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**The Peculiarities of Community Archives: Exploring the Documentation of
History and Memory through Digital Archives and Social Media**

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Report

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This work introduces community-based archives in the United States that practice archivist activism through the use of digital archives and social media to an academic and public audience. The archives presented in this study reveal successful efforts of archivists who engage with and record the stories of underrepresented and historically marginalized communities. In hopes of understanding the profound importance of community-based archives to the archival field and the field of history, this work presents an analysis on three community-based archives: ATX Barrio Archive, the Black Lesbian Archive, and the Texas After Violence Project. The mentioned community-based archives utilize social media and digital archives as a method of engaging with their audience, with intentions of projecting visibility and the survival of marginalized identity communities and individuals. The archives feature various materials that not only present events and experiences of gentrification, erasure, and violence, but also life, vulnerability, history, and memory. The focus in context aims to add to the discourse on the importance of community-based archives and post-custodial framework models, and furthermore aims to advance the way those in the archival profession understand the term ‘community.’

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Introduction

When I was a graduate student in the history program at California State University, Long Beach I imagined archives as a welcoming space of cognitive energy created by professionally trained people and accessible to everyone. By the end of my three years of study at that institution, academia provided examples that supported the unbending and challenging policies that my initial idea was false. While my involvement in research and historiography helped to develop my larger understanding of the power relationship between archivists, researchers, and academic institutions, it was mostly the told experiences from colleagues about their perplexed struggles of gaining access into archives for research. Simultaneously, there emerged a large discourse on open access that began to shift the social sciences and the field of information science. These challenges of open access eventually caught up with me as I searched and sifted, near and far from my city, for sources that would allow me to continue developing my original research. Whether through digital collections or physical archives, there existed privacy policies that promoted great undertones of power, neutrality, and, quite possibly, biases.

For different reasons—connections to other affiliates from another institution or borrowing privileges as a graduate—it demonstrated to me how protective and private academic institutions are with their materials. An enormous question and concern arose for me. First, I wondered how considerably difficult or easy the processes must have been for scholars before me to obtain primary sources yielded and analyzed in their published research, many of which that I digested for knowledge. And, secondly, I learned that a large percentage of the quantitative and qualitative research in the social sciences often use a bottom up approach, utilizing primary documents that are reflected and belong to marginalized—persons in powerless and unequal positions —and underrepresented—historically excluded —individuals and collectives.

Enormous questions began to take shape. Are there archives that openly share information that highlight individuals' stories in disparate communities? Did there exist self-determined archivists who initiated alternative archival models through engagement with their communities, documenting less likely viewed memories, while aiming to make community history a part of the mainstream and openly accessible?

The University of Texas at Austin's (UT Austin) former Latin American Metadata Librarian, Itza Carbajal guest lectured for an Archival Enterprise II course offered through the School of Information in spring 2019 and posed a series of questions related to my own. She specifically asked:

“Does a community archive exist without or prior to the academic gaze? Or does it only come into existence and according to the principles set out by the privileged researcher and their own set of value and preferences?” and “If the term Community Archives in regards to marginalized and ignored collections, what is lost, visible, or found? What happens when we remove or focus on direct preferences to Indigeneity, Blackness, Latinidad, Queerness, Feminist, etc. when speaking about archives or archival spaces that belong or are controlled by these communities or peoples? Do these terms already reference a community?”¹

During my time at the School of Information, I enrolled in courses that assisted my understanding of the multifarious roles librarians and archivists play in upholding privacy policies, while also attempting to collaborate with community archives on a local and state level. However, it was through other masters students at UT Austin and digital archivists on social media who were committed to community and memory work that I learned about broader archival methods. These methods concentrate on the inclusion of people in identity-based communities, provide open resources for everyone, and illuminate the value in sustainable public services through archival work.

¹ Itza Carbajal, “Community, Communities and Archives” (SlideShare presentation, Archival Enterprise II, University of Texas at Austin, February 9, 2019), <https://www.slideshare.net/ItzaCarbajal/community-communities-archives>.

Through the lenses of Critical Theory and Intersectionality, which will be further explained in the methodology section of this paper, I analyze three proponents that underline the theory and praxis of community-based archives through their own respective foci. Particularly, my work presents an analysis of three community archives that subsist through the production of social media and digital archives. ATX Barrio, the Black Lesbian Archive, and the Texas After Violence Project continue to develop platforms for under-shared or passed-over stories of marginalized collectives and individuals. The archives' content provide open access to stories and experiences that reflect that of memory and history before gentrification in East Austin, Black lesbian identities in the United States, and state violence against people in Texas. These community-based archives showcase examples of the ways through which these non-profit archival project archivists engage with communities and commit to open access. I posit that these projects serve as critical models for the evolving field of archives, especially in practice, theory, ethics, and goals. The projects' objective to obtain and share records about marginalized, identity-based communities with non-academics, as well as academics, through social media and digital archives is inclusive of greater populations that extend into and outside of the margins of academia. The second argument integrated throughout this work asserts that, through their labor, archivists continue to construct physical and digital spaces that address problems of discrimination and inequality, while also producing a vault of collective memory.

Literature Review

Gerald Ham wrote an essay in 1975 in which he described the varying roles of historians and archivists. He pointed out that historians only take responsibility for documenting identity histories, while archivists simply preserve historical documents. His argument illustrates how the traditional ways archivists record history and culture is insufficient. Ham stated:

“This tradition, of course, leaves the archivist too closely tied to the vogue of the academic marketplace. For example, only after historians rediscovered the importance of the city in American history did a few so-called urban archives come into existence. Similar efforts, often initiated by the action of concerned historians, were developed to meet the needs for documentation on the black community; on ethnic groups and immigrants; on social welfare; on architecture; on popular culture; the history of science; and so forth.”²

Further into the essay, Ham called for archivists to be active participants in understanding the documents for which they are responsible for preserving. Not only should they be concerned about the preservation of all historical documents that they encounter, but also, ethically archivists should understand that their role as custodians should change along with evolving societal patterns. Over decades, scholars from different subfields of the social sciences have joined the drawn-out, yet, still guiding principle. A discussion about community archives became one way scholars gained momentum in pointing out the significance of such a critical thought.

The conception of community-based archives can be traced as far back as the nineteenth century. During this time, it was common for small societies to hire a ‘recorder’ to preserve documents pertaining to events and civil polity activities. Thus, the actions through which people collected documents for their personal archives existed and, most likely, extends further before the community archives emerged in the 1960s with that of social justice movements. The initial influences of established community-based archives of the 1960s and 1970s are considered the grassroots of the types of community-based archives scholars reference. The first conscious efforts by academics to observe the development and practice of community archives emerged in

² F. Gerald Ham, “The Archival Edge,” *The American Archivist* 38, no.1 (1975): 6.

the late 1990s with discussions on power in archives, archivists as partisans, and how too often documents about marginalized communities are disdained and misunderstood by archivists. Then, in the early 2000s, scholars commenced a dialogue that provided historical background and acknowledged the significance of non-profit archives' goals, model frameworks, and processing of materials that highlight identity-based communities. By identity-based communities, I mean individuals or groups within one or more communities comprising multiple identities such as race, ethnicity, citizen status, sexuality, gender, and disabilities.

