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### Voices from Drug Court: Partnering to Bring Historically Excluded Communities into the Archives

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## Voices from Drug Court: Partnering to Bring Historically Excluded Communities into the Archives

### Cover Page Footnote

The authors wish to thank Andrew Dupree, whose insights and hard work made this project a reality. As well, we acknowledge the contributions and generosity of Judge Thomas Willmore, Brock Alder, and all those participated in the Project.

### Erratum

Erratum from Randy Williams and Jennifer Duncan for Voices from Drug Court: Partnering to Bring Historically Excluded Communities into the Archives (JWA 2019:10:1 article 8). Submitted 20 February 2021. The first and most important tenet of ethnographic and archival work is strict adherence to ethics: work to mitigate (do no) harm. Since the publication of this article, the authors have grown increasingly uneasy about their usage of the terms “drug addicts” (twice) and “recovering addicts” (once) in this article. Using the word “addict” to describe a person is pejorative and triggering and does not reflect the attitudes and feelings of the authors—or fit with the Opioid stigma-reduction work that Williams and USU partners are engaged in at present. (Note: these terms were also used by others in the article; we suggest that the term was likely not meant in a negative way, but rather employed as heard.) Thus, the authors encourage readers to substitute person-first language that recognizes the dignity of people depicted in this work, such as using “people who use drugs” and “people in recovery” in place of the descriptors noted above. One important facet of community partnerships by ethnographers or archivists must be the willingness for these professionals to acknowledge wrongs they may intentionally or unintentionally introduce into projects and work resolutely to improve their ethnographic and archival work. Academic humility is key to true partnerships in ethnography and archiving.

# Voices from Drug Court: Partnering to Bring Historically Excluded Communities into the Archives

Randy Williams  
Jennifer Duncan

## ABSTRACT

While many archivists have evolved their professional scope to bring diversity into their collections, we posit that much can still be done. One area for growth is greater work by archival professionals to partner with communities to help them tell and preserve their own stories, incorporating a community's own perspective and goals. This article discusses the community-based project between the Cache Valley Utah Drug Court and Utah State University Library's Special Collections & Archives. The project was conceived and co-managed by Andrew Dupree (name used with permission), a participant and now graduate of the Cache Valley Drug Court. Perhaps the only project of its kind as of this writing, this effort gives voice to a historically excluded community in archival records. This article examines the importance of ensuring that archivists include the voices of a diverse community in their collections by actively partnering to facilitate community participation in framing and building these collections. This approach will make archival collections more diverse, socially just, and inclusive, especially with historically excluded communities.

Michelle, 37, mother of seven:

*When I was about eight months pregnant [with my last baby], I got served with papers of distribution. Three controlled buys were done on me. And my heart dropped, and I started crying because I [had] changed my life. [Later,] I had just had my baby, thinking, 'I can't go to jail, I'm breastfeeding. What am I going to do? Everything is going to fall apart.' Because every time I've been on my binges, everything has been on my husband: everything. He's had to take care of the kids, he's mommy and daddy. He's an awesome husband, to where he cooks, he cleans, he's very maternal with them. And so I just started thinking, 'Oh, my gosh. What am I going to do?' And so I told Mike [defense attorney], 'What should I do? Tell me, what should I do?' And he's like, 'I can't tell you; but they're offering Drug Court.' And [sighs] my heart sank, like,*

*[sighs] 'I don't want to do this. I can't go to jail, but I don't want to do this [drug court] either.' ...So I looked at it as a gift and took drug court.'*<sup>1</sup>

Utah State University's Voices from Drug Court is a community-based fieldwork effort that includes 26 interviews with 28 unique individuals. The interviews provide an intimate look inside the life experiences of Cache Valley, Utah drug court participants, their families, and the professionals that direct the local drug court.<sup>2</sup> This representation is more authentic, gritty, and personally curated than can be portrayed in short segments on the news or in secondary source articles about the tragic opioid epidemic ravaging homes, schools, and workplaces in communities across the country.

Stories like Michelle's document an important segment of contemporary society and are vital records for future generations. They reflect the lived experience of people from diverse populations within a community. Often, however, these voices do not make their way to the mainstream communities' ear or into the archival collections of a repository charged with documenting the local history of a specific place. These voices are frequently referred to as "under heard" or "underrepresented" in the archival profession, but we suggest that this term is inadequate, and in many cases, dishonest and harmful. Work with Utah Humanities colleague Josh Wennergren inspired Folklore Curator Randy Williams to reconsider and revise her use of this terminology to "historically excluded" for many of the Utah State University (USU) ethnographic and oral history projects. This shift in language more accurately reflects the centuries-long exclusion of many voices, both purposely and unknowingly, from archival collections, that limits the ability of scholars to reconstruct our shared history. We believe this omission disregards the contributions and experiences of many communities throughout the U.S.

