection that contains materials related to my topic?
- What questions have come up in my own research that I'd like to ask my interviewee?
- How can I learn more about my topic and my interviewee before we engage in the interview?

Once you've researched your topic and have a basic understanding of what you'll be discussing in your interview, it's time to learn more about your interviewee. A quick Google search might help you find articles written about them, social media profiles they have, or their page on a company website. Each of these sources can help you understand who you're talking to and how to approach your conversation. Remember, by participating in this oral history, your interviewee is doing you a favor. Treat them with the authority and respect they deserve, and be courteous in all of your contact with them. Something as simple as sending a polite reminder about your interview time and location can mean a lot. When you've established the logistics for your interview, finalize your questions. You'll typically want to plan for an hour-long session with about 10 to 15 questions, keeping in mind that you likely will not address all of them. Make a note of which questions are the most important for you to address. Here are a few sample questions for a general, biographical interview:

- Can you state and spell your name for me?
- Where were you born and where did you grow up?
- Did you have any siblings growing up? Are they older or younger than you?
- What was your family dynamic like when you were growing up?
- Did your parents raise you in a particular religion or cultural tradition?
- What was your experience with school like? Did you go to college?
- Where do you live now, and what is your occupation?

- How did you start the job in which you currently work?
- Are you married, and do you have any children?
- What are your plans for the future?

You'll likely want to make these questions more specific based on your initial research, but this kind of demographic and biographical information can help you guide the rest of the interview. They also help your interviewee become more comfortable with you, and will make it easier to relax into the body of the interview. If you're addressing a particular topic, like a major historical event, make sure your interviewee knows that and is prepared to talk about it. In some cases, living through a historical event is not always something a person wants to talk about, especially with a stranger. Building a rapport with your interviewee and providing them with potentially sensitive questions before your interview can help smooth this over. Other than potentially sensitive questions, it is not recommended that you send questions to your interviewee up front. If you do, they might write down and read scripted responses to you that don't feel genuine.

When it comes to asking specific, topic-related questions, keep your word choice open. Don't ask questions that can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no." Instead, consider questions like:

- What was it like to enlist in the army at age 18?
- When you arrived at college for the first time, what were you feeling?
- What was going through your mind when you heard about the assassination on the radio?
- How have you learned from that experience?

People are often more willing to open up and more confident in sharing their thoughts when they have the opportunity to recall feelings and memories instead of facts or dates. You can also jog your interviewee's memory with even more specific questions, like asking about favorite teachers or foods they ate as a child. These emotional and sensory memories are often what brings up more intimate and honest stories. Make sure to read over your list of questions several times, checking for accuracy and flow of the questions. Follow the funnel method by moving from general questions like biographical data to specific ones. Write your questions using simple language that's easy to understand, don't ask incredibly broad or multifaceted questions, and don't write questions in a way that encourages a particular response. If you need to, define words or concepts in your questions for your interviewee.

During the actual interview, make sure you meet at the place and time you've agreed upon with your interviewee promptly. Again, this is a favor someone is extending to you– treat it as such. Bring all the audio recording equipment you need: this can be as simple or as complicated as you'd like. Anything from a smartphone to a professional-grade audio recorder will work. Run tests with your equipment

prior to the actual interview. Your location should be somewhere that your interviewee feels comfortable, like their home or office. If the room you're in has loud air conditioning or street noise, suggest finding another place that's quieter. Follow these steps during your interview:

- Open with a brief introduction stating your name, your interviewee's name, and the date, time, and location of your interview
- Keep a conversational tone and allow the conversation to flow naturally
- Ask follow-up questions as needed to clarify or elaborate on certain points, but only ask one question at a time
- Do not feel pressured to fill pauses, just allow your interviewee to continue speaking
- Be sure your interviewee spells out any names or places that they mention
- Maintain eye contact and a friendly demeanor, avoid taking notes unless you need to
- Keep track of the time so your interview does not extend well beyond an hour
- Always end your interview by asking if your interviewee has anything else they would like to add or mention
- Thank your interviewee for their time and contribution
- Provide them with necessary consent forms or let them know how and when you will send forms to them

There are a few key points here. First, a conversational tone with good rapport is the key to a good oral history interview. Next, allowing pauses to continue uninterrupted can feel awkward, but often gives your interviewee time to collect themselves and continue their train of thought. A follow-up question can have the same effect if well timed. Finally, the ethics of recording an oral history have been central through this process, so formalizing your interviewee's consent in writing is essential. You'll need to have either a general consent form for educational use of a recorded oral history, a deed of gift form for a recorded oral history, or both. We'll touch on this again later.