The importance of memory work and community-based archival models have made its presence known on an international level. In 1997, Lisa Singer wrote a thesis on Canadian ethnic communities, drawings from surveys, such as The Canadian Jewish Congress National Archives, to showcase the persistence of underrepresented communities in Anglo-French archives.³ South African archivist, Verne Harris also entered the dialogue with literature on public discourse and archives that addressed archives and archivists' positions during apartheid and South Africa's shift into democracy. The majority of Harris' essays drew from deconstruction theorist Jacques Derrida, consistently calling for archivists' attention to decolonize archives by being in historical consciousness.⁴ Harris' work contextualized the ways in which archival documents are slivers of events and social memory that reflect on ways "the dimension of power in archives is made plain in the extreme circumstances of oppression, and in the heady processes of rapid transition to democracy."⁵ Terry Cook, Jeannette Bastian, and Joan Schwartz promoted the argument of the

³ Lisa Singer, "The Value of Community-Based Archives: A Resource in Development," master's thesis, University of Manitoba, 1997, <http://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/bitstream/1993/1018/1/mq23498.pdf>, accessed October 28th, 2020.

⁴ For further readings on Harris' social justice and memory in archives refer to Verne S. Harris, *Archives and Justice : a South African Perspective / with a Foreword by Terry Cook*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, (2006).

⁵ Verne Harris, "The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory, and Archives in South Africa," in *Archival Science* 2, no.1 (March 2002): 63-64.

relevant shift in societies that inevitably affected archives and the profession, by addressing archival theories around the paradigms of memory, identity, power, and history. In an article published in 2007, Andrew Flinn recognized the growing number of community archives since the 1960s, declaring that, in the future, the phenomenon will avail itself with the advancement of technologies and interest in community histories.⁶ With change and continuity of community archive comes with its democratization and historical inclusivity and challenges old narratives both in academia and the public sphere.⁷

Gradually, over the first decade of the 2000s, archival studies gained critical archivists and theorists who have and, continue to, contribute to scholarship by focusing on community archival theories that use the latter explained methods and illuminate their existence through analyses, case studies, interviews, and ethnographic research. From the United Kingdom perspective, Andrew Flinn, Elizabeth Shepard, and Mary Stevens offered an alternative to defining community archives, emphasizing that since the concept stretches beyond the western hemisphere, that it would be best to use the definitions provided by the team working within the community-based archives. The scholars contended “the emphasis on community control makes these collections substantively different from the town or city collections managed or supported by local authorities and whose closest counterparts in Canada, for example, are also referred to as ‘community archives.’”⁸ Mario H. Ramirez, Michelle Caswell, and Marika Cifor generated a study on South Asian American educators' response to the South Asian American Digital

⁶ Andrew Flinn, “Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges,” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 28 (2007): 159-160.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁸ Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Shepherd, “Whose Memories, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy and the Mainstream,” *Archival Science* 9, (2009): 74; Refer to other examples models of community archives in the UK, Mary Stevens, Andrew Flinn, and Elizabeth Shepherd, “New Frameworks for Community Engagement in the Archives Sector: From Handing Over to Handing on,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 16, (2010): 59-76.

Archive exemplifying the crucial effects of symbolic annihilation in academic archives, community archives, and archival impact on communities.”⁹ Jimmy Zavala, Alda Allina Migoni, Caswell, and Noah Geraci successfully grappled with the investigation of twelve community archives in Southern California to show the efficiency of autonomy, “resistance to dominant archival practices, and community empowerment.”¹⁰ Provoked in critical thought and Benedict Anderson’s theory on *Imagined Communities*, Gracen Brilmyer, Joyce Gabiola, et al. suggest reciprocal archival imaginaries, a concept grounded on the continuing and evolving relationship between archival users, users’ thought process, and community-based archives that shift the boundaries of the archival process.¹¹

Despite the potent academic presence in debate on community-based archives, scholars outside of the western hemisphere have made great efforts to fortify archives that represent the land, people, and tradition of pre-colonial settlement in acts of discussion, preservation, and representation of community heritage. In 2018, Stanley H. Griffin, Jeannette A. Bastian, and John A. Aarons published an anthology of essays in a book entitled, *Decolonizing the Caribbean Record: An Archives Reader*. In this work, authors aimed to shift the conventional western colonial dialogue and “...instead reimagining records within the context of Caribbean cultures

⁹ In “Seeing Yourself in History Community Archives in the fight Against Symbolic Annihilation,” *The Public Historian* 36, (4) 2014: 26-37, Caswell provides a definition of symbolic annihilation asserting community archives as a form of resistance to erasure and a movement for self-empowerment for marginalized groups supported by archivist activism. Caswell’s work is influenced by the term ‘symbolic annihilation’ which was coined by Michel-Rolph Trouillot in their book, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Beacon: Boston, 1995. The word identifies with the phases of silences in documenting history that consisted of: the historical documents themselves, establishment of archives, a common narrative, and a traditional historical view. Marika Cifor and Mario H. Ramirez. “To Suddenly Discover Yourself Existing!: Uncovering the Affective Impact of Community Archives.” *American Archivist* 79, no.1 (2016), 19.

¹⁰ Jimmy Zavala, Alda Allina Migoni, Michelle Caswell, Noah Geraci & Marika Cifor, “A Process Where We’re All at the Table’: Community Archives Challenging Dominant Modes of Archival Practice,” in *Archives and Manuscripts*, 45, no. 3 (2017), 203.

¹¹ Brilmyer, Gracen, Gabiola, Joyce, Zavala, Jimmy, and Caswell, Michelle, “Reciprocal Archival Imaginaries: The Shifting Boundaries of ‘Community’ in Community Archives,” in *Archivaria* 88, (2019): 6.

and identities where the oral may be privileged over the written, the creative design over text, the marginal over the mainstream.”¹² Another anthology entitled, *Community Archives, Community Spaces: Heritage, Memory and Identity*, presented scholarly essays by archivists who represented communities in Thailand, New Zealand, Haiti, Canada, Australia, and the U.S., examining the significance of archiving intangible information for Indigenous groups and other communities that experience erasure. The collection of essays applied similar approaches: to withdraw archives and archival literature from colonial perspectives and to engage the profession and non-academics in a dialogue on the significance of community and identity before and after European settlement. Recent archival scholarship, practices, and theories have shifted from the academic and an elite stance to theories and approaches that consider identity and memory of individuals that ultimately offers broader perspectives that too often are missing from collective memory.

Given the focus that this paper highlights gentrification, identity, violence, and memory, I will provide an assessment of the literature that incorporates an inclusive and on-going dialogue around these topics.

¹² Bastian, Jeannette A., John A. Aarons, and Stanley H. Griffin, *Decolonizing the Caribbean Record: An Archives Reader*, edited by Jeannette A. Bastian, John A. Aarons, Stanley H. Griffin. Sacramento, California: Library Juice Press (2018), 2.