Additionally, this term more truthfully reflects the systematic non-inclusion of many voices into an archive, which may result from many factors. Explanations may include: an archivist's mainstream archival and library education, that until recently, glossed over diversity issues; a curator's possible limited awareness of the diverse local communities within her collecting area; an archivist's fear of or inexperience with partnering with local communities to collaborate in collecting projects; the lack of administrative understanding or support for diversity concerns in the archives (even though many universities and organizations have strategic plans that identify

1. Jennifer Duncan and Randy Williams, "Michelle Oral History Transcript, May 11, 2017," 2-7, Utah State University Libraries, Special Collections & Archives, Cache Valley Drug Court Oral History Project, <http://digital.lib.usu.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16944coll32/id/13/rec/50> (accessed January 29, 2019).
2. The Cache Valley Drug Court Oral History Project is available online at <http://digital.lib.usu.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16944coll32> and includes both interview audio and vetted transcripts. Each participant was given an informed consent form, which they all signed, and each had the opportunity to review their interview transcript and make changes if desired. The interviews, conducted with first names only (or alias if desired, though none did).

diversity as a key initiative); pushback from the local “majority” community and/or lawmakers; lack of project funding; and the overextended nature of an archivist’s work today.

This concern is not new to archivists.<sup>3</sup> In his 1970 Society of American Archivists (SAA) address, Howard Zinn asked his peers to “take the trouble to compile a whole new world of documentary material, [a]bout the lives, desires, [and] needs of ordinary people.”<sup>4</sup> In 1975, F. Gerald Ham, writing during the close of the Vietnam War and on the heels of the 1960s cultural revolution, cautioned archivists not to be “passive” or “abdicate” their “role in this demanding intellectual process of documenting culture.”<sup>5</sup> During this same time, the archives profession saw a rise of a “vocal minority,” also influenced by the civil rights, anti-war, and social justice movements of the 1960s and 70s that called for a more diverse workforce in the archival profession.<sup>6</sup>

Concerns of diversity and social justice in documentation are not exclusive to archivists; other professionals also struggle with efforts of inclusion and exclusion. American folklorists grapple with diversity within their work (and ranks). The American Folklore Society’s Cultural Diversity Committee, a permanent standing committee charged with research priorities, works “to keep the Society engaged with diverse communities.”<sup>7</sup> The committee seeks to teach the next generation of professionals best practices by “equipping folklore graduate students, new professors, and public-sector workers with the tools they need to explore folklore theory and history at the intersection of critical race theory, queer theory, transnational, feminist theory/praxis, and disability and performance theory.”<sup>8</sup>

Like archivists, American folklorists have long worked with underserved and excluded communities to gather, preserve, and present traditional knowledge in an

3. For an excellent overview of efforts to make archives more inclusive, see: Mary A. Caldera and Kathryn M. Neal, “Introduction,” in *Through the Archival Looking Glass: A Reader on Diversity and Inclusion*, eds. Caldera and Neal (Chicago: SAA, 2018), xii-xxiv.
4. Howard Zinn, “Secrecy, Archivists, and the Public Interest,” *Midwestern Archivist* 2, no. 2 (1977): 25.
5. F. Gerald Ham, “Archival Edge,” *The American Archivist* 38 (Winter 1975): 5.
6. Caldera and Neal, xii-xiii.
7. American Folklore Society, “Cultural Diversity Committee,” <https://www.afsnet.org/page/CDC> (accessed May 28, 2018).
8. *Ibid.*

effort to document the diverse traditional culture in U.S. communities.<sup>9</sup> Many folklorists work in tandem with local or national-level archives to preserve their fieldwork. As an example, the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress engages in culturally diverse fieldwork projects and houses rich collections of cultures from all over the world.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, two major professional groups charged with documenting diverse voices have identified the need for deeper, more sustained work to include *excluded* voices in their documentation and collection-growth practices and archival holdings.<sup>11</sup> Both organizations call for their membership to be proactive and vigilant in their efforts to hold a “mirror up to mankind” in our work in an effort to make the experiences of all included.<sup>12</sup> Many archival professionals have done so with outstanding results.

Work towards inclusivity of collections, which includes work behaviors and mindsets, cannot be carried out *only* by one or limited staff members, such as “minority” colleagues, diversity librarians, or folklore curators, alone. This work *must* be a focus for the entire archives and library. Others have written about efforts to

9. In 1977, the Folk and Traditional Arts Program at the National Endowment for the Arts was created; a major effort of the first director, Bess Lomax Hawes, was the creation of folk arts programs in U.S. states and territories that work to preserve and present folk communities and diversity in each state. Since 1977, the NEA Folk and Traditional Arts Program hosts the National Folk Heritage awards. During this time, several U.S. academic folklore programs began offering emphasis or degrees in public sector folklore. See: Bess Lomax Hawes, *Sing It Pretty: A Memoir (Music in American Life)* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Steve Siporin, *American Folk Masters: The National Heritage Fellows* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1992); Robert Baron and Nicholas R. Spitzer, *Public Folklore* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992); and Public Folklore Collection 1970-2004 Finding Aid, Utah State University Special Collections & Archives, <http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv08578>.
10. American Folklife Center, “About the American Folklife Center,” <https://www.loc.gov/folklife/aboutafc.html> (accessed May 27, 2018); American Folklife Center, “How to Do Research in the Archive of Folk Culture,” <https://www.loc.gov/folklife/ResearchInfo.html> (accessed May 27, 2018).
11. Both SAA and AFS have also identified the need to have a more diverse and inclusive workforce; the authors agree. As members of “minority” communities, archivists Valerie Love and Marisol Ramos discuss the ideal and realities of diversity in workforce and collections, noting: “Some institutions, particularly libraries and archives with relatively homogenous workforces, attempt to address these issues by increasing the number of minority staff members within the organizations. We do not believe that this is a bad approach, as gaining varied perspectives and insights is an important first step. However, it is only a first step, as achieving greater diversity of staff does not, in and of itself, automatically improve outreach to and inclusion of underrepresented communities in collection and services.... The organization as a whole must carry out this work” (emphasis added). Valerie Love and Marisol Ramos, “Identify and Inclusion in the Archives: Challenges of Documenting One’s Own Community,” in *Through the Archival Looking Glass: A Reader on Diversity and Inclusion*, eds. Mary A. Caldera and Kathryn M. Neal (Chicago: SAA, 2018), 3.
12. Ham, 13.

