

RICHARD S. DINNER CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES  
GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION

SYMPOSIUM

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2007, 10 AM- 4 PM

Tucson Common Room, CDSP  
2451 Ridge Road, Berkeley

PRODUCING MEMORY:  
ORAL HISTORY AS COUNTER HISTORY IN JEWISH STUDIES

**A** DAY-LONG PROGRAM OF PANELS AND WORKSHOPS to examine the politics and practices of recording, interpreting and publishing human memories, looking at several scholarly contributions that illuminate Jewish life in Europe and the United States during and after the Holocaust. Panelists will also analyze the methodology and applications of conducting oral histories.

PROGRAM

REGISTRATION 9:30 AM – 10:00 AM

MORNING PANELS

PANEL I: 10:00 AM-11:15 AM

**Subverting the Master Narrative: Oral History as Research Tool**

Panelists: Diane L. Wolf, “Identity and Memory through Oral History: Challenges and Practices” & Shana Penn, “From New Jews and *Halbeh Goyim*, to Philosemites and *Shabbes Goyim*: Oral History Accounts of Jewish Experience in Poland During and After Communism”

PANEL II: 11:30 AM-12:45 PM

**The Power of the Personal Narrative: Oral History in and of Itself**

Panelists: Arwen Donahue, “Making History?: The Problem of Memory and Archival Collections” & Susan Rothenberg, “Holocaust Survivors and Their Families: Conducting Personal Oral Histories”

LUNCH 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS 2:00 PM-4:00 PM

WORKSHOP I

**Guidelines for Conducting Oral Histories: Practices and Considerations**

Taught by: Arwen Donahue & Susan Rothenberg

WORKSHOP II

**Working Session on Oral History Projects**

Taught by: Diane L. Wolf & Shana Penn

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## MORNING PANELS

Oral history constitutes a distinct methodology that is embraced by some fields and critically questioned by others. A way of collecting and interpreting human memories, oral history can uniquely highlight connections between individual and collective experience that not only fosters new knowledge but can also challenge and upturn given historical narratives.

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**PANEL I:** 10:00 AM-11:15 AM

### **SUBVERTING THE MASTER NARRATIVE: ORAL HISTORY AS RESEARCH TOOL**

Panelists will examine the contribution of oral history as an approach and practice, analyzing what they learned from those they interviewed, and why such information may not have been forthcoming using a different methodology.

- What kind of unknown information was uncovered because this oral history was adopted?
- How were the findings formally presented and received?
- What are the responsibilities and drawbacks to the interviewer-interviewee relationship in conducting scholarly research?

Diane Wolf will draw from her research findings on child Holocaust survivors in Holland. Shana Penn will use examples from her oral histories with Jews and Christians active in Jewish heritage preservation in Poland during and after Communism.

#### **PANELISTS:**

**Diane L. Wolf**, Professor of Sociology and Director of Jewish Studies, University of California at Davis; Author, *Beyond Anne Frank: Hidden Children and Postwar Families in Holland*; and *Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork*.

**Shana Penn**, Visiting Scholar, Center for Jewish Studies, Graduate Theological Union; Author, *Solidarity's Secret: The Women Who Defeated Communism in Poland*; and *Impossible Home: Jewish Life in Poland after Communism* (forthcoming).

#### **MODERATOR:**

**Arwen Donahue**, University of Kentucky

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**PANEL II:** 11:30 AM-12:45 PM

### **THE POWER OF THE PERSONAL NARRATIVE: ORAL HISTORY IN AND OF ITSELF**

Panelists will use examples from their own work to explore some of the ways in which oral history subverts the traditional historical document-bound enterprise, by bringing memory, reflexivity, subjectivity, and creativity more squarely into the foreground. Panelists are experienced oral historians whose works are collected in both family and academic archives.

#### **PANELISTS:**

**Arwen Donahue**, Adjunct Professor of Oral History, University of Kentucky; Author, *This Is Home Now: Conversations with Kentucky's Holocaust Survivors* (forthcoming 2008); Co-author, *Oral History Interview Guidelines of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*.

**Susan Rothenberg**, Affiliated Scholar, Kenyon College; Editor, *To Be A Man: Johnnie Wilson Jr.; B & B; I've Been Real Lucky*; and *For My Family*.

#### **MODERATOR:**

**Diane L. Wolf**, University of California at Davis

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**LUNCH** 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Tucson Common Room

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## AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS

2:00 PM-4:00 PM

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### **WORKSHOP I:**

#### **GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING ORAL HISTORIES: PRACTICES AND CONSIDERATIONS**

Why do oral history? What makes oral history different—different from standard journalistic interviews; different as an approach to documenting history? What strengths, and what challenges, are inherent in the oral history process?

This two-hour workshop will address the questions above, while introducing participants to nuts-and-bolts aspects of how to conduct an oral history interview, including: preparation and research; choosing equipment and site for the interview; legal issues and creating an appropriate

deed of gift; and conducting the interview itself. We will also touch upon some options of what to do with the interview once it is complete, and approaches that various writers, researchers and documentarians have taken in making use of oral history in their work.

Oral history is an interdisciplinary practice. This workshop will be especially useful for researchers and students in the fields of history and archival studies, but would also be of interest to students/practitioners of religion, folklore, ethnography, anthropology, and psychology, as well as filmmakers, journalists and writers.

**TAUGHT BY:**

**Arwen Donahue**, Adjunct Professor of Oral History, University of Kentucky

**Susan Rothenberg**, Affiliated Scholar, Kenyon College

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**WORKSHOP II:**

**WORKING SESSION ON ORAL HISTORY PROJECTS**

Students and community members working on current oral history projects are invited to bring your projects ideas and questions to this working session.