LGBTQ Community and Memory in Archives

The scholarship that describes, analyzes, and provides a moderate overview of community-based archives that hold records that represent the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans-sexual, and Queer movement, grassroots organizations, and individuals' experiences exists on a global scale.¹³ In 1987, Elizabeth Knowlton wrote an article on the importance of collecting documents that shed light on LGBTQ experiences. Knowlton contended that although an individual's sexuality inevitably intersects with their distinguished and indiscernible identities, the people most likely to select, appraise, describe, and process these records are professional archivists who are members of the LGBTQ community.¹⁴ For example, in 1974 a grassroots organization by the name of the Gay Academic Union established The Lesbian Herstory Archives. Today, the archive contains the largest collection of documents and memorabilia of the lesbian community. One of the founders of Lesbian Herstory Archives, Joan Nestle explained:

“In order to survive in America as an archives we have had to call ourselves a not-for-profit information resource centre because the New York State Board of Regents maintains control over educational institutions and could therefore confiscate the collection for 'just cause'. We take no money from the government, believing that such an action would be an exercise in neocolonialism, believing that the society that ruled us out of history should never be relied upon to make it possible for us to exist.”¹⁵

As valid as Knowlton and Nestle's statements remained for archives, recent postmodern and critical archivists have made applicable, and questionable, efforts to combat the lack of visibility and representation of the LGBTQ community in archival literature.

Ajamu X, Topher Campbell, and Mary Stevens focused a conversation that centered on black queerness in the UK. The community-based archive, rukus!, was established in London by

¹³ Throughout the paper, I will alternate between LGBTQ community and queer community. The term 'queer' is an umbrella term used to positively describe and empower sexuality of individuals who are binary or nonbinary.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Knowlton, “Documenting the Gay Rights Movement,” *Provenance* 5, no. 1 (1987), 17-18.

¹⁵ Joan Nestle, “The Will to Remember: The Lesbian Herstory Archives of New York,” *Feminist Review* 34 (1990): 227.

artists who focus on the Black LGBT experience by way of exhibits, film-screenings, oral histories, and workshops. The scholars stated that “for the Black queer community, doubly marginalized by the splintering of activists historiography into the discrete categories of a heteronormative Black history and an exclusive monochromatic queer history,” rukus! aims to revise history with the help of the LGBT community members donation as evidence.¹⁶ In 2012, Angela DiVeglia wrote an article that contributed to the conversation on the effective ways community-based archives are, and continue to be, influential institutions to look to as ethical models for academic archivists to understand the needs and concerns of the LGBT collective community.¹⁷

Examining community-based archival approaches for archivists in larger institutions, Diana K. Wakimoto, Christine Bruce, and Helen Partridge leapt into the conversation with case studies, showing numerous ways of integrating power and representation of the surrounding LGBTQ community into academic archives. The authors focused on cooperative models, potential donors, community involvement, and interviews as examples to not only understand the power dynamics in preserving LGBTQ individuals’ materials, but also protecting and empowering the people in the LGBTQ community. With great rigor to explore the discourse on hate with archival management of LGBTQ collections, Cifor’s work brought attention to recognizing hate speech in queer archives “to allow for more critical understanding of structural disparities, archives’ role in (re)producing them, and how we might address them through queer and critical archiving practices.”¹⁸ Cifor’s work showcased LGBTQ individuals and

¹⁶ Ajamu X, Tophér Campbell, and Mary Stevens, “Love and Lubrication in the Archives, or rukus! A Black Queer Archive for the United Kingdom,” *Archivaria* 68, (2009): 272.

¹⁷ Angela DiVeglia, “Accessibility, Accountability, and Activism: Models for LGBT Archives,” in *Make Your Own History: Documenting Feminist and Queer Activism in the 21st Century*, ed. Kelly Wooten and Lyz Bly (Los Angeles, CA: Litwin Books, 2012), 74.

¹⁸ Marika Cifor, “Aligning Bodies: Collecting, Arranging, and Describing Hatred for a Critical Queer Archives,” *Library Trends* 64, no.4,“ (2016): 766.

community-based archives activism that combat normative hatred, by documenting acts of hate crimes and responses to events. The late oral historian, Horacio N. Roque Ramírez, pursued a solo journey to document oral narratives by San Francisco's queer Latinx community in the 1990s.¹⁹ Due to the ongoing gentrification of the Mission district, Ramírez focused on individuals and collectives to help them produce recordings of public memory events and assisted in the production of community projects. The recording and remembrance of violence on individuals and communities has been practiced through community archival models also known as memory work.²⁰

¹⁹ When I mentioned violence, the act of violence can occur in several forms whether physical, emotional, displacing, deportation, hatred, discrimination.

²⁰ I will often refer to gentrification as reconstruction in this paper and will alternate between the two terms.

Social Justice and Memory of Violence in Archive

In an analysis of the Eastories oral history project in Boston, Massachusetts, Janet Ceja Alcalá provided a case study that discussed ways archivists engage and contribute to social justice through archival practices, while also developing relationships with community members. While gentrification attempts to dismantle communities of color like Eastories, Alcalá asserted that recording oral histories of communities that are experiencing displacement by the city can be transformative.²¹

Gabriel Solis wrote a memorable statement about the existence of community archives that focus on human rights and social justice. Solis stated that the idea “is to deflect from silence and submit to an alternative method that brings to light, educates, and uplifts, those who have been silenced, oppressed and unrightfully imposed by state violence.”²² Unveiling and protecting stories that are often hidden, under analyzed, or scarcely talked about offers advancement of archival praxis and ways professional archivists work with archival users and community members.

²¹ Janet Ceja Alcalá, "Community Engaged Scholarship in Archival Studies: Documenting Housing Displacement and Gentrification in a Latino Community" *Community Archives, Community Spaces: Heritage, Memory and Identity* Vol. II, (2019), 152.

²² Gabriel Solis, “ Reflections on Archives of Violence and Transformative Justice,” *Medium* (blog), Sept 10, 2018, <https://medium.com/community-archives/reflections-on-archives-of-violence-and-transformative-justice-87e813f310fe>.

Methodology

This work introduces three case studies that contribute to the scholarly debate on community archives, activism, and the use of community-based archival model frameworks. The case studies consist of two archival practitioners and one nonprofit organization. Each section individually offers details about the establishment of the community-based archive, then analyzes strategies of community outreach and education through digital archives and social media. Specifically, the case studies feature community-based archives that document cultural and social memory before gentrification in East Austin, documentation of populations that experience violence by the state of Texas, and archival documentation on the stories of Black lesbian women across the U.S.. For supporting evidence, my work yields documented interviews from articles found on the internet, information obtained from each case study's website, articles written by founders of the archives, coverage in social media, and content on digital archives. I also drew information from archival literature and collected data, such as interviews and digitized collections materials, from the community-based archivists who run the projects. Examples are given to make connection between memory and history as a means to further the understanding of community-based archives in context to archival theory, practice, and open access.

By looking at community based archives through a lens of memory and history, first I contend that archive activism takes a bottom-up approach and takes the wheel in driving the continuity of archival theory and praxis. ATX Barrio Archive, Texas After Violence Project (TAVP), and Black Lesbian Archives (BLA) have made efforts to obtain and share records about marginalized communities, thus playing a role of an archivist and activist whose goals are inclusive of the greater—and too often misinterpreted, underrepresented, and neglected —

populations and provide access to information to a broader audience. Secondly, I contend that through these efforts community-based archivists continue to construct physical and digital spaces asserting ethics and values of memory work. Since community archives engage with various groups and individuals with intersectional identities and focus on historical events occurring in the surrounding environments, this paper follows a bottom-up approach to analyze the activities and approaches of the three community archives. Thereby, my approach, considers factors such as race, ethnicity, faith, sexuality, political stance, and experiences of the people and their archival materials. It also offers a chance to understand any agency and motivation of archivists and volunteers who care for the archival materials. Each case study reveals levels of community engagement and progress, examples of what open access looks like, and insight into the different models and labor that produce a community-based archive.