build stronger diversity in the archival workforce (Thibodeau) and some give steps for doing this work (Greene).<sup>13, 14</sup> Yet with all this incredible effort, we still falter.

Today, more than ever, *archivists* must be *activists*. We must all work to collaborate with local communities to collect and create collections that give voice to the excluded. Thus, in order to make archival records more diverse, and reflect the totality of any collecting region, an archivist must spend time outside the walls of the archive, learning from and working with the communities that they are charged with representing in historical records. Moreover, an archivist must learn to champion these communities' integration into the archives to administrators, funders, and the public. To do this Joanne Evans and her co-authors, suggest that archivists must advocate the "archival autonomy" of communities.<sup>15</sup>

*Archival autonomy is tentatively defined as the ability for individuals and communities to participate in societal memory, with their own voice, and to become participatory agents in recordkeeping and archiving for identity, memory and accountability purposes. The achievement of archival autonomy is identified as a grand societal challenge, with the need for archival activism to become an integral part of social movements on a local and global scale.*<sup>16</sup>

Archivists and recordkeepers have the power to create memory, and as David A. Wallace has written, "the work of archives is politics by other means."<sup>17</sup> He argues that we must endeavor to align our personal and our professional ethics:

*The path forward requires us to choose which values will animate us and guide our actions. The proposition being put forth here is that, in recognition of this thesis, we align ourselves with a social justice ethic that critically examines professional ethics and praxis.*<sup>18</sup>

13. Sharon Thibodeau, "Building Diversity Inside Archival Institutions," in *Through the Archival Looking Glass: A Reader on Diversity and Inclusion*, eds. Mary A. Caldera and Kathryn M. Neal (Chicago: SAA, 2018), 195-212.
14. Mark A. Greene, "Into the Deep End: One Archivist's Struggle with Diversity, Community, Collaboration, and Their Implications for Our Profession," in *Through the Archival Looking Glass: A Reader on Diversity and Inclusion*, eds. Mary A. Caldera and Kathryn M. Neal (Chicago: SAA, 2018), 41.
15. Joanne Evans, Sue McKemish, Elizabeth Daniels, and Gavan McCarthy, "Self-determination and Archival Autonomy: Advocating Activism," *Archival Science* 15 (December 2015): 337.
16. *Ibid.*, 338.
17. David A. Wallace, "Locating Agency: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Professional Ethics and Archival Morality," *Journal of Information Ethics* 19, no. 2 (2010): 184.
18. *Ibid.*, 185.

In fact, at the time Wallace authored this statement, he was responding to the existing SAA Code of Ethics for Archivists (2005).<sup>19</sup> As of this writing, SAA has revised this Code and now maintains a separate document entitled the Core Values Statement, approved in 2011, which explicitly states:

*Since ancient times, archives have afforded a fundamental power to those who control them. In a democratic society such power should benefit all members of the community. The values shared and embraced by archivists enable them to meet these obligations and to provide vital services on behalf of all groups and individuals in society.*<sup>20</sup>

The archivist's core values now specifically reference history and memory ("Archivists recognize that primary sources enable people to examine the past and thereby gain insights into the human experience"<sup>21</sup>) as well as social responsibility ("Yet, the archival record is part of the cultural heritage of all members of society"<sup>22</sup>). Accountability is also crucial to our work:

*Archivists in collecting repositories may not in all cases share the same level of responsibility for accountability, but they, too, maintain evidence of the actions of individuals, groups, and organizations which may be required to provide accountability for contemporary and future interests.*<sup>23</sup>

Randall C. Jimerson has also addressed questions of the profession's responsibility to exercise our power for the greater good of society through a constant weighing of professional and personal ethics:

*Ultimately, professional ethics cannot ignore or remain aloof from the individual's sense of morality, civic duty, and social responsibility.... The truly ethical archivist must remain true to her or his individual sense of morality bearing in mind the various claims and interests of other parties and the ultimate good of society.*<sup>24</sup>

19. Society of American Archivists, "Code of Ethics for Archivists, 2005," <http://ethics.iit.edu/ecodes/node/4560> (accessed May 25, 2018).
20. Society of American Archivists, "Core Values of Archivists, Approved by the SAA Council in May 2011," <https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics> (accessed May 25, 2018).
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Randall C. Jimerson, *Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice* (Chicago: SAA, 2009), 339-340.



