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Protest Voices: Using Activist Oral Histories to Teach Historical Thinking

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Protest Voices: Using Activist Oral Histories to Teach Historical Thinking

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

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Abstract

The goal of Protest Voices was to create classroom resources using oral history interviews for use in social studies classrooms. Oral histories remain underutilized as primary sources. In an effort to engage students with the historical thinking process, we created clips from oral history interviews of Cleveland-area peace activists and connected those clips to the Ohio Department of Education Social Studies standards. Our work focused on collecting interviews from individuals who were involved in anti-Vietnam protests and members of the Cleveland Latin American Mission team to El Salvador, as well as the InterReligious Task Force. The project created a collection of twelve oral history interviews and numerous clips for classroom use. According to the Oral History Association, oral history interviews “foster intergenerational appreciation and an awareness of the intersection between personal lives and larger historical currents.”¹ Our aim was to connect educators, and thus students, with the voices of those who witnessed historical events in order to bring history alive and facilitate the historical thinking process. All of the interviews conducted are archived in the Cleveland Regional Oral History Collection and clips are part of the History Speaks blog.

¹ Debbie Ardemendo and Katie Kuzmar, “Principles and Best Practices for Oral History Education,” Oral History Association, 2014. <http://www.oralhistory.org/oral-history-classroom-guide/>.