Theoretically, this work imagines together a postmodern Critical Theory and Kimberlé Crenshaw's framework on Intersectionality connected to community-based archives. Crenshaw's concept flows from her 1988 article that discussed the links between race and gender as specific to the social and political implications that produce violence against women of color. This analysis follows Crenshaw's focus "... on the intersection of race and gender," and class that "highlights the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed."²³ Derived from the Frankfurt School of Thought in 1922 and second generation critical theorists, such as Jürgen Habermas, the postmodern Critical Theory imagines forms of empowerment of people and diminishing the act of domination. Kevin Rioux and Bharat Mehra explained that the combination of social justice framework with the postmodern

²³ Kimberlé Crenshaw "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," in *The Feminist Philosophy Reader*, Alison Bailey and Chris Cuomo (eds) New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008: 300.

Critical theory is essential to the field of library and information. Rioux and Bharat explained that “Critical Theory is today concerned with social foundations such as the forces and relations of production, employer-employee work conditions, division of labor, property relations, cultural institutions, political power structures, roles and rituals, and the nature of state control.”²⁴ In context to the case studies, interweaving Intersectionality and Critical Theory are relevant because it provides perspective on social constructs that continually affect historically marginalized groups mentioned in this paper. Moreover, these two philosophies lay out some foundational reasons on why archives, and academia in general, remain exclusive and why community-based archives emerged in the first place.

Structured into sections, my paper introduces ATX Barrio Archive, BLA, and TAVP, followed by conversations on their framework models for using digital archives and social media. Then it closes with a conclusion that describes the ways in which the scope of these case studies contribute to the larger discourse on archivist activism, in addition to the significance of supporting community-based archives from an academic standpoint. And lastly, the goal of the analysis is to add to historical and archival scholarship. The examination of the community-based archives’ methods will show inclusivity and ethical actions to uplift individuals’ stories and trace the history and memory of intersectional communities.

Throughout the paper, I juxtapose the terms memory, history, and archives as a concept embedded in the work done and the spaces that the following archival practitioners uplift. In an essay written in 1982, historian Pierre Nora discussed how the ties that bind us as humans—memory and history—yield a psychology truth; that while there exists a past within families, neighborhoods, communities, societies, and nations that ultimately the sense of history has

²⁴ Kevin Rioux and Pharat Mehra, “Introduction,” in *Progressive Community Action: Critical Theory and Social Justice in Library and Information Science*, Sacramento: Library Juice Press, 2016: 5.

become somehow displaced because of the lack of recorded remembrance of memorialization.

This is especially true when speaking of the ordinary person. Nora state that historians and archivists interests reside in:

“*lieux de mémoire* where memory crystalizes and secrets itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn — but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain cities where a sense of historical continuity persists. There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environment of memory.”²⁵

This work aims to further assert that the establishment of archives requires a fulfillment to consciously combat the disappearance and erasure of traditions, cultures, stories, activities, and people.

Lastly, the following case studies follow Carbajal’s principles of community-based archives (or post-custodial). Following this framework, I analyze effective ways digital archives and social media are used to circulate materials, engage with community, and leave a long-lasting impact on academic and non-academic audiences interested.²⁶ In following these

²⁵ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” in *Representations*, no. 26 (April 1989): 7.

²⁶ Itza Carbajal, “Post-Custodial Methods in Archival Practice” (SlideShare presentation, Access and Care of Indigenous Cultural Knowledge Course, University of Texas at Austin, November 5, 2018), <https://www.slideshare.net/ItzaCarbajal/community-communities-archives>. Ham’s Original Archival (1981) Framework: 1). Late 20th century revolution in information processing is inexorably changing the world and the work of archivists. 2). These changes Ham argued pushes archivists into a new period he called post-custodial archival history. 3). Earlier period meant record quantities were relatively small; the technology of records creation, storage, and retrieval fairly simple; and archivists assumed a passive role in shaping the documentary record. 4). Previous custodial ethos made archivists excessively proprietary toward archival holdings. 5). New period brings many changes including computer processing of information allowed people to collect, preserve, and manipulate vast quantities of social and economic data. 6). Now archivists can make a large portion of their holdings as available as printed books, but this requires changes in outmoded ideas about where and by whom resources are used. Post-Custodial Frameworks in Archival Praxis (Illustrated by Carbajal): 1). Creators must take on record manager roles. 2). Decentralization of holdings. 3). Utilize the benefits of modern technology to provide easy and centralized access. 4). Coherent and comprehensive acquisition program. 5). Better use of limited resources available for archival work. 6). Encourage inter-institutional cooperation. 7). Archival service center providing traditional services to smaller institutions such as purchasing supplies, providing records survey, etc. 8). Provide needed short- term vocational assistance as well as consultations on project planning and administration. 9). (Re)balances power between colonizer/colonized, global South/Global North, repository/creator. 10). (Re)defines

principles, I hope to show the interdisciplinary approaches between these three case studies that would further inform and enrich the archival field and the discipline of history on tools, strategies, and methodologies that could equally benefit the non-academic audience.

archival practice and expectations between different parties. 11). (Re)locates the archival enterprise responsibilities. 12.) Diversify and democratize the historical record.”

Black Lesbian Archives

Krü Maekdo's mission for the Black Lesbian Archives is to “bring awareness, build our Community, Educate & Preserve our Culture. While bridging intergenerational gaps.”²⁷ As a member of the Black lesbian community, Krü created the BLA with intentions of sharing lesbian history, specifically highlighting the activities, experiences, and work of other Black lesbians.

Krü stated the establishment of the archives happened:

“After watching 'The Last Lesbian Bars' documentary then doing some research on Lesbian history I noticed that there was a lack of digital representation of Black Lesbians on the web and local physical resources. IE: libraries, archives, etc. This hub is for Black Lesbians, allies & the LGBTQIA+ community to submit Black Lesbian Archives (articles, posters, flyers, mixtapes, videos, photos, audio, publication, poetry, etc of Black Lesbians to this outlet in efforts to preserve the stories of our lives.”²⁸

Krü is a storyteller archivist, multimedia artist, and astrologer who founded the BLA in June 2017, an archive with a unique focus on a marginalized group within the LGBTQ and Black diaspora. With the utmost intentions of documenting and preserving the stories and activities of Black lesbians in the U.S., Krü asserts her passion and developed professional experiences into the archival field by focusing on communities, which she most identifies and strongly supports. Krü grappled with the way large institutional archives hold stories made by and for Black lesbians. She observed how very little information about Black lesbians' contributions to LGBTQ activism and history rarely surfaces into conversations. And how their stories are overlooked when compiled into large archival collections that focus on a variety of identities within the LGBTQ movement.

