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ABSTRACT
In response to the OHR editors' prompt regarding important considerations for teaching oral history during disasters and pandemics, this article presents a case study model for developing socially engaged and collaborative pedagogy that centers on the ethics of conducting oral history in the present moment of crisis and hiatus. Central to our oral history research and pedagogical concerns about teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic are inquiries such as, what conditions create an ethical time for recording history? How can we use oral histories about the pandemic to address the normalized conditions of precarity and instability that millions in the United States and around the world face on a daily basis? In addressing these concerns, we also gesture towards developing a participatory mode of history making that redresses historical erasure, misrepresentation, and underrepresentation.

KEYWORDS
COVID-19; pandemic; socially engaged pedagogy; ethics of the ask

In response to the *Oral History Review* editors' prompt regarding important considerations for teaching oral history in the midst of the pandemic and training students to conduct COVID-19-related interviews, one could make the argument that oral historians have always conducted their work during precarious times. Tumultuous life circumstances, conflicted political environments, economic shifts, and historical upheavals are disruptive for someone, somewhere, at any time. Oral historians step into the breach to document stories of pain, triumph, and daily life. In the initial days of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, two impulses seemed to circulate among oral historians over email LISTSERVs and social media. On the one hand, oral historians felt the need to mobilize and capture the immediacy of people's experiences of global lockdown, fears of illness, uncertainty, sudden deaths, job loss, and a host of other dilemmas unfamiliar for several generations.[1] On the other hand, others in the field thought it "too soon" and even insensitive to gather oral histories. Yet, as esteemed oral historian Mary Marshall Clark said in a recent webinar, "It's never too soon . . . and it's never too late."[2] This article details how we – Ana Paulina Lee, a professor teaching a Contemporary Civilization course through a postcolonial lens, and Kimberly Springer, a curator for an oral history archive – pursued an integrated approach to teaching oral history as a socially engaged process that interrogates how history is created, who writes history, and how to make history-as-it happens legible in a crisis situation for undergraduate students.

Contemporary Civilization II at Columbia and Pandemic Year One in New York City

In mid-March 2020, Columbia University was among the first higher education institutions in the country to suspend classes and evacuate students due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Within forty-eight hours, 5,600 students left their dorms; the University

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allowed three hundred students to remain on campus who could not otherwise leave. Following the evacuation, the university moved all classes online. Instructors and students found themselves teaching and learning from across different time zones, some in difficult situations the pandemic exacerbated.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a traumatic circumstance that makes it difficult to plan for the future since new directives have dramatically changed from one moment to the next. At this writing, two months after the evacuation, New York City remains the epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic. Mobile morgues, a tent hospital in Central Park, conversion of a major tennis center, the deployment of the USNS Comfort, and the conversion of the massive Javits Center as a temporary field hospital, are examples of the rapid, and seemingly surreal, adaptations the City undertook to handle the overwhelming number of patients and deaths.[3] In New York, and across the United States, non-essential businesses shut down and 38.6 million people have filed for unemployment.[4] Though lockdown status varies by state, Columbia students began sheltering in place, with first-hand knowledge of people impacted by COVID-19 and the economic crisis. Each life quickly became a microcosm of pandemic experience worth documenting through oral history.

When the pandemic hit New York in spring 2020, Lee was teaching the course Contemporary Civilization, which is part of the core curriculum of undergraduate studies at Columbia University. Columbia students generally enroll in Literature Humanities during their first year and Contemporary Civilization during their second year. Both are year-long courses, which give instructors and students the opportunity to spend two consecutive semesters together and build a lasting cohort. Lee and Springer co-planned an oral history component in the course sequence to include a unit on "Inclusive Histories." This unit aimed to address a recurring critique from students about the university's core curriculum's missing voices: "Where are voices of women and people of color?" In response to the exclusive canon, composed of predominantly male authors from areas known today as Italy, France, Greece, and the United Kingdom, Lee structures her assignments on the theme of exclusion and the politics of inclusion. Arguably, all canons are exclusionary, and so taking this as a starting point, she focuses on teaching her students to understand the logic of exclusion as a relationship between knowledge and power. Each time the class approaches a new text, students ask of it, whose histories are remembered and how? What is at stake for this author? How are other people's voices and images appropriated for social, political, and economic agendas? Who gets to tell their histories? This teaching practice plays out in a semester-long assignment called "concept histories" composed of a series of scaffolded writing and peer-review assignments. In a sequence of essay prompts that emphasize the practice of good writing through many revisions, students trace the intellectual history of a concept. Concept history examples include keywords like citizen, savage, labor, property, freedom, morality, truth, virtue, and nature, among others.

