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# Oral History as a Methodology for Teaching Human Rights (abstract)

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## **The Social Practice of Human Rights: Charting the Frontiers of Research and Advocacy**

2015 Conference of the University of Dayton Human Rights Center

Oct. 2-3, 2015, Dayton, Ohio

For the archive of the conference, see [http://ecommons.udayton.edu/human\\_rights/2015/](http://ecommons.udayton.edu/human_rights/2015/)

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**Research Panel:** Human Rights Education

**Title:** Oral History as a Methodology for Teaching Human Rights

**Presenter:** Carol J. Gray, University of Connecticut

**Abstract:** Documenting history by interviewing those who lived it has long been an essential tool for journalists, lawyers, anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists and human rights advocates. The award-winning book *Remembering Jim Crow* is a prime example of the power of oral history as a vehicle to teach about the plight of blacks in the post-Civil War South, recording the persecution they faced as well as the quiet acts of courage on the part of many.

While living in Cairo after the 2011 revolution, I volunteered with one of Egypt's leading human rights organizations, then applied for and received a grant to conduct an oral history of that organization called the Hisham Mubarak Law Center. The Center was raided with dozens arrested during the middle of the Revolution because of their active role in supporting the protesters in Tahrir Square. As part of my oral history of the Law Center, I interviewed 50+ Egyptian lawyers, students, professors, activists and others involved in Egypt's human rights movement, a total of more than 100 hours of interviews.

I received a Fulbright Scholarship last year to continue this research in Montreal at Concordia University's Loyola College for Diversity and Sustainability and as an affiliate of the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling. I established an Egyptian Human Rights internship program for 50+ students and volunteers who then, over the course of two semesters, transcribed all 100 hours of interviews.

This article will describe each stage of this internship: recruitment; group supervision during a weekly seminar on Egyptian human rights and current events; the creation of templates for transcribing interviews; establishing a database to house a permanent archive of the interview tapes and transcripts; and the ongoing partnership with interns as they used me as a reference to embark on careers doing human rights related study and employment. In essence, this article will provide a model for how to involve and train the next generation of human rights advocates while receiving vital assistance in completing human rights oral histories.

**Biography:** Attorney Carol Gray, a recent Fulbright Visiting Research Scholar at Loyola College for Diversity and Sustainability, is a former public defender in New Hampshire and Massachusetts and was a National Association for Public Interest Law fellow at a nonprofit organization representing inmates on Georgia's Death Row. She lived in Cairo from 2010 to 2011 after being selected as a Rotary International Ambassadorial Scholar.