By building the historical record, anchored in a diverse body of evidence, archivists hold society accountable to future generations.

As the folklore curator and the special collections librarian, we take the ideals of social justice and archival accountability seriously. And yet, we understand the challenges that working outside the archives brings when days are filled with acquisitions, collection processing, student-worker management, metadata creation, coding, meetings, liaison librarianship, donor relations, reference responsibilities, mentoring, and teaching. Nevertheless, we believe this work is vital to the health of our communities and collections.

One important way that Utah State University (USU) works to include ignored voices (like Michelle's) is through community-based oral history endeavors. These efforts are often the first introduction of an excluded community to archives and their collections; and this work builds a bridge for further partnerships and prospective material deposits. To do this work ethically and responsibly, these projects must begin with community inclusion at all levels of the work, from concept through completion and presentation. USU curators plan their oral history work using ethnographic documentation best practices and obtain Institutional Review Board approval for trained interviewers, including those from the community.<sup>25</sup>

The work of bringing historically excluded voices into our archives requires an honest and focused dedication from all levels of archival administration and staffing. In reality, it is hard for historically excluded voices to make their way into an archive. Even when invited to participate, it can be intimidating as "the establishment" is rarely seen to care about or treat excluded communities with respect. And, more simply, university campuses and other cultural institutions are hard to navigate, often having perceived and real rules that are off-putting and with easily overlooked barriers, such as difficult parking accommodations.

Owing to these concerns, we submit that the best way to make real change is to embrace community scholars in any such endeavor. Community scholars, those who are members of the community to be documented, have expert knowledge of the day-to-day experiences, practices, histories, and vocabularies that are vital to successfully carrying out all aspects of ethnographic fieldwork, whether project conceptualizing and planning, drafting questions, interviewing participants, metadata terminology assistance, publicity, or engaging in public programming. If this sounds like a

25. The ethical responsibilities of professional researchers to the individuals and communities who collaborate with them in the course of research projects are central concerns for a number of scholarly organizations including the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress ("Cultural Documentation Guidelines," <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/edresources/ed-trainingdocuments.html>), The American Folklore Society ("AFS Statement on Ethics," <http://www.afsnet.org/?page=Ethics>); "AFS Position Statement on Research With Human Subjects," <http://www.afsnet.org/?page=HumanSubjects>), and the Oral History Association ("Principles and Best Practices," <http://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices/>).

tremendous amount of work, it is; but it is ethically and realistically the only way to authentically bring diverse voices into an archive. We cannot continue with our archives-only curated projects and expect diversity to appear. Since 2006, all USU Special Collection & Archives' oral history efforts have included the support and guidance of community scholars.

In May 2016, Andrew Dupree, a Cache Valley Drug Court participant (now graduate), approached Williams with the idea of collecting the voices of this previously excluded community. Dupree became familiar with USU Libraries' oral history program through the USU/Library of Congress Field School for Cultural Documentation that produced the Cache Valley Refugee Oral History Project in 2015.<sup>26</sup> At the community event for the Refugee Oral History project in May 2015, Dupree heard Williams talk about the importance for archives to include underheard and underserved communities in fieldwork projects. His thoughts percolated on this concept, and he concluded that the drug court community was indeed such a community. When Dupree reached out to Williams, she was unaware of drug courts in general and had no idea there was a nearly 20-year-old drug court in Cache Valley. However, she saw this as an opportunity for partnership to preserve the voice of a community not represented in USU's repository. Williams brought Dupree's proposal to a regularly scheduled USU Special Collections & Archives staff meeting as a discussion item, and there was an immediate recognition that documenting the crisis of addiction and the process of recovery as it touches Utah was a part of USU curators' professional responsibility. Thankfully, this project was also recognized and generously supported at a statewide level, receiving an Oral History grant from Utah Humanities and the Utah State Division of History for the transcription of the interviews.

As of this writing, there are no other collections of drug court oral histories. Research in criminal justice may use intake data to study the lives of those admitted to drug court programs and sociological research often uses interviews to study the outcomes of drug courts, however true oral history collections of drug addicts and those in recovery are fairly rare.<sup>27</sup> While it is somewhat easy to locate individual oral histories of those who suffer from drug addiction, searches of the WorldCat database and several aggregators of archival content such as ArchiveGrid did not uncover collections similar to the USU Drug Court Oral History Project. The University of Michigan holds a 1970 collection documenting Methadone treatment. Columbia University is the repository for the Phoenix House Foundation Oral History Collection (2014-2015), which documents a therapeutic community model to address addiction. The Samuel Proctor Oral History Project at the University of Florida

26. "Cache Valley Refugee Oral History Project," Utah State University Special Collections & Archives, <http://digital.lib.usu.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16944coll14> (accessed January 29, 2019).

27. O. Hayden Griffin, Vanessa Griffin, Heith Copes, and John Dantzler, "Today Was Not a Good Day: Offender Accounts of the Incidents That Led to Their Admission to Drug Court," *Criminal Justice Studies* 31, no. 4, 388-401.