In the beginning of the fall semester, students identify a concept in assigned texts. Then, in their essays and weekly discussion posts, they practice tracing the philosophical and intellectual history of a concept. This allows them to spend months thinking deeply as well as writing and revising their ideas about their chosen concept's intellectual history. In the second semester, students may choose new concept history words to explore or continue tracing their words from the previous semester. They then continue thinking

and writing about their concept histories in relation to larger questions about the politics of inclusion and historical memory.

When Lee taught this class in spring 2020, she asked students to visit different historical sites in New York City and elsewhere to put their concept histories and the ideas of the authors on the syllabus to the test by placing them in conversation with histories of people who made a significant difference in society but whose contributions are starkly left out of national narratives. A prompt from the assignment included the inquiry, "How does their exclusion or misrepresentation function as a device to advance different political and economic agendas?" Students turned in powerfully written and carefully researched papers about historical sites and people who made significant contributions to society but who barely have a place in the annals of history.

One student, Victoria, wrote about the conception of family, linking Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women and a Vindication of the Rights of Men* and Mabel Lee, the first Chinese-American woman to earn a PhD in Economics at Columbia University and a leader of a women's rights parade in Manhattan before women could vote.[5] Victoria examined archives at Mabel Lee's church in Chinatown and interviewed some of its members, gathering an impressive archive and writing an excellent final paper about Mabel Lee and her work in advancing political representation for women. Andrew, an aspiring architect, researched honorary street signs as memory sites, focusing on the history of Elizabeth Jennings, who played a key role in desegregating public transportation in New York City.[6] Andrew was deeply frustrated by the limited impact of Jennings's lower Manhattan sign that included physical barriers preventing close examination and no description of Jennings's historic civil rights work. These projects are just a few examples of the rich histories students reconstructed through primary source research and site-specific explorations of geographies of history, prior to the pandemic altering the course's structure.

Through these assignments, Lee aims to develop research-driven models of socially engaged pedagogy that treat history and knowledge production as a collaborative process among diverse participants in the course. In addition to approaching concept histories and site-specific explorations as primary sources, our initial, pre-pandemic plan was for students to listen to existing oral histories and interrogate first-person testimony and memory as additional primary sources. We wanted to enable students to trouble historical chronology and seemingly coherent historical arcs using the Oral History at Columbia's (OHAC) oral history collections to examine evidence of the politics of exclusion and inclusion in historical sourcing (Columbia established its oral history collection in 1948). OHAC's teaching mission is geared toward understanding the politics of exclusion as they have shaped the collection and reparative moves toward inclusion in OHAC's contemporary collecting priorities.[7] In the original assignment, Lee's students were going to listen to existing oral histories as primary sources and against this structural backdrop that shaped the collection.

Changes in Oral History Instruction under Pandemic Conditions

Since the class was already discussing the politics of inclusion, it was a smooth transition to shift from analyzing oral histories to conducting oral histories when the pandemic hit New York. The pandemic created an unusual opportunity to collect oral histories in a time

of crisis. COVID-19 exposed and exacerbated existing inequalities, and we shifted the assignment to incorporate social issues and current events into the curriculum as history unfolded. We employed a socially engaged and collaborative pedagogical approach that works toward redressing historical erasure, misrepresentation, and underrepresentation. We shifted from asking students to listen to existing oral histories (oral history as product) and encouraged them to think beyond issues of whose voices are missing in OHAC's collections to interrogating *how* and *why* underrepresentation or misrepresentation of certain voices serve political agendas. We tasked students with understanding how processes of historical erasure and silence have contributed to ongoing forms of oppression and violence rooted in histories of social difference (race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, caste, disability, and class). By engaging students in creating oral histories of the pandemic (oral history as process), they embarked in the reparative project of listening to the voices around them.