After your interview, it's time to begin the process of transcription. You can use a tool like Otter or Trint to make this process much faster, or you can write out the entire transcription by hand from your recording. In general, you can make a lot of judgement calls based on the context of your interview to either include or exclude things like repeated words, filler words, or false starts. For example, you might opt to replace, "I was walking– I was walking down to the store," with just, "I was walking down to the store." It is also generally at your discretion how to note indecipherable words, interruptions, or other sounds that occur in the recording. You might write "[indecipherable]" or "[dog barking]" to signal one of these sounds. You can also use a question mark to indicate if there's a phrase or sentence you're not sure about. Finally, it is your call when to redact or include off-topic, potentially offensive, or embarrassing comments made by your interviewee.

If you aren't sure what to do, remember that you will send a copy of your transcript to your interviewee for review. This should clear up many of these questions. Once you've finished your transcript, send it to your interviewee and let them know that you will make grammatical or structural revisions based on their comments. Do not open this up broadly to content revisions, or people may try to amend their previous statements. Allowing for privacy with redactions is fine, but opening up revisions broadly can change the context of an interview. If you have questions about securing consent or amending transcriptions, refer to your project supervisor, teacher, or librarian. In general, most detailed questions you have should be answered in any oral history guide published by an accredited university or public library. This guide is meant to provide a brief overview of the content of those guides, a few of which are provided at the end of this document.

Now that you have an approved transcription and consent to use your recorded oral history, you can include it in an archive. You'll need to include a brief written statement about the interview process, which covers research you've done for the interview, any challenges you faced with the interview process, additional comments or context from your interviewee, and the introductory statement from the beginning of your recording (with time, date, location, names, etc.) Also include copies of your signed consent form and/or deed of gift form, a copy of the list of questions you prepared, and the final written transcript of the interview. Either upload all of this directly to your project website, or send it along to your supervisor or teacher who is responsible for managing the website. You may also be asked to provide a description and/or keywords for your interview. Make sure that any description of the interview that you write includes objective facts about what your interviewee discussed without any subjective or judgemental language. For example, "Mr. Jackson discusses his time working at a bookbinding company in northern Arizona during the 1990s," is a much better description than, "The wonderful and eloquent Mr. Jackson discusses the hardship of his experience working in the highly competitive bookbinding industry during its most critical years."

The Oral History Association outlines several guidelines to follow that you should keep in mind:

- Oral history interviews and their documentation should be well-preserved and widely accessible to the public
- Interviewers must be explicit and direct when informing interviewees about intended and potential uses of their interview, and interviewees must give explicit consent for these uses
- Interviewees must have the right to amend or withdraw their consent
- Providing documentation (research summaries, introductory information, and consent forms) for your interview is just as important as providing access to the interview itself

Of course, there are many more specifics we could cover related to finding the ideal audio equipment and setup, editing audio in post-production, and managing a digital archive of oral history interviews– but we don't need to cover all of that in a beginner's guide. Below are links to a few oral history guides published by accredited universities and public libraries that can provide more in-depth information and technical details should you be interested in learning more. In general, remember these few tips:

- Always show respect for your interviewee through timeliness, manners, and a good attitude
- Do your research before *and* after your interview to contextualize the conversation
- Remember consent and ethics at every stage of the interviewing process
- Double check that your audio equipment is working and do a couple of test runs
- Take a deep breath and relax into your conversation, let it flow naturally
- Seek out help and other resources as necessary

Oral History Association: OHA Principles and Best Practices

Oral History Society (UK): Oral History Sensitivity Reviews

Smithsonian Institution: How to Do Oral History, The Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide

Baylor University: Introduction to Oral History, Style Guide: A Quick Reference for Editing Oral History Transcripts

Bowdoin College: Oral History Manual

Duke University: Oral Histories Toolkit

Guilford University: Oral History: Best Practices and Procedures: Transcription

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