

OHMAR **Newsletter**

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NYU TO HOST OHMAR'S FIRST MEETING IN NEW YORK **Saturday, September 21, 1991**

OHMAR will hold its fall meeting at New York University's Robert F. Wagner Archives, 70 Washington Square South, in New York City, on Saturday, September 21, 1991. The meeting will convene in the tenth floor Tamiment Library, a labor history collection with an extensive oral history component. The program committee includes Debra Bernhardt of Tamiment, Ron Grele of Columbia University, Rena Benmayor of Hunter College's Center for Puerto Rican Studies, and Joe Doyle of the NYU Public History Program.

Keynote speaker **Lawrence L. Langer**, professor of English at Simmons College, is the author of the recent book, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (Yale University Press), which drew much critical acclaim. His study of how survivors remember their traumatic experiences in the Holocaust was based on a selection of the 1400 video interviews with survivors, at Yale University's Fortunoff Video Archives. David Wyman, writing in the *New York Times Sunday Book Review*, judged Langer's book "an unsparing attempt to address some critical problems concerning the interpretation of these interviews."

The fall meeting will also feature this year's Forrest C. Pogue Award winner, together with panels on biography and autobiography, and on how to publish books based on oral history. The meeting concludes with a special walking tour of New York's Chinatown, conducted by members of the N.Y. Chinatown History Project, and with a Chinese banquet dinner.

Hotels within walking distance of the Wagner Archives include the moderately priced Gramercy Park Hotel at 21st Street & Lexington Avenue (1-800-221-4083); and the Leo House, run by a religious order, that offers inexpensive lodgings at 332 West 23rd Street, (212) 929-1010. Most New York hotels offer lower weekend rates.

NYU is located in Greenwich Village. Those riding Amtrak to Pennsylvania Station can change to the 8th Avenue subway line and take any southbound train to the West 4th Street station. After a short walk east, West 4th becomes Washington Square South.

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A Plug for Oral History

Martha Ross submitted the following transcription of a radio interview with Haynes Johnson, author of *Sleepwalking Through History*, an account of the Reagan administration. Johnson was interviewed by Larry King on the Mutual Broadcasting Network, March 5, 1991:

KING: What about getting Reagan? Was that hard? By "getting him," I don't mean hitting him. I mean "getting him."

JOHNSON: Well, I don't know if I *have* got him. This is not a biography of Reagan. What it is is a portrait of America in our times, with Reagan in the backdrop. To me, they're inseparable. I spent enormous amounts of time trying to understand Reagan. And one of the things I found most fascinating, early on in the project friends of mine at Berkeley said there was an absolute treasure at the University of California system, where there was an oral history treasure trove of interviews done with all the people who were in Reagan's governorship years, including Reagan himself: everybody--the fund-raisers, the kitchen cabinet, the conservatives who staffed the administration, bankrolled him, put him in Sacramento, helped to do the same thing in Washington, and they were all done before they came to Washington, and I thought those were fascinating. And that helped a lot because what you're reading then was exactly what came later in Washington--same people, same attitudes, same values. I found it very interesting. That's indisputable because these were their own words, edited, checked for accuracy, so it wasn't me saying it or it wasn't them saying it afterwards. I found that interesting.

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Anacostia Museum African-American Communities Project

The Anacostia Museum in Southeast Washington, DC is working to document and celebrate the cultural diversity of black community life in the District of Columbia. The Contemporary African American Communities Project will explore this diversity by means of oral history interviews and other research, culminating in an exhibition that will open in 1992.

The Museum is asking for assistance in documenting the histories and cultures of the different African American communities, particularly from the Upper South (Virginia and North Carolina), Africa, and the West Indies. Museum interns will conduct oral history interviews. They seek volunteers to be interviewed, names of potential interviewees, and identification of important historical resources and cultural activities. Please call the Anacostia Museum Research Department at (202) 287-3380 if you wish to participate in this project.

DC Humanities Commission Grants

The Washington, DC Humanities Commission is funding an assortment of projects and events to commemorate the bicentennial of the District of Columbia. Two projects, ongoing through December, 1991, involve oral history. **DC Hidden History** is an ongoing project to help DC religious institutions preserve and organize archives and implement oral histories, and to create a model of other institutions' use. For information, contact the Historical Society of Washington, DC (202) 785-2068.

Duke Ellington's Washington is an exhibit of photographs and oral histories focusing on the Shaw and LeDroit Park communities where Ellington lived from 1899 to 1923, and how these communities influenced Ellington's musical career. The exhibit will open in the fall of 1991. Contact Franz Jantzen (202) 387-6597.