Krü showcases a collection of materials through digital archives, exhibits, and workshops of audiovisual, oral histories, photographs, writings, and memorabilia that assist in tracing past multigenerational stories of Black lesbians who desired to continue their existence. Now, Krü

²⁷ Krü Maekdo, “About,” *The Black Lesbian Archives*, Accessed Nov 17, 2020, <https://blacklesbianarchives.wixsite.com/info/about>.

²⁸ Ibid.

encourages her audience to share their oral stories, writing, photographs, and items that might represent their existence. Krü emphasized that by using available tools to document and preserve their histories, it would properly allow the community to “keep the stories alive so nobody has control over our narrative.”²⁹ Whether through donations, widely shared work, or education, Krü’s main goals align with post-custodial framework principles.

Krü asserts her unique presence in the LGBTQ community into various spaces, while also creating multiple inclusive and diverse environments for Black lesbians. Krü emphasized that “identifying as a lesbian feels like a revolution! Black lesbians I feel are always put at the bottom of the conversation. I love who I am and I feel powerful embracing who I am.”³⁰ As a transplant who has lived all across the world, Krü found a safe space in Atlanta, Georgia and embraced the lesbian community. While her idea to begin a community-based archive formulated in Virginia, Krü launched it into reality in Atlanta in 2017. Shortly afterwards, Krü moved to Chicago, Illinois to connect with other Black archivists who focus on the history and representation of people of color in the LGBTQ community. In 2018, Krü curated their first exhibit hosted by Affinity Community Services that featured BLA collections and archival workshops. Krü designed an oral histories confessional booth as an offer to participants to reflect on their thoughts and experiences while exploring the exhibit.³¹

One reflection created by Dr. Yvonne Welbon, an American film maker and author of *Sisters in the Life: A History of Out African American Lesbian Media-Making*, stated:

²⁹ Krü Maekdo, “Black Women Radicals ”Afrekete Convos”,” YouTube video, 59:59, July 20, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vac550OhbK4>.

³⁰ Zakiyyah Najeebah, “ Black Women Are Everything: Centering the Voices and Experiences of Black Lesbians in Chicago,” *Chicago Reader*, June 20, 2020, <https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/black-women-a/Content?oid=71093552>.

³¹ <https://www.affinity95.org/about>. Affinity Community Services is a LGBTQ non-profit organization in Chicago, Illinois with an emphasis in caring for Black women, but also focuses on social justice and community work for Black people.

“When Krü told me they were going to do this project, I thought it was interesting because I had never seen one.”

“I walked into the room that had a video playing and it was Juanita Grey. And she was telling a story that I didn’t know about somebody bringing a bomb to a night club, here in Chicago, and it exploded. I didn’t know about that hate crime that had happened.”³²

Krü’s grassroots approach to archiving takes two avenues. First, it provides a wide variety of archival material that focuses on Black lesbian experiences and history. Second, Krü asserted historical memory by introducing identities through archival materials and provided exhibit participants to record their own thoughts and memories that eventually were added into the BLA collection. Simultaneously, at this particular exhibit, Krü managed to identify the significance of local community history and LGBTQ history in Chicago.

BLA stands as a community organization that is accessible to Black lesbians and lesbians of color with the intent of collaborating with other community archives that share similar goals. During the exhibit, Krü invited then Project Manager and Archivist of the South Side Home Move Project, Candace Ming, to host an archival workshop. The collaborative preservation workshop showcased ways of practicing at home preservation. Candace provided her expertise on ways to “preserve their own film, their own material...how they should digitize,” and store their digital collections.³³ Ming also offered pamphlets that discussed preservation for paper, photos, and handling home videos and film. The archival workshops enabled Krü to offer free and accessible archival training to BLA supporters, thus following principles of

³² Yvonne Welbon, “Chicago Confessionals (2018) Black Lesbian Archives exhibit,” YouTube video, 8:06, January 27, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CAYsLiRjPU&t=1s>.

³³ Candace Ming, “Black Lesbian Archives: Southside Home Movie Project with Candace Ming,” YouTube video, 1:08:14, October 19, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78qgtRgm5wg>.

community-based archives that aim to uplift their community with education and knowledge that may not be attainable in everyday spaces that do not discuss archival concepts.

Not only does Krü preserve a large collection of physical archival materials, but also she makes available the items in the digital archive collection on the BLA websites and Instagram. In the ‘media’ and ‘archives’ sub-sections of the website, personal stories, archival documents, and public forums are freely accessible to the public. Most of the content depict events and documentation centered on the Black lesbian experience to further enhance the existence and encourage others to share their stories. Krü posted a newspaper article from October 1990 written by the author of *A Word on Books*, Yvonne Anderson. In the post, Krü took a quote from Yvette’s article and tagged a few words with hashtags “#Literature is a vehicle by which lesbians are to be a part of #herstory. Lesbians #writing about lesbians is a way to ensure that herstory depicts accurately the lesbian experience. It is important that black lesbian writers #document #blacklesbians. #blacklesbianarchives how are you documenting yourself?”³⁴ By clicking each hashtag, the website directs users to Instagram where relevant content exists, thereby making the document visible to millions of Instagram users. Other archival materials can be located throughout Krü’s social media account that capture past activities and events, as well as her visits to archival repositories that house some of the items she used for research. BLA has also established a Patreon account that enables patrons to financially support the community-based archives and offers a bit more archival content that is not readily available on BLA’s official website or Instagram account.³⁵

³⁴ Krü Maekdo, ”BG [B&G] 1.8 (Oct 1990) A Word On Books by Yvette Anderson” *The Black Lesbian Archives*, Accessed Nov 17, 2020, <https://blacklesbianarchives.wixsite.com/info/post/bg-b-g-1-8-oct-1990-a-word-on-books-by-yvette-anderson>

³⁵ <https://www.patreon.com/blacklesbianarchives/posts>.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, BLA announced a nationwide tour that began in Atlanta, Georgia. Krü launched the event to discuss open accessibility of information from the BLA and share education through informative and interactive exhibits. Hosted at the Buenos Días Cafe on Georgia State University's campus, the BLA Grassroots Tour Stop invited the public to learn about BLA, explore the content that the tour would offer, and support local artistry. While this event was complimentary, Krü encouraged donations that would proceed towards sustaining the tour and other accessible logistics pertaining to BLA. The tour came to an abrupt end as the pandemic progressed into the early weeks of March. However, Krü's future plans are to continue the BLA's mission and, eventually, establish it as a non-profit organization.³⁶

As events and public forums circulate through Krü's social media, digital archives, and public forums, BLA's unique platform that encourages preservation of and education for the Black lesbian community continues to create forthcoming challenges. In an interview with *ArchivesAWARE!*, Krü mentioned that "one of the challenges is figuring out an innovative way to preserve archives without having the largest set of funds/backing and to keep it going. The more I learn about archival preservation, the more I understand there's so much you wouldn't expect that goes into the backend of archival preservation."³⁷ Krü's self-determination and passion for archiving Black lesbian history and memory genuinely dives into core post-custodial archival principles. And lastly, BLA's initiative to invite everyone, especially its targeted

³⁶Krü Maekdo, "LA 2020 Tour Campaign and Updates," YouTube video, 9:31, December 2, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78qgtRgm5wg>.