Libraries has the Addiction Oral History Project, a collection of 22 oral histories, which is perhaps the most similar to the USU project. This collection is the work of an undergraduate history student who recorded the stories of drug users, drug researchers, and members of the criminal justice and public health systems. However, none of these projects originated with the community itself and do not demonstrate the archival autonomy to which the USU project aspired. Moreover, the USU collection, as far as can be determined, is the only attempt at aggregating the stories of a specific drug court community, broadly defined.

Drug courts began operating in the late 1980s to address the rapidly growing felony caseloads straining the country's court system following President Ronald Reagan's legislative push to increase mandatory minimum sentencing laws for drug-related crimes.<sup>28</sup> These courts were the first example of specialized, boutique, or alternative courts. Other examples of such courts now include mental health courts, domestic violence courts, truancy courts, homelessness courts, prostitution courts, gambling courts, and most recently courts focusing on veterans returning from combat zones with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Over the past 25 years, alternative courts (specifically drug courts since they have the longest track record) have been studied extensively in terms of efficacy, cost-effectiveness, and manner of implementation. Research shows that drug courts are both effective and a worthwhile use of tax dollars.<sup>29</sup>

The first drug court opened in 1989 in Miami-Dade County, and today there are over 3,000 drug courts nationwide.<sup>30,31</sup> Drug courts first emerged in Utah as part of a pilot project in the mid-1990s, with Utah's Third District Judge Denis Fuchs presiding

28. During this time, the Reagan-era-supported "Just Say No" anti-drugs campaign was launched. Furthermore, during this time, pharmaceutical companies also began extensive marketing campaigns for the use of opioids. Subsequently, doctors (who received incentives for prescriptions), began routinely prescribing opioids as painkillers after surgery and for chronic pain, systematically setting up a troubling dynamic of over-prescribing addicting drugs to their patients. This combination of events effectively stigmatized those who did not or could not "just say no." More recently, conversations about drug suppression call for a different campaign: "Just Say Know," advocating for education and responsible choices. Thus, a byproduct of the "Just Say No" campaign was a no-tolerance for drugs, and incarceration for drug crimes rose. See: Kelly K. Dineen and James M. DuBois, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Can Physicians Prescribe Opioids to Treat Pain Adequately While Avoiding Legal Sanction?" *American Journal of Law and Medicine* 42, no. 1 (2016), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5494184/> (accessed January 29, 2019); Joseph Moreau, "I Learned it by Watching YOU! The Partnership for a Drug-Free America and the Attack on 'Responsible Use' Education in the 1980s," *Journal of Social History* 49, no. 3 (Spring 2016): 710-37.
29. National Drug Court Institute, *Painting the Current Picture: A National Report on Drug Courts and Other Problem-Solving Courts in the United States* (Alexandria, VA: National Drug Court Institute, 2016), 14-15.
30. Peter Finn and Andrea K. Newlyn, "Miami Drug Court Gives Drug Defendants a Second Chance," *Judicature* 77 (1994): 268.
31. National Institute of Justice, "Drug Courts," <https://www.nij.gov/topics/courts/drug-courts/pages/welcome.aspx> (accessed January 29, 2019).

over the first one in Salt Lake City in 1996.<sup>32</sup> In Northern Utah, home to Utah's First District Court, Judge Thomas Willmore and Brock Alder, of the Bear River Health Department, initiated a drug court for Cache Valley in 2000 and a second one for Box Elder County in 2001. Judge Willmore agreed to be interviewed for the Project and explained why he decided to pursue a drug court in Logan, Utah, which, on the surface, appears to be the perfect example of an idyllic small town.

*I didn't have much of an understanding about addiction. I haven't been involved in any type of addiction; none of my family members that I know of, or close personal friends have been addicted. So, I never had seen the problems, and the dire straits that an addict becomes, as it develops within their life. It really just hit me like a brick wall once I became a judge and started to deal with problem after problem and repeat offenders.*

*And so really, what was probably the driving force, more than anything, was that I was seeing these single mothers with children coming in, and the need to help them. And then also to try to do something, so it wouldn't go on to the next generation.*<sup>33</sup>

To date, thousands of Utahns have participated in the drug court program. At any given time, there are almost 1,000 participants across the state. According to the Utah Department of Health, from 2013 to 2015, Utah ranked seventh in the country for drug overdose deaths; and since 2002 these deaths are outpacing deaths due to firearms, falls, and motor vehicle crashes in our communities.<sup>34</sup> 2015 marked the first time in six years that there was a decrease in prescription opioid use, yet heroin deaths have simultaneously increased. Salt Lake City attorney Greg Skordas, one of the initial advocates for Utah drug courts, notes addicts are "our sons, daughters, mothers, and fathers. They are our neighbors, friends, and colleagues. They made unlawful choices not because they were inherently criminals but because they saw no other way to live their life in happiness."<sup>35</sup>

With Dupree's interest and Williams' outreach efforts, these two had a chance to include a historically excluded community into USU's Special Collections & Archives. Jennifer Duncan, USU Special Collections Unit Head, quickly signed on to the project team with Dupree and Williams. This trio, with help from Alder and support from

32. Greg G. Skordas, "Utah's Drug Court," *Utah Bar Journal* 28 (September/October 2015): 26-31.

33. "Thomas Oral History Transcript, March 7, 2017," 3, Utah State University Special Collections & Archives, Cache Valley Drug Court Oral History Project, Folk Coll 62, Item 49, <http://digital.lib.usu.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16944coll32/id/23/rec/51> (accessed January 29, 2019).