In asking students to take on oral history interviewing when their lives and learning processes have been disrupted in ways that none of us could have imagined, it was important to direct them to ethical frameworks already established through years of collective practice detailed in the Oral History Association's Best Practices guidelines.[8] Yet it was just as important to recognize that long before oral history was institutionalized and professionalized in scholarship, historical societies, and other entities dedicated to public memory, people have told stories about major disruptions in their lives with care and within ethical frameworks distinct to their families and communities. We were curious to see what learnings from the semester about the politics of exclusion students would bring to who they decided to include in these oral histories.

Students learned about the field of oral history as both process and product within the contexts they are operating as individuals and as a collective class. In providing students with instruction, we all worked our way through a seismic transition that called for flexibility and adaptability. If, under normal circumstances, "students don't know what they don't know," it was especially imperative during the early stages of this pandemic that we, as instructors, were transparent that *we* do not know what we don't know either about living and responsibly conducting oral history in a pandemic! Above all else, we encouraged our students – and ourselves – to engage deeply in a reciprocal process fully cognizant of our subjectivities and positionalities, which is also what we hope from oral history narrators, archivists, and future researchers. Devising ways for oral history inquiry to remain rigorous – while also creative – during a moment so heavy with grief and uncertainty was another of our goals.

Central to our research and pedagogical concerns were inquiries such as: What conditions create an ethical time for recording history? Whose stories are worth memorializing? Whose voices are notable and essential during a pandemic? The category of "essential worker" during the COVID-19 pandemic refers primarily to frontline workers, doctors, nurses, paramedics, and hospital staff. In addition to medical professionals who are battling the virus, essential workers also include supermarket cashiers, stockers, order pickers, truck drivers, sanitation workers, delivery service workers, factory workers, agricultural workers, and meatpacking workers, among a wide range of laborers who, in a regular economy, are treated as disposable laborers without workplace and adequate healthcare protections. The pandemic exposes the vast socioeconomic inequities and fragile infrastructure of the country. Groundwork laid to marginalize undocumented

citizens – many of whom pay state and local taxes using Individual Tax ID numbers – has effectively left millions of people deemed essential, but now visibly marked expendable, outside the United States's tenuous social safety net. In response, the government has enacted radical measures, including a 2.2 trillion USD stimulus package and direct payments of up to 1,200 USD to American citizens. These measures have proven inadequate in the face of the immense structural weaknesses in the social welfare system. As of this writing, there were more than one million confirmed cases in the United States, more than 96,479 deaths, with 28,905 deaths in New York City alone.[9] Mapping deaths by race, treated as an afterthought, in New York City and its boroughs, matched patterns of income inequality, with blacks and Latinx people dying at twice the rate of white people.[10]

In creating a space for ethically asking students to conduct oral histories for this assignment, we accounted for the equity issues students were confronting now that they were in different parts of the country and the world, with uneven access to internet and private spaces. We stressed empathy in considering the wide range of foreseeable and unforeseeable challenges when structuring the new format of the online class and assignments. As we attempted to figure out how to be, how to pause, how to get on with things, how to be accountable, and how to be gentle with ourselves and others, instructing students in oral history as a methodology and as a primary source required us to consider limitations of time, various emotions, and technical resources, all factors impacting students and staff thrown into disarray while attempting to create a body of knowledge ethically. We drew on our inclusive pedagogy foundation in asking students to consider access issues in their exploration of how oral history might need to be more flexible than under usual circumstances.

Instructors working with students to conduct oral history during spectacularly disruptive times should consider the following questions: To what individuals did students have access? How does one interview vulnerable populations while respecting social distancing requirements? What kind of time and psychological capacity did they have for seeing this project through? How could we address shortcomings in historical and oral history methodologies in line with their learning up to the point when the semester was disrupted? How could we situate their oral history work as reparative and inclusive, despite the ways in which the pandemic has revealed inequalities inside and outside the classroom?