³⁷ Society for American Archivists, ArchivesAWARE! Awareness and Outreach Resources for Archivists January 22, 2020 <https://archivesaware.archivists.org/2020/01/22/theres-an-archivist-for-that-interview-with-kru-maekdo-founder-of-the-black-lesbian-archives/>.

audience, to access BLA content to further engage in LGBTQ history presents a framework focused on collective memory.

ATX Barrio Archive

The origins of Austin reach as far back as 1839. ATX Barrio Archives attempts to reproduce identity communities that represent generations of Black, Latinx, and immigrant communities who once lived and currently reside in the city's East side by creating a timeline that focuses on their presence.³⁸ The author of *Flatlines: Portraits of East Austin*, Michael King argued that “The 1930s follows directly on Austin’s 1928 city master plan, an urban policy that formalized the racial segregation confining African American and Mexican American residents to what would become the East Side — originally the “Negro District.”³⁹ During the plight of the Jim Crow era “... the 1960s marked a breakthrough in racial desegregation after decades of civil rights agitation, protest, and personal sacrifice and enabled the first great visible steps towards racial integration of the city’s public schools, universities, institutions, and neighborhoods.”⁴⁰

Building on the history of East Austin’s swift shift from segregation to cultural cohesiveness and then later on, to gentrification, King emphasized that the first decade of “...the twenty-first century has brought even more dramatic change to East Austin. Economic progress, physical renewal and population growth have produced a generational, demographic, and racial transformation that occurred so rapidly it can seem breathless, even ruthless.”⁴¹ Due to the increase of real estate prices and gentrification, the effect has resulted in the displacement of people, demolition of structures and homes, and interruption of generational continuity on the East side of Austin.

³⁸ Latino/a/x not only defined here as a shared ethnicity among people who are from Latin American countries or are descendants of Latin Americans, but also includes people who are non-binary and binary gendered. Spanish and non-Spanish speaking people who identify as Latinx or Hispanic are included. The term also includes those who have Indigenous roots that existed before pre-colonial United States (Chicano/a/x and Mexican Americans). I will reference the term Latinx throughout this paper.

³⁹ Michael King, *Fault Lines: Portraits of East Austin*. San Antonio: Trinity University Press, (2019), 9.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, 10.

⁴¹ *ibid*, 12.

East Austin resident, archivist, and founder of ATX Barrio Archive, Alan Garcia dedicates his time to “documenting the cultural heritage and history of Austin POC neighborhood, past and present.”⁴² His earliest experiences with collecting family documents, archival projects, archival education and training, and genuine passion aids in the production of the work he shares with the East Austin community and to all who are interested. In 2016, Alan created a community-based digital archive on Instagram that maps East Austin’s past and present identity communities before the displacement of people and destruction of the physical neighborhoods, also known as gentrification.

Alan encourages photo and video submissions and obtains consent to share individuals’ stories on the Internet and in open exhibits. The digital archive’s content consists of research Alan conducted at various archives around the city— Austin History Center, UT Libraries, Texas Archives of Moving Images, and others—collecting photos, videos, audio recordings, newspapers, and vinyl records. Not only does Alan find both physical and digital formats to share on Instagram, but also he has utilized the Washington Carver Museum, Culture and Genealogy to promote awareness about community activism. Below are examples of the collections’ content made available on Instagram (available captions in footnotes):

⁴² Alan Garcia, “Alan Garcia- ATX Barrio Archive Interview on LatinxVoices // LatinxSpaces,” YouTube video 7:42, November 20, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GMDwdJhHIQ>; The term POC is an acronym for People of Color.



⁴³ "Celestine Eunice Madison Brown was born in 1878 in a log cabin located at present day East 11th Street and IH-35. Celestine's father, Henry G. Madison (1843-1912), built the cabin in 1863 with his wife Louisa Green. Henry G. Madison served the city of Austin as a police officer, a porter in the Texas House of Representatives, and as the first African American city councilman. In 1886 a frame house was built around the log cabin and it was not until 1968 that demolition workers discovered the cabin inside the walls of the old Madison homestead. The cabin was donated to the city, and in 1973 it was disassembled and later reassembled in Rosewood Park in East Austin. Celestine Brown was the last of eight children born to Louisa Green and Henry G. Madison in the family log cabin. In an 1971 interview with the Austin American Statesman, 93 year old Celestine Brown is quoted asking staff writer Rowland Nethaway about the recent interest in her family's cabin: "Why did you all take so long to try to find out something about the colored people?" 📷: 1. Celestine Brown at age 93, Austin American Statesman, June 15, 1971 📷:2. Madison log cabin (East 11th St. at IH-35), Austin Parks and Recreation Department. Photo Negative Collection, Austin History Center, September 20, 1968." <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bt7DLNrFnP/>. Accessed November 24, 2020.



atx_barrio_archive · Following
Texas State University

atx_barrio_archive #tdih in 1963, Texas State University (then Southwest Texas State College) was desegregated when 4 African-American women were allowed to register for classes. Standing, left to right, Georgie Faye Hoodye and Mabeleen Washington. Seated, left to right, Dana Jean Smith and Gloria Odoms. 📷: University Archives, Texas State University, located on the 5th floor of the @alkeklibrary . S/out to all the woke Bobcats!

196w

cthu living large!

196w 1 like Reply

cachi_camo @feelleal yes!!!



143 likes

FEBRUARY 4, 2017

Add a comment...

Post

44



atx_barrio_archive · Following

atx_barrio_archive April 4, 1974: Black and Chicano members of the East Austin Committee for Justice protest at City Hall, calling for an end to police brutality and the dismissal of police chief R.A. Miles and assistant chief George Phifer. Pictured is Juan Hipolito, at microphone, and Velma Roberts, holding up the "Stop The Beating" sign. 📷: The Rag, vol. 8, #21, 4/08/1974.

200w



48 likes

JANUARY 5, 2017

Add a comment...

Post

45

⁴⁴ “#tdih in 1963, Texas State University (then Southwest Texas State College) was desegregated when 4 African-American women were allowed to register for classes. Standing, left to right, Georgie Faye Hoodye and Mabeleen Washington. Seated, left to right, Dana Jean Smith and Gloria Odoms. 📷: University Archives, Texas State University, located on the 5th floor of the @alkeklibrary . S/out to all the woke Bobcats!.” <https://www.instagram.com/p/BQGuokfAewg/>. Accessed November 1, 2020.

⁴⁵ “April 4, 1974: Black and Chicano members of the East Austin Committee for Justice protest at City Hall, calling for an end to police brutality and the dismissal of police chief R.A. Miles and assistant chief George Phifer. Pictured is Juan Hipolito, at microphone, and Velma Roberts, holding up the "Stop The Beating" sign. 📷: The Rag, vol. 8, #21, 4/08/1974.” <https://www.instagram.com/p/BO5OCnogeNt/>. Accessed November 1, 2020.



Not only does ATX Barrio Archives offer a memorable scope into the past, but also aims to engage with the community through caption storytelling and community interaction through commentary. Furthermore, this method serves as a way for individuals to become familiar with archival practices and view materials that are not often incorporated and shown in museums.