34. Utah Department of Health Violence and Injury Prevention Program, "Prescription Opioid Deaths," <http://www.health.utah.gov/vipp/pdf/RxDrugs/PDODeaths2015.pdf> (accessed January 29, 2019).

35. Skordas, 27.

Judge Willmore, worked for six months to organize the project.<sup>36</sup> Together Dupree, Duncan, and Williams embarked on a collaboration that began by building trust—vital to any oral history endeavor—and learning from each other. Dupree taught the curators about addiction, drug court practices, and drug court culture. In return, Williams discussed with Dupree and Duncan oral history work: ethics, USU Institutional Review Board (7816) and State of Utah Department of Human Services (0586) approval, project planning, oral history training, and grant writing. Both Duncan and Williams did research—online, in the library’s stacks, with public health officials, and at court.<sup>37</sup>

In September 2016, prior to the first interview in December, Duncan and Williams began attending drug court each Tuesday at noon. For the uninitiated, drug court can be overwhelming, and at times heart-wrenching. In addition, drug court has a very steep learning curve. Williams took notes on terms (“phasing up”) and phrases (“using dreams”) during court and she and Duncan frequently peppered Dupree and Alder with questions. During the beginning weeks they were at court, people were wary of the archives team. Some thought they were narcs or reporters. Slowly, as Dupree told people about the project and the visiting scholars, the community became more comfortable and began talking to them and even sitting

36. Additional information about the Cache Valley Drug Court Oral History Project is available at <https://archives.usu.edu/folklo/drugcourt.php> (accessed January 29, 2019).

37. An initial lack of understanding of the theory behind and the operations of Utah’s drug court put the curators at a distinct disadvantage prior to conducting interviews. In addition to doing general research on the topic, the curators met with public health officials where they learned that the approach of a drug court is to treat addiction first as a disease and to attempt to rehabilitate, rather than incarcerate individuals who have had encounters with the criminal justice system. Those charged with drug offences are diverted to the drug court and then offered a treatment option. A team of professionals attempts to address and resolve underlying public health, psychological, or social welfare problems through a therapeutic rather than a punitive approach, while still taking into account public safety.

In a typical drug court, this team consists of representatives from the judiciary, probation and parole agencies; law enforcement employees; attorneys for both the defense and the prosecution; public health officials; and members of the addiction and recovery support community. The Bureau of Justice Assistance, charged with supporting local criminal justice systems, has identified the key components that define drug courts: 1) Integrating treatment services with case processing, 2) Promoting public safety while using a non-adversarial approach between prosecution and defense counsel, 3) Identifying eligible participants early, 4) Providing treatment and rehabilitation on an appropriate continuum, 5) Monitoring abstinence, 6) Coordinating appropriate responses to participants’ compliance, 7) Facilitating ongoing judicial interaction with participants, 8) Monitoring and evaluating the program’s efficacy, and 9) Continuing interdisciplinary education for the team.

Along with forging partnerships in the community, each of these elements is, to some degree, represented in the USU collection; but more significant is the human stories that are revealed in the interviews. See: The National Association of Drug Court Professionals, Drug Court Standards Committee, “Defining Drug Courts: The Key Components,” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2004), iii.

with them in court. By November 2016 when Judge Willmore invited Williams to introduce the project at court, they were no longer complete outsiders to the drug court community.

Trust and understanding remained a difficult point of negotiation and continued to be an area for re-evaluation and care. Before the recorder was turned on for Heather and Ryan's interview, which took place on the USU campus on a Sunday (their only available day, when the Logan Library was closed), Heather shared that when arriving at the USU Library, she realized that she wasn't sure if she was actually "allowed" on campus.<sup>38</sup> This occurred after in-person conversations, emails, and texts; Williams, however, never thought to communicate that all are welcome on campus. Thus, breaking down these barriers and attitudes (both inside and outside the archives) regarding physical, intellectual, and experiential concerns like Heather's, takes time to build necessary trust.

When Dupree attended the 2015 public presentation on the Cache Valley Refugee Oral History Project, he recognized the need to provide a platform for the voices of the invisible drug court community of which he was a part—a community that is often feared or ignored by the general public. In his interview, Dupree articulated how he felt he had been silenced and the vulnerability he felt in even suggesting the project:

*...being on drug court, and being a felon, and being someone who has been arrested—I did [not] feel like I [had] a voice or a medium to express my voice.... So yeah, there's a complex of like inferiority that comes with the experience of being on drug court, and being arrested, and being a felon. And so, there's a lot of self-esteem issues, and confidence that comes with that. So there was a lot of hesitation, or, like I said, feelings of inferiority that came with that. And I was pretty nervous and pretty scared approaching you, and talking to you.<sup>39</sup>*

Building bridges, as noted, to the addiction/recovery community, particularly among a group of people who are currently involved with the criminal justice system and other social welfare organizations and who often already feel stigmatized, can be particularly tricky because this is a community in which trust is often in short supply. Dupree was the community scholar whose faith in USU's curators secured the ultimate trust of those who agreed to be interviewed. For Dupree though, emotion

38. To mitigate stress and for easy access, almost all the Cache Valley Drug Court Oral History Project interviews were conducted at Logan Library, the location of the May 24, 2017 event "Voices from Drug Court" that highlighted the collection.