Within the pandemic context, students could no longer physically access OHAC's archives, so we opted to split the class sessions into two parts for remote learning. Part one focused on "What is Oral History?" and part two gave an overview of "The Nuts and Bolts of Oral History." In essence, part one explored oral history as a product and the historical evolution of the collection, which shaped OHAC's holdings and also influenced the development of the field. Part one started with a video featuring Dr. Ifeoma Nwanko (Vanderbilt University) defining oral history by succinctly engaging the work of Zora Neale Hurston to draw distinctions between history as so-called factual accounts and oral history storytelling as a rich, "Well. What happened was . . . " narrative.[11] This section also makes a distinction between popular storytelling ventures, such as *StoryCorps*, and lightly edited, journalistic renderings of "the oral history of" ilk, as described by Evan Faulkenbury in this issue, to illustrate for students various characterizations of oral history. Aligned with Lee's teachings on the politics of exclusion, Springer addressed OHAC's composition of oral histories as co-created life histories, sometimes focused on

particular organizations or major events, and how these stories fit within accepted notions of history. She also discussed with students the politics of meaning-making and how biases in traditional archival collecting problematized Columbia's historical collecting practices.[12]

Devoting several sessions to labor intensive oral history pedagogy requires various levels of collaboration including in-syllabus design to integrate instruction with sustained support during the oral history collecting process. Effectively teaching students basic oral history methods would ideally include instruction in the nuts and bolts process of pre-interviews, equipment use, the actual interview, and the post-interview, with students working collaboratively and individually. During lockdown, with students off-campus and in locales scattered across the globe, and in a short-time frame due to the rapidly approaching semester's end, Springer gave roughly an hour-long remote session summarizing key methodology points in conducting oral histories. Since students were scattered across time zones, we recorded the training for classmates who could not join synchronously. Some students also had to grapple with positive COVID-19 diagnoses that understandably hindered their ability to participate synchronously. In addition to the oral history archives' online research guide, there are a number of available quality manuals and sources of advice for conducting oral histories. To assist students in listening to their narrators, we emphasized the idea of balancing background research with thinking of the oral history interview as a co-created conversation.

Lee's approach to historical exclusions and deconstructing how historical questions are asked fit well with how Springer teaches oral history methodology: for both of us the goal was not to "give voice to the voiceless" but to recognize the cacophony of voices always already present, if only we would listen. To this end, the students' homework following our first session was a telling/writing, listening/hearing exercise meant to help students distinguish between those activities. As one student concluded after this homework assignment, oral history is "guided storytelling." It was important to us that students have this epiphany in approaching narrators and conducting interviews, given the varying levels of empathy or sensationalism reflected in media coverage of how the pandemic was affecting people in those early days of lockdown.

Driven by the desire to find a meaningful project that allowed students to process the pandemic and take a record of it for posterity, we posted a number of questions to the university's course platform for students to consider, including this central one: "What do you think are the benefits of doing an oral history about the pandemic right now?" Recurring themes in their answers were that conducting oral histories during the crisis moment captures "raw" and "authentic" emotions, "accurate" details, "immediate physical and emotional reactions," "the small details," "confusion," and "spontaneity." Their responses related their own visceral reactions to an overwhelming sense of instability when conditions were changing by the minute. Events were too current to enable retrospective and cohesive narratives, which, in turn, might not capture the all-consuming sense of confronting the crisis in real time. As students learned in the first half of Lee's course, once enough time passes to allow events of the present to settle, historians might mold the past into various arcs. Capturing oral histories in the moment of crisis was a central concern for us when thinking about oral history testimonies and the ethics of asking both students and potential narrators to document this space of unfolding trauma.

Taking up ethical concerns of oral history with a particular focus on conducting oral histories during an emerging traumatic period, we addressed the ethics of asking potential narrators to sit for an interview. This included discussing with students the appropriateness of conducting an oral history interview at a time of great stress and trauma. We listened to them, showed compassion and empathy, and held additional office hours. We were concerned for the students' emotional and physical well-being in conducting the interviews. Some students were preoccupied with whether to ask narrators who were essential workers or those who contracted COVID-19 to share these highly important stories. Others wanted to interview elderly family members and had to grapple with technical aspects of remote interviewing during social distancing. While these might seem like pragmatic concerns specific to any interviewing situation, in the context of the pandemic, we were overly cautious due to uncertainty about how the virus spreads, as well as the psychological implications of doing oral history in quarantine. To this end, students workshopped who and how to ask, as well as collectively created a question bank of about thirty questions from which they could draw, including:

- Have you lived through an event that caused a somewhat similar impact on society (e.g. natural disaster, another pandemic, etc.)? If so, what lessons can you apply from that experience to the current state of life?
- How does your awareness of other societies' color your preparation for our current situation?
- How has social distancing taught you more about yourself? Has social distancing revealed anything about your relationships with others (i.e. friends, family, colleagues)? If so, how?