Another post-custodial method Alan commits to is collaborating with other archivists in Austin, to foster education to residents about events in Austin’s history that are too often glossed over. For example, in April 2018, Alan collaborated with Rachel Winston, the Black Diaspora Archivist for the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection at UT Austin Libraries, to curate an exhibit entitled, *Juntos/Together: Black and Brown Activism in Austin, Texas From 1970-83*.

Housed at the Washington Carver Museum, Culture and Genealogy Center, the contents of the

⁴⁶ “🎉BIG ANNOUNCEMENT!!!🎉 The ATX Barrio Archive will have a collection of photos/artifacts on display at the Carver Branch for the entire month of March!!! 🙌🏻 Special s/out to Carver managing librarian Doreen Boyd for giving us the opportunity to curate a display for the community 🙌🏻.” <https://www.instagram.com/p/BRJsyjdBXYM/>. Accessed November 1, 2020.

⁴⁷ “🙌🏻 S/out to Brandon from the 44 helping spread the word on community efforts to keep Mendez Middle School from being closed by the state #DoveSprings44.” <https://www.instagram.com/p/BeoeU3KIGQi/>. Accessed November 1, 2020.

exhibit displayed photos and information on the cohesive social justice activism between Black and Latinx community members who protested against gentrification and police violence in the 1970s and 1980s. In one interview, Alan and Rachel stated “We felt it was necessary to work together, pull our different resources together, at the institution and community level, to emphasize the fact that black and brown people were always behind the activist movement... to show people that we were always working together, marching together, going to school together.”⁴⁸ The exhibit provided evidence of cohesive relationships among two groups that often goes unrecognized in Austin’s community history. This initiative furthermore contributes to the discourse on the effectiveness of community archival work and activism.

Alan and Rachel structured the exhibit to show five significant co-related categories that parallel Austin’s history to that of current events. Each exhibition room showcased key events such as: solidarity and organization between Black and Latinx community members who practiced social justice activism; a diverse initiative for the improvement of education and employment in public schools and at UT Austin through student protests; individual’s stories that were and continue to be affected by gentrification; the support of community members to social causes; and “the presence and activities of the Ku Klux Klan in Austin.”⁴⁹ Austin reporter, Acacia Coronado mentioned that the stories and “many of the artifacts shine a light on different motives for activism, such as that which resulted from murders of unarmed black and brown citizens at the hands of the Austin Police Department in the 1970s, an issue that resonates with today’s protests of police brutality.”⁵⁰ Another great example, Alan pointed out in the interview, is that the exhibit “...shows how the minority communities of the past were protesting issues they

⁴⁸ Acacia Coronado, “Juntos/Together” Ties Austin's Activist Past and Present: Shedding light on action & initiatives by local minority communities” *The Austin Chronicle*, March 28, 2020, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/daily/arts/2018-03-28/juntos-together-ties-austins-activist-past-and-present/>

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

saw forthcoming, like gentrification, by fighting against real estate developers and urban planners and advocating to support small businesses.”⁵¹ Overall, the initial project ushered in representation of and engagement with marginalized groups of East Austin, showing contribution of memory and ongoing existence of Black and Latinx people in the Texas capitol.

Alan’s commitment to serve the East Austin community through social media, digital archive, collaboration with other archivists, and curating exhibits show dedication to connecting with audiences that need representation and empowerment. ATX Barrio Archives presents the idea that an open digital archive allows for flexibility in the creation of records—subject headings, vocabulary, description, and search terms—and community interaction. Also, considering the closure of libraries during the current COVID-19 pandemic has limited access to physical archives, the concept of a social media digital archive acts as a virtual archive. Traditional archives could learn from this model framework, by becoming more inclusive of a non-academic audience, providing archival training to communities, actively hiring people from communities that their collections represent, and effectively understanding the social and political implications that significantly affect academic and non-academic individuals who live within city and state limits.

⁵¹ *ibid.*

Texas After Violence Project

Founded by Walter C. Long in 2007, the TAVP implements post custodial frameworks that involve collaborating with UT Austin, oral history documentation through community engagement, creating digital media, social media presence, and continuing education for those interested in the kind of transformative work TAVP advocates. As a practicing lawyer, Long established TAVP “..hoping it might help foster dialogue between Texas on all sides of the death penalty debate about the human need...so that Texans might move beyond polarized discussions and seek together a less violent future.”⁵² The scope of the TAVP collection aims to “conduct responsible, inclusive, and ethical research, and to build an archive of stories and other materials that shift narrative power to marginalized and oppressed communities and promote restorative and transformative justice.”⁵³ The team of archivists, volunteers, board members, and interns service the communities of Texas by promoting their stories, through documentary projects and oral histories that are preserved in digital archives and on social media. TAVP also focuses on maintaining a presence within communities, by investigating the long term effects of state-violence and healing trauma.

Since June 2019, TAVP has participated in critical discussion and adds to the scholarship on social justice community-based archives, through blogging on *Medium.com*. The TAVP team publishes essays on different topics that remember the lingering effects of grief and violence, emphasize the conditions of incarcerated peoples, the criminal justice system, and transformative memory work in archives. *Medium.com* is an open digital publishing platform that invites writers to create and make available their work on various topics, while engaging with curious individuals and collaborating with authors. Alongside oral historian and archivist of TAVP, Jane

⁵² <https://texasafterviolence.org/> accessed November 1, 2020.

⁵³ *ibid.*

Fields, are team members and board members who have received relevant training to archival studies, librarianship, law, visual arts, and social justice.⁵⁴

An extension of community outreach continues through a collection of recorded narratives accessible to anyone with an electronic device. Showcased videos on Vimeo.com discuss practical skills to document history and life, information on trauma, and ways to implement healthy environments for community members of incarcerated or executed people.⁵⁵ Centralizing access to free information, by way of technology, allows individuals to reach for sources at their convenience and shows TAVP as an archive open to community assistance.

TAVP's position as a community based-archive also includes collaborating with other archives. In 2010, UT Austin Libraries and TAVP established a partnership to house TAVP's oral histories in their digital repository, the Human Rights Documentation Initiative (HRDI). The academic library uses archival strategies that promote long-term preservation, education, and collaboration with non-profit community-based archives. The library initiates the preservation of human rights related content in efforts to secure records that are in jeopardy of potential loss or do not have more than one place to hold recordings and images. UT Austin Libraries' archivists and librarians work with non-profit organizations and community-based archives around the U.S. and in various countries. HRDI's mission aims to support human rights and tackle human rights issues around the globe through the promotion of advocacy and research.⁵⁶ For example, the documentary project, *Life and Death in a Carceral State: Narratives of Loss and Survival*, was

⁵⁴ Gabriel Solis (Executive Director), Jane Field (Associate Director), Murphy Anne Carter (Sheltering Justice Project Coordinator), aems emswiler (Archival Fellow), Julia Montiel (Sheltering Justice Interviewer and Archival Intern), Mark Menjuvar (Artist-in-Residence), and Hollis Hammonds (Artist-in-Residence). Board Members: Walter C. Long, Betty Snyder, Charlotte Nunes, Susannah Sheffer, Naomi Paik, Celeste Henery, Glenna Balch, and Jim Kuhn.

⁵⁵ <https://vimeo.com/TexasAfterViolence> access November 1, 2020.