39. "Andrew Oral History Transcript, March 3, 2017," 3, Utah State University Special Collections & Archives, Cache Valley Drug Court Oral History Project, Folk Coll 62, Item 43, <http://digital.lib.usu.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16944coll32/id/25/rec/44> (accessed January 29, 2019).

and personal investment in the outcome of the project made this process a challenging experience:

*So this whole process, it's been tough for me. And you know, sometimes I disappear, and I don't get back to you guys. And it's not that I've just disregarded you guys, but I mean, I sit there, and I think about you guys for hours upon hours. And I just—I go back and forth because that's just my personality. And there is a level of, I guess you could say, almost PTSD that comes with this whole experience.<sup>40</sup>*

While archivists and curators have a professional responsibility to do this work, this work is not a paid job for community scholars like Dupree, who may already be undergoing significant personal challenges. Without the entrée Dupree provided, however, a project with this community would not have been possible, particularly in the initial stages of developing interview questions, securing participants among those going through the drug court process, and even conducting the interviews. Thus, USU Special Collections felt the responsibility to compensate Dupree for his expertise and secured funding to pay him for interviews in which he participated as an interviewer.

Jessie, one of the project's first respondents, was also an amazing guide to the world of drug court. She clearly laid out the structure of the program and many of its processes. She also provided a foundational understanding of the role of drug court as a “scaffold” for people who are attempting to rebuild their lives in the community:

*[Drug court is] just showing you how to live life, and if you can get used to living your life like that—it's like building braces around your life, and then taking the braces out once your house is built. Like, once you have your life built, just take the braces out and it's still your life. They're just helping you get there; they're supporting you.*

*Whether or not you appreciate the support you get, but we need it, you need it. I mean, I sometimes feel bad for people that aren't on drug court, that don't have problems in their life, because I have so much more support than they do. Like you could just have a regular, average Joe suffering, like having a hard time in life, and I'm better off than him, because I've got the counselors to talk to; I've got a doctor to go see.<sup>41</sup>*

A significant component of the drug court program is working with drug addicts to find individual paths to recovery and out of the criminal justice system. The

40. Ibid., 6.

41. “Jessie Oral History Transcript, December 5, 2016,” 37-38, Utah State University Special Collections & Archives, Cache Valley Drug Court Oral History Project, Folk Coll 62, Item 5, <http://digital.lib.usu.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16944coll32/id/8/rec/4> (accessed January 29, 2019).

process is very much about unique solutions, as described by Angie W., a counselor at the Bear River Health Department where her clients include drug court participants. Her own brother is a recovering addict and she is passionate about working with drug court participants to identify individually tailored paths forward rather than looking at one-size-fits-all solutions.

*The one thing about drug court, and just recovery in general, is there is no right or wrong way—whatever works for that individual. I think it's so important that we, again, take a client-centered approach and say, 'Maybe we need to try something different for this person.'*

*For some, the 12-step meetings are what works. For others, it's more the counseling piece that works. For others, it's becoming more involved in their community and giving to others, and being a part of their family. There is no right or wrong way.*

*I think sometimes there's situations where it's like, 'Well, if you're not doing it one certain way, then it's wrong.' And I don't believe that. I think that everybody's addiction is the same, and yet it's so different; and I think that their recovery is the same. It's so different, and yet it's just the same.<sup>42</sup>*

Therefore, while drug court participants do make up a distinct community, they each have their own unique stories that explain their path to addiction and recovery.

As for the way that members of the Drug Court Committee (who are charged with overseeing the program) see the effect of this program, there are a variety of attitudes. Overall, it is clear that even criminal justice professionals who were initially skeptical have acknowledged changes in how they themselves understand these members of the community by listening and interacting in a different way with them. Aaron is a prosecuting attorney in Cache County:

*When you think of the kind of goals of a prosecutor, sitting in drug court, watching someone who has already entered a guilty plea, you know—I guess one could say, 'Well the prosecutor doesn't care at that point, because he has his guilty plea.' And if this person fails drug court, then he gets a conviction, and then the person gets sentenced. And then potentially, on some of these charges, that person goes to prison....*

*So, am I interested in getting convictions? Do I want people to sign up just so I can get guilty pleas? No; that's not my intention at all. Not my intention because I know what the drug court program has done for many people, and can do for the people that are currently in it.*

42. "Angie W. Oral History Transcript, February 14, 2017," 33, Utah State University Special Collections & Archives, Cache Valley Drug Court Oral History Project, Folk Coll 62, Item 11, <http://digital.lib.usu.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16944coll32/id/1/rec/10> (accessed January 29, 2019).



*So when I see, or at least when I (many times) only see the problems, I think ‘If I’m not careful’—that skews my perception of, not only the program, but the people that are in the program. And because of that, I am constantly checking myself to make sure that I don’t just look at these people as continual problems.*

*But I need to see them as people who have feelings, who all have mothers – hopefully mothers who love them, you know, and who have family, and in some cases, have kids.<sup>43</sup>*

Aaron spoke about his own biases regarding a specific participant and how they were overcome by understanding his story and witnessing his recovery.

