

SAMPLE PROJECT DESIGN

Civil Rights in Waco, Texas: Documenting the Voices of the Movement, mid-1950s–early 1960s

When we hear about the civil rights movement, we often think of places like Montgomery, Alabama; Memphis, Tennessee; Atlanta, Georgia; and Little Rock, Arkansas. We don't often look at what happened in our own communities. To commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, this project is focused on gathering oral histories of those who participated in protests, sit-ins, and other demonstrations in Waco, Texas.

An additional goal is to highlight everyday voices in this community and share the stories of how participating in these activities shaped their lives and careers. An understanding of the stories of those who participated will hopefully inspire present and future generations to continue the fight for equality and contribute new information on an important era in history in an area that is often overlooked.

The project will gather the stories of key activists, organizers, and participants involved in protests, sit-ins, and other demonstrations from the mid-1950s to early 1960s. Not many records on these activities exist except for a few newspaper clippings and photographs. An interview project exploring this history through the viewpoints of former participants will bring to light this history on a local level and fill in gaps present in local history archives. This project will follow the Principles and Best Practices of the Oral History Association.

Fortunately, some participants are still living who can share their experiences with us. For those who live in or within one hundred miles of Waco Texas, travel will be arranged to conduct in-person interviews. For those who live outside of the one-hundred-mile radius, or have a need or preference for distance interviewing, remote interviews will be conducted using the Zoom platform to collect their stories. Focus will be given to those who helped organize and participated in these protests, with priority given to those who may be at risk due to age or health. The project will then turn its focus towards those who witnessed the protests and sit-ins. If we are unable to locate enough narrators, we plan to extend our project geographically to the county level (McLennan County) and then to the region of Central Texas, if necessary.

The interviews will be transcribed, and the recordings and transcripts will be archived with the Baylor University Institute for Oral History, which will provide public access to the oral histories. On completion of the interviews, all narrators will receive a copy of their recording and transcript in digital format.

Among the ways the project plans to commemorate this history will be an online exhibit using photographs and excerpts from the oral history interviews gathered. Future plans include a web page devoted to this history including excerpts from narrator testimony. Plans are in the works to

create educational K–12 material based on these stories to share with local school districts and libraries.

Planning, training, and acquiring equipment are underway. The first major phase of the project—conducting background research and recording and transcribing interviews—is scheduled to start in December 2024 and conclude in March 2025. The second round of interviewing and transcribing will continue from March 2025 to July 2025. The period of July 2025 to September 2025 will be devoted to creating the online exhibit for the commemoration ceremony.