We did not tell students who to invite to sit for their oral history interviews. In ordinary circumstances, for a thematic course, we might ask them to tell us who they selected and give us their rationale to ascertain a good fit for a thematically archived collection. In this instance, everyone is impacted by the pandemic; so questions of thematic fit were secondary to the ethics of the ask.

There are established ethics around informed consent (age and ability to consent, rights of narrators not to respond or to withdraw), but where does sensitivity to concurrent and ongoing trauma fit into this oral history work? How do students' own identities and situations influence who they interview, and who they have access to under shelter-in-place, self-isolation, and quarantine? Each of those circumstances were dictated by where one happened to be when local, state, and national mandates were issued, creating limitations on who students could invite. International repatriation guidelines changed daily. Financial resources for travel varied by educational institution. Public health and safety guidelines became more restrictive with increasing knowledge about the virus. And personal mores about possibly carrying, passing, or being susceptible to the virus have continued to evolve in response to different health officials' advice.

Students secured interviews with a compelling array of individuals, a testament to their creativity under the circumstances, as well as the willingness of narrators to give of themselves when we are all being asked to do so in many ways. Recognizing the pressure of the pandemic situation, Lee made the oral history assignment optional. In the end, twenty-one students of twenty-two enrolled in the course submitted interviews. One

student opted out. Two narrators opted out of having their interviews included in the archival collection. Each student conducted one interview, though a few students interviewed a couple or family in a single sitting. The interviews average sixty minutes in length.

Demographically, the remote nature of the interviews confounds easy assessment of geographical range for the project. From our meeting with the students over Zoom and check-ins, we were able to ascertain that students and narrators were located in a range of places across the United States, including Florida, California, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Massachusetts, and across New York City's boroughs; one student was located in England.

Addressing the racial and ethnic makeup of Lee's students and narrators is more complex than a simple tally. Earlier in the academic year, Lee's students were already grappling with questions of the social construction of race in history and in their own lives. As two instructors of color, we recognize ways in which accounting for race can be tokenizing. We also did not want demographic questions to shape narrator selection nor interview content inorganically. Questions of racial and ethnic identity were left up to the students to negotiate within the context of their course discussions, and we found that the students' selection of narrators were richer for it. Our students themselves came from various backgrounds and, as a result, their narrators organically reflected this diversity with narrators and interviewees from the United States, as well as from Taiwan, Mexico, India, China, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and the former Soviet Union. Similarly, we did not direct students to ask narrators about socioeconomic background explicitly. Yet by listening to the oral histories, one can infer socioeconomic background from narratives of educational attainment, occupational choices, and narrators' needs and priorities while under lockdown.

The majority of the narrators were family members, presumably isolating in the same domestic space. When interviewing relatives with whom they were sheltering in place, students were able to gain some critical distance by drawing on the Contemporary Civilization course's themes of inclusion and exclusion. More than one student engaged relatives who are medical workers, careful to note that they were already probably extremely maxed-out emotionally, physically, and psychically by the magnitude of extraordinary workdays and nights.[13] Isaac conducted an interview in stages with his father who is a private practice physician.[14] Attentive to both his father's grueling schedule and capacity for participating in the project, he observed that conducting the interview in stages allowed for an almost "time-lapsed" view of the unfolding pandemic and medical responses for a smaller medical office, as opposed to the decision-making being conveyed through media reports about hospitals. An online debrief conversation with students considered how their narrators' lives and occupations give us broad societal overviews of the pandemic, as well as the quotidian impacts on individual lives across diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds and professions.

Most students interviewed family members in quarantine with them. The pandemic allowed them a chance to ask how family members made sense of the crisis. In the following two examples, interviewers asked narrators if this moment resembled anything they had lived through before. While their responses involve different contexts, the United States and Haiti, they share a commonality in how they both make sense of the current crisis by relativizing it with other moments of political and economic turmoil or natural

disasters, which gives unique insight into how COVID-19 stirred together a unique storm of political and economic crisis with an ecological disaster.

Indira Ramgolam interviewed Constance Chastain, a histologist:

Indira: Have you lived through any other major events like or unlike a pandemic?