*So you know, it’s interesting to see this guy be successful in the program. And I’m very proud of that not because of anything that I’ve done, at all. I mean, because initially, you know, what I was wanting was to get these felony convictions and send him to prison; but that’s not what has happened. And I think if he continues on this path, and graduates—he will have absolutely earned the dismissal on those charges, because he’s done so well.<sup>44</sup>*

In terms of what the originator of this program in Cache Valley hopes comes from the oral history project, Judge Willmore spoke about the social good that can come from a criminal justice program of which most community members have no knowledge:

*Well drug court is the highlight of my profession, it is. It’s something that’s made a difference in the community, and affected not only the addicts, but their families. And it is: it’s the highlight.... Well drug court is a breath of fresh air, as far as seeing people change, and seeing families. You know, you see the moms and dads, and the sisters and brothers there. And as those trust relationships are restored. I’ll be out often at a restaurant, and I’ll have drug court graduates, or family members just come (or in the grocery store) and just come and say, “Thank you.” It means everything; it does.<sup>45</sup>*

In his interview, Dupree reflected on the importance of humanizing a segment of our communities with which many people have little day-to-day interaction.

*What [do] I hope people get from it? I hope that those going into any of the related fields that come along with drug court, that would be the judicial side,*

43. “Aaron Oral History Transcript, February 10, 2017,” 21, Utah State University Special Collections & Archives, Cache Valley Drug Court Oral History Project, Folk Coll 62, Item 9, <http://digital.lib.usu.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16944coll32/id/24/rec/8> (accessed January 29, 2019).

44. *Ibid.*, 21-22.

45. “Thomas Oral History Transcript, March 7, 2017,” 17.

*you know, attorneys, judges, paralegals, prosecutors, the law enforcement, and you have social workers (such as those that work at Bear River). I think we need to humanize all of this. And that's what I've seen with the two of you, as you've done this project. Is that you've got to know some of us, and I think that brings a level of like humanity that maybe you guys possibly didn't have before this?*

*And I don't mean that in a negative way at all. I just mean that prior to this, maybe it was more of something you saw on the news, or in a passing magazine article, so forth.*

*And so I think that yeah, I think that one thing I'd like is definitely humanizing it, because addiction and abuse is something that hits so many of us: whether it's family members or friends. And so I think if we can approach it that way, that helps so much.<sup>46</sup>*

Jessie reflected that it is hard for people who haven't walked this path to really understand:

*A lot of people look at it and they don't understand it; they're like, 'Why can't you just do this?' Because I don't know how. I don't know how to be an adult, that's why. You know? Not that nobody ever tried to teach me; but the way I lived life (or manipulated life) to work for me is just now how it flies. That's not how it flies in society.<sup>47</sup>*

Another interviewee, Rebecca, also indicated her desire to be treated with kindness and dignity as she went through the recovery process:

*I have had people tell me that... "This is what you deserved," you know, with the way that they treated me, or the way that they—I think it's somebody who is not an addict to dehumanize the addict very, very quickly. Because they're so frustrated, and they're so mad—and I get that; I do.*

*But, they dehumanize them with a lot of the cruelty, and the words they speak, and the way that they think that they're getting through to somebody. And I just—I don't believe in fear and shame-based recovery. It's not going to get the person to where they need to go; it's just not. And if it does—well that's the exception to the rule in my experience.<sup>48</sup>*

46. "Andrew Dupree Interview, March 3, 2017," 14.

47. "Jessie Interview, December 5, 2016," 16.

48. "Rebecca Oral History Transcript, December 15, 2016," 23, Utah State University Special Collections & Archives, Cache Valley Drug Court Oral History Project, Folk Coll 62, Item 3, <http://digital.lib.usu.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16944coll32/id/16/rec/3> (accessed January 29, 2019).

In truth, unless you have walked the path of addiction yourself—personally or with someone about whom you care deeply—you may not be able to empathize with these members of your community. However, this project seeks to develop that empathy and to diversify—beyond just questions of race, gender, and class—the community voices we have preserved for our community in the USU Special Collections & Archives.

As archivists and curators, it is our job to document our present-day communities for future generations. Stories of addiction and recovery will be a critical component to telling the story of Utah in the early 21st century. At present, Williams is working with Dr. Sandra Sulzer and five USU Extension faculty *and* community scholars on the Stories of Utah’s Opioid Crisis, a nine county oral history endeavor in Utah that builds off the work of the Voices from Drug Court: Cache Valley Drug Court Oral History Project. The products of this significant effort will become a digital collection. At the conclusion of the effort, presentations on the “stories” will be shared at community conversations—helping to give local voice and reduce stigma to this social problem sweeping our state and nation.

Preserving this history through only government reports, court cases, or newspaper stories, without the significant contributions of and collaboration with the people who actually experienced these events, will not result in a story well told or give guidance to professionals working to improve lives. Hearing the recordings of the voices in the Cache Valley Drug Court Oral History Project, a historically excluded community now included in our archives, conceived of by community scholar Andrew Dupree, is more powerful than simply seeing the data or reading an impersonal newspaper article could ever be.