**TAUGHT BY:**

**Shana Penn**, Center for Jewish Studies, Graduate Theological Union

**Diane L. Wolf**, University of California, Davis

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**PANELIST BIOS**

**ARWEN DONAHUE**

Arwen Donahue is an oral historian, writer and artist. Current projects include a book of oral histories of Holocaust survivors who have made their homes in Kentucky; and, for the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, editing oral histories for a series of podcasts on the postwar lives of Holocaust survivors. She is Adjunct Professor of Oral History at the University of Kentucky. Past projects include a series of audio documentaries for the US Holocaust Memorial Museum's online exhibit "After the Holocaust," which Donahue co-wrote and produced with Regine Beyer. The online exhibit, which explores the lives of

Holocaust survivors in the US, was chosen in 2006 as one of Yahoo's Daily Picks, and was a finalist for the Flash Animation competition in the 2006 Austin Film Festival. Additionally, she co-authored, with Joan Ringelheim and Amy Rubin, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum's internationally-distributed *Oral History Interview Guidelines*.

In 2005, the Lexington History Museum hosted an exhibition based on Donahue's interviews with Kentucky's Holocaust survivors, with portraits of the survivors by photographer Rebecca Howell. The exhibition served as the subject for the Kentucky Historical Society's annual oral history symposium in November 2005. The interviews and photographs featured in the exhibition are the basis for Donahue and Howell's book *This Is Home Now: Conversations with Kentucky's Holocaust Survivors* (forthcoming 2008, University Press of Kentucky).

**SHANA PENN**

Shana Penn is a Visiting Scholar at the Graduate Theological Union's Center for Jewish Studies in Berkeley, where she is working on a book about the reemergence of Jewish cultural expression in contemporary Poland; a translation project of the poetry of Julian Tuwim, the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Polish Jewish poet; a collection of oral histories with women activists in the Czechoslovak anti-communist movement; and a collected volume of new scholarship on gender issues in the state socialist era, co-edited with Jill Massino, Oberlin College.

Shana also directs a philanthropic program, the Jewish Heritage Initiative in Poland, for the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life and Culture, in San Francisco.

She is the author of *Solidarity's Secret: The Women Who Defeated Communism in Poland* (University of Michigan Press), which was supported by an Open Society Institute Fellowship and received the 2005 Heldt Prize for Best Book in Slavic/East European/Eurasian/Women's Studies by the Association of Women in Slavic Studies. She has published two other books: *The Women's Guide to the Wired World* (Feminist Press 1997) and *Podziemie Kobiet*, "The Women's Underground" (Rosner & Associates, Warsaw, 2003).

## SUSAN GLUCK ROTHENBERG

Susan Gluck Rothenberg has been listening to stories for many years. Initially, as a psychiatric social worker with a variety of populations: troubled families; abused and neglected children; and young families learning parenting skills, she listened as people spoke of their concerns and troubles, helping them find their way to making changes in their lives. More recently, she found her niche helping people record their life experiences, by helping a friend, who was a Holocaust survivor, tell his story in detail for the first time. Since that first oral history, she has worked with others, editing remembrances into a coherent tale so that their histories and life lessons will not be lost to younger generations. Although most are privately published for families, *To Be A Man: Johnnie Wilson Jr.*, an oral history of an African American man born in Louisiana in 1903, has been commercially published.

Susan, who received her BA from Hunter College and her MA from the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago, is an affiliated scholar with the American Studies Department at Kenyon College, where she has lectured on oral history techniques in the “North by South” undergraduate class and the Great Migration Master Teacher’s program at Kenyon College. She has also lectured at the Urban School of San Francisco, in their “Telling Their Stories: Oral History Archives Project.”

## DIANE L. WOLF

Diane Wolf is Professor of Sociology and Director of Jewish Studies at University of California, Davis. Her first book, *Factory Daughters*, is based on 1½ years of ethnographic fieldwork in Java, Indonesia where she analyzed young factory workers in new, modern Western-style factories and their interactions with their poor peasant families. Her book won an award from the Amer-

ican Sociological Association in 1996. That same year, she published an edited volume *Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork*, motivated by the stark inequalities she saw during her fieldwork, which not only remained but intensified after her fieldwork.

In preparation for fieldwork in a foreign country in a foreign language, Diane took a life history course at Cornell and worked with a Jewish holocaust survivor in Ithaca. Years later, she returned to redo his oral history more professionally, and added to it an academic essay focused on the questions of home and diaspora. In the essay, she compares her oral history of this survivor with the interview taped by the Steven Spielberg Visual History Project. This resulted in: *From Auschwitz to Ithaca: The Transnational Journey of Jake Geldwert*.

She has done research and published on children of Filipino immigrants in California and currently has a project with Prof. Yen Le Espiritu comparing children of Filipino and Vietnamese immigrants.

After several years of intensive research on hidden children and their relationship to their multiple families, her book *Beyond Anne Frank: Hidden Children and Postwar Families in Holland* came out with UC Press in January 2007. Her most recent publication is a co-edited book that came out in June 2007, *Sociology Confronts the Holocaust: Memories and Identities in Jewish Diasporas* (Duke University Press). This particular volume was a way to bring contemporary theoretical discourses such as those found in transnational and diaspora studies, race and ethnic studies and feminist studies to bear on sociological studies of the Shoah and post-Shoah life.

The thread that is woven throughout her major projects concerns the relationship between an individual, gender, and family dynamics. As the daughter of German Jewish refugees and a child of immigrants herself, her work has always had a personal and autobiographical hook.



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