Constance: I'm not sure that I could say that I've lived through something with this same magnitude because this affects the whole world. However, I have had some natural disasters in my life. The first one would be 1971 in Los Angeles. There was a very large earthquake. I was young, and I remember it vividly. It was very scary. Our house was shaking. The aftershocks were scary. There were so many of them. We had a two-story house. One side of it was only one story. We all took our mattresses and slept there. It was a very scary time.

Then, there were a few other things that happened. There was a very bad fire season that I lived through out West, and then shortly after I moved to Florida, Hurricane Andrew happened. Then I moved to Ormond Beach, Florida, and there was a very bad fire season up there, and we were evacuated, and the last few years, or I would say decade, in Florida has been pretty bad with hurricanes as well. So, I have lived through a few disasters – nothing quite like this – and I'm not sure that anything could prepare you for something like this.

Amanda Amilcar was curious about her mother's experiences of the pandemic as a Haitian immigrant with a high-level job in banking.

Amanda: As you know, I'm conducting this interview mostly to kind of get a better sense of individual experiences in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic and the lifestyle of having to quarantine for this long. And so with that in mind, how would you describe your lifestyle as a child in Haiti and I mean has there ever been any instances of a national crisis, kind of similar to what's happening now, that's happened in Haiti while you were there that you can think of?

Irene: I can tell you that you know the last few years when I was in Haiti sort of felt like a quarantine because there were so many political turmoils going on and you know, a lot of times it was basically go to school and come back, you know? We were lucky sometimes like if school was in session, because of a lot of the political things going on, sometimes they wouldn't even have schools. So we would have to basically stay home for a week or two weeks however it lasts, and we really couldn't go anywhere. We had to stay home and just hunker down, you know, maybe watch TV, you know, but really just reading a lot. Because, as you know, a lot of time in Haiti, you know there's no electricity. So you can't even really watch TV like 24/7 like here. So, being quarantined for a couple of weeks probably felt like a couple of months for us because we didn't have like all the luxury that you guys have here, the internet and things to keep you occupied. So it was basically going outside, playing with your brother or sister, and reading you know a novel or something like that, getting some work done for school. But we always had that, like I said, sometimes we were able to go to school, sometimes we weren't.

> And when we were able to school in those situations, we had to sometimes basically – because everybody wore uniforms really in Haiti. So we had to put our uniforms on and then put like a big sweater on and then get in the car and my dad would drop us off because he didn't want to be driving like in the street, you know to get to school because we lived in a decent area. But sometimes to get from point A to point B, you have to go into a not-so-nice area. And he didn't want to be driving in the not-so-nice area for people to see us wearing our uniforms, which meant that you know, we had enough means to go to school, and some people really didn't like that and they would basically maybe like you know chase you down the street.

The pandemic serves as a unifying thread across all the interviews but each narrator's understanding of crisis is shaped by their unique life experiences. In turn the oral history collection of the pandemic is not only about COVID-19 but the stories in the collection give insight into the dimensions of a crisis that traverses economic, political, public health, and ecological spheres.

Practical Considerations about Socially Engaged Pedagogy during a Major Event

The question of access to resources shifted dramatically in the beginning stages of this pandemic. Oral historians encountered funding challenges under pre-pandemic circumstances. There are institutions capable of seeking grants and funding for their oral history work, which includes staffing, equipment, transcription, travel, and archival and preservation costs. But if we focus simply on *time* as a resource, the temporal has taken on a disproportionate amount of thought and consideration in how one conducts oral history in this moment, particularly for students. Usually occupied with class meetings, discussion sections, labs, homework, activist work, volunteering, campus extracurriculars, sports, and socializing, students were abruptly told to leave campus with varying degrees of support for returning home. Students' ability to participate in virtual learning threw into sharp relief their different economic circumstances. Time, which before the pandemic was routinized and scheduled by registrars, became a mixture of free-floating, anxiety-ridden, and distracted attempts to create some semblance of "normal" work while not knowing how to plan for the future. The oral history process pivoted to an iterative mode as oral historians – from novice to professional – grappled with whether this is the "right time" to invite potential narrators to share their life stories and reactions to the pandemic. Also, interviewing remotely, as Anna Kaplan describes in detail elsewhere in this issue, was a new puzzle in terms of technology, how and whether to use video, audio quality, and rapport and trust building between interviewers and narrators.