⁵⁶ "Home: University of Texas Libraries," *University of Texas Libraries*, accessed November 1, 2020. <https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/hrdi/>.

intentionally created to record oral histories that highlight people who have been “...impacted by murders, police violence, in-custody deaths, mass incarceration, and the death penalty.”⁵⁷ As community engagement is an essential ingredient to documenting violence in Texas, TAVP deliberately established documentation objectives that oversee oral history interviews and asserts the individuals, or storytellers, communicating their stories as the primary creators of the content made available through the HRDI repository.

By establishing an archive preserved with voices and appearances of storytellers that represent community members’ voices and emotions that have been repressed by state authorities, trauma induced experiences, long-term grief, and other valid reasons, TAVP presents a model framework for acquisition that depends on materials that will contribute to collective memory. The focus of the oral documentation records family members, friends, and witnesses to violence, punishment, or death by policing or the criminal justice system centers on community history and collective consciousness. For example, in 2019 TAVP formulated a “collaborative research documentation project with formerly incarcerated advocates to document the health impacts of incarceration on their lives and on their families.”⁵⁸ This perspective goal of the community-based archives visualizes a space that encourages restoration of the health of storytellers and the greater number of affected community members.

In 2017, Angela Brown shared her story with Texans and anyone willing to listen, a decade after her brother Kevin Alexander Brown was shot and murdered by Austin Police Department Sergeant, Michael Olsen on June 3, 2007. Angela expressed:

“I’m trying to be a voice for him. I think that’s how to keep his spirit alive. Hopefully one day, something will actually change so families don’t have to deal with this. I’m hoping to make him proud by continuing to do this. All this death is, I think, God’s way of saying to me, ‘Use your

⁵⁷ https://texasafterviolence.org/?page_id=1522 accessed November 1, 2020.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

voice. This is what you need to do because there are people who are in your situation and can't handle the stuff I've put you through. Just don't give up. Don't let death defeat you. Defeat death."⁵⁹

Angela's voice and remembrance of her brother humanizes Kevin Brown's existence. She continues to speak out on social injustices such as policing and mass incarceration in Texas.

Another example of inclusive oral testimony and empowerment of the narrator include Jorge Antonio Renaud.⁶⁰ The author of *Behind the Walls: A Guide for Family and Friends of Texas Inmates* spoke about his experiences in the Texas prison system for twenty-seven years:

"Despite whatever intelligence I had and how much education I received in prison. So sure enough, eight months later, I end up back in prison, after a series of robberies here in Austin. And they give me a twenty-eight year sentence. And I did like, what about eight years on it. But this time I ended up getting a lot more education. I started writing. I started writing seriously. I started writing poetry. I started publishing poetry. It's how I met Raúl Salinas. I was writing poetry and I hadn't really tried to publish. I'd maybe sent out to a couple of places but I didn't really know the mechanics, the ins and outs of publishing.

.....

And I was reading them to myself. And they sounded - the way they sounded- the way the sounds would merge together - it just really moved me. And I had all this stuff just flooding out of me so I just started publishing a lot of poetry. I started writing a lot of poetry, sending out a lot of poetry.

....

And it wasn't for any other purpose than to, again, just - I had to deal with these emotions that I didn't, at the time, have the willingness to deal with as I did later on in my next sentence. And I was facing it through poetry."⁶¹

Today, Jorge works as the Director of Policy and Advocacy for the Latino Justice Southwest Regions, a civil and human rights organization. The mission of the Latino Justice Southwest Regions is to highlight "the personal stories and experiences of victims and survivors of state

⁵⁹ Angela Brown, "Interview with Casey Phillips," *Sheltering Justice, Texas After Violence Project*, accessed October 6, 2020, <https://shelteringjustice.texasafterviolence.org/items/show/39>.

⁶⁰ For more examples about ways testimonies serve as a powerful concept to communities, refer to Lisa Tuhiwai Smith's work *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, London: Zed Books, 1999.

⁶¹ Jorge Antonio Renaud, "Interview with Mr. Jorge Antonio Renaud." Texas After Violence Project Collection of Oral History Interviews, Human Rights Documentation Initiative, University of Texas Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin, http://av.lib.utexas.edu/index.php?title=TAVP:Jorge_Renaud.

violence are critical counter-narratives about violence, criminality, and the purported efficacy of current law enforcement and criminal justice policies and practices.”⁶² Also, Jorge continues to address prison conditions and the long-term negative effects of the Criminal Justice System on Latinx communities through activism and writing.

As for current projects, TAVP is conducting research on the long-term ways the death penalty in Texas continues to affect individuals and communities. The report, *Nobody To Talk To: Barriers to Mental Health Treatment for Family Members of Individuals Sentenced to Death or Executed*, stated that:

“Even when this sentiment is expressed sympathetically, and even when the speaker has enough understanding of trauma and the dynamics of family relationships to begin to imagine how death row family members might be affected by their experiences, it is clear that there has not been much interaction between death row families and mental health service providers, and certainly very little interaction in which the family member’s experience with the death penalty is explicitly recognized and addressed as part of the care they are receiving.”⁶³

The report presents ways family members of incarcerated people who are currently in prison, facing the Death Penalty, or have been executed by the Texas criminal justice system experience disproportionate barriers. It addresses the ripple effects that families may encounter, such as lack of financial resources, stigmas behind mental health, distrust, lack of knowledge or familiarity of the Texas Death Penalty, and rejection of counseling.⁶⁴

In efforts to broaden approaches to implement and sustain community-based archival praxis, TAVP makes the administrative decision to practice an archival model that enforces constant effective community engagement and community empowerment. By inserting

⁶² Gabriel Solis . 2018. ”Documenting State Violence: (Symbolic) Annihilation & Archives of Survival,” in *KULA: knowledge creation, dissemination, and preservation studies* 2, no. 1 (2018): 9.

⁶³ *Nobody To Talk To: Barriers to Mental Health Treatment for Family Members of Individuals Sentenced to Death or Executed*. 17 https://texasafterviolence.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/TAVP_Report.pdf accessed November 10,2020.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

storytellers at the center of their focus in their digital archives, documentaries, and social media, TAVP attempts to contribute to community healing and substantiates the realities of oppressive and traumatic experiences of past events that still affect communities across the state of Texas and continue to happen in the present day.

While these positions are transparent to that of TAVP's role as an archive, the archivists who work for TAVP aim to reflect communities that have experienced state violence. They do this through providing a digital platform for individuals to tell their stories, and meeting the project objectives to serve as a sanction of cultural memory, "resilience, survival, and healing."⁶⁵ Solis, Executive Director of Texas After Violence Project, argued "that counter-narratives are forms of endangered knowledge not only because of political, technical, and funding barriers, but also because the people most directly impacted by state-violence—overwhelming people of color—are silenced by justice systems, mainstream media, and archives, and early death."⁶⁶ Most importantly, the existence of community archives that focus on human rights and social justice, Solis explained "is to deflect from silence and submit to an alternative method that bring to light, educates, and uplifts, those who have been silenced, oppressed and unrightfully imposed by state violence."⁶⁷ For example, TAVP interviewed Civil rights activist and librarian, Marta Cotera, which provided an insightful perspective on her active presence in Austin's community history. Marta stated that in the 1960