From the archival and library instructional side, introducing students to oral history focused on the complex issues at stake in situating oral histories as potential correctives to historical records: Who is asked to tell stories? Whose stories are archived? These inquiries introduced students to the excitement and challenges of conducting oral history, and we hope they stimulate further curiosity about the field's methodologies. Adding to a growing list of educators, librarians, archivists, and researchers worldwide who have rushed to document the beginnings of this pandemic, we drew upon existing best practices around

oral history and traumatic events.[15] We emphasized tactful ways to request an interview, narrators' absolute rights to decline to participate or withdraw, and how one accepts rejection as part of oral history's methodological terrain. Reporting back on a questionnaire that we administered, students overwhelmingly said they felt "comfortable" approaching their proposed narrators about sitting down for an oral history interview. We also tried to maintain flexibility, recognizing that specific circumstances have continued to change by the day, even by the hour, depending not only on personal positioning but also on community, local, state, national, and international determinants.

Students were remarkably organized and timely in submitting their oral history interviews. As part of the nuts and bolts session, Springer instructed students on best practices for submitting preservation-quality audio, provided them with a simplified set of instructions for formatting their transcripts, and discussed how appropriate file-naming assists the oral history archivists in processing their interviews as part of the collection. We also did a walk-through of OHAC's Deed of Gift/release document, stressing the use of a non-exclusive license and interviewer/narrator retention of copyright. Springer created a Google Drive space for students to submit their materials, which included instructions for creating their own submission folder and a "Read Me First" document reiterating file-naming structures. For future iterations, Springer wants to add detailed instructions for editing and completing the Deed of Gift/release document.

To collect contact information, Lee also created a Google Form that doubled as a checklist to ensure students submitted all parts of the assignment. This form populated a spreadsheet with relevant metadata for the oral history archivist's accessioning of the collection, including file names, restrictions, and important dates regarding signature of the releases. Given the collection's small number of interviews and orderly submission of materials, the archivist anticipates it will be an easy collection to process. We hope to have the interview audio and transcripts online by the end of Summer 2020. The collection is tentatively titled, "Contemporary Civilization II COVID-19 Oral History Project" and will be searchable in Columbia University Libraries' Digital Library Collection.[16]

Conclusion

Using oral history as a methodology to generate primary source material about the COVID-19 pandemic magnifies issues of time, resources, and identity in applying socially engaged pedagogy. Under ordinary circumstances, the identity and positionality of both the interviewer and narrator merit careful attention in terms of shared authority and a co-created interview experience. Yet, in these extraordinary circumstances of self-isolation and quarantine, the prevailing slogan, "Alone Together," accentuates inequalities and privileges rendered hypervisible by the pandemic. The ethics of asking someone to sit for an oral history interview right now is a paramount consideration.

Ideally, oral history instruction in academic libraries would entail library staff and course instructors collaborating to develop a course with sequenced sessions on oral history in a digital humanities context, allowing for a more hands-on experience of oral history. These modes of designing reparative curricula dedicated to addressing inclusive research and pedagogy are already at the heart of contemporary oral history; our mid-semester pivot unexpectedly provided an opportunity to put them into practice. At Columbia, the model has been to focus on one-time instruction about oral history as a primary source, including how

to use library search tools and access them in the archives. Existing courses at Columbia and Barnard College require students to conduct oral histories over the course of a semester, but they do so independently of the archive or with an initial instruction session on available library resources. Those resources do not include recording or transcription tools. In Columbia's evolving milieu, a critical task to doing this work may be to bridge academic silos among researchers, faculty, librarians, and archivists to develop socially engaged models for inclusive research and pedagogy. This process would require a reconceptualization of the culture of the university to include affording library staff the time and resources to participate in course instruction effectively in ways that existing hierarchies do not permit. A time- and resource-rich model should include the resources and staffing to co-develop and co-teach courses, purchase reliable equipment, and receive consistent technical training and technical support. This type of collaboration would require flexibility in assessment and evaluation criteria to account for interdisciplinary work that bridges and builds on subject specialization, field research, and oral history instruction – factors not normally in dialogue on our campus.

As this endeavor in bridging socially engaged pedagogy and oral history came together during an emerging crisis, it generated for all involved – students, faculty, library instructional staff – concerns around the ethics of asking during a global crisis with many uncertainties and a conviction that posterity will want to know what happened when the COVID-19 pandemic put New York City under quarantine.

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Disclosure Statement

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Notes

1. Just the language of "capturing" stories implies a type of acquisition and violence from which oral historians should seek to move away, particularly as the ethics of the field shift to the co-creative aspects of interviewing and telling life stories.
2. Mary Marshall Clark, "Oral History of Disasters and Pandemics," Oral History Master's Program Workshop Series, Columbia University, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DbyRhAcj5Sg (accessed April 16, 2020).
3. Alan Feuer and Andrea Salcedo, "New York City Deploys 45 Mobile Morgues as Virus Strains Funeral Homes," *The New York Times*, April 2, 2020; Eyewitness News, "Javits Center hospital closing after treating more than 1,000 amid COVID-19 pandemic," ABC 7, May 1,2020; Yoav Gonen, "Brooklyn Field Hospital Shuts After $21 Million Constructions – And Zero Patients," *The City*, May 21, 2020.
4. Shayna Jacobs, Devlin Barrett and Ben Guarino, "New York governor orders shutdown of all nonessential businesses," *The Washington Post*, March 20, 2020; Tony Romm, "Nearly every state had historic levels of unemployment last month, new data shows," *The Washington Post*, May 22, 2020.

5. Victoria Li, Columbia University student.
6. Andrew Zhang, Columbia University student.
7. Oral History Archives at Columbia, "What We Collect: Oral History," Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University; OHAC's collecting priorities and assessment of proposed collection donations are largely driven by the politics articulated in Lae'l Hughes-Watkins, "Moving Toward a Reparative Archive: A Roadmap for a Holistic Approach to Disrupting Homogenous Histories in Academic Repositories and Creating Inclusive Spaces for Marginalized Voices," *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies* 5 (2018): Article 6. In terms of organizational structure OHAC is part of the Columbia University Libraries system, while the research and education programs are housed in the social sciences division.
8. Oral History Association, "Principles and Best Practices," https://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices-revised-2009/#best (accessed May 22, 2020). Note that the Oral History Association approved and published new Principles and Best Practices in October 2018, which can be accessed at https://www.oralhistory.org/principles-and-best-practices-revised-2018/ (accessed May 26, 2020).
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11. Tatiana McInnis, Interview with Dr. Ifeoma Nwankwo on "Zora Neale Hurston and Oral History Research," Public Humanities Project sponsored by the Center for Latin American Studies at Vanderbilt University, https://youtu.be/SFG3GUIOVB0 (accessed February 28, 2020).
12. Assigned readings for part one of Springer's lecture included: Lae'l Hughes-Watkins (2018) and Jamie A. Lee, "In Critical Condition: (Un)Becoming Bodies in Archival Acts of Truth Telling,"*Archivaria*, [S.l.], (November 2019): 162–95.
13. Ali Watkins, Michael Rothfeld, William K. Rashbaum, and Brian M. Rosenthal. "Top E.R. Doctor Who Treated Virus Patients Dies by Suicide," *New York Times*, April 29, 2020.
14. Isaac Gershberg, Columbia University student.
15. Documenting the Now, "Documenting COVID-19," https://bit.ly/doc-covid19 (accessed April 21, 2020).
16. At the time of publication, the collection is with OHAC's archivist for processing. Once the collection is preserved and cataloged, it will be searchable in Columbia's Digital Library Collection by keyword, interviewer name, and narrator at: dlc.library.columbia.edu/.

Ana Paulina Lee is assistant professor of Latin American and Iberian Cultures at Columbia University where she teaches courses on race, citizenship, and historical memory. She is the author of *Mandarin Brazil: Race, Representation, and Memory* (Stanford 2018), winner of the 2019 Antonio Candido Prize for Best Book in the Humanities.

Kimberly Springer is the Curator for the Oral History Archives at Columbia University's Rare Book & Manuscript Library. She's the author of *Living for the Revolution, Black Feminist Organizations, 1968-1980* (Duke University Press, 2005), *Still Lifting, Still Climbing: African-American Women's Contemporary Activism* (New York University Press, 1999), *Stories of Oprah: the Oprahfication of American Culture* (University of Mississippi Press, 2010) and articles in several journals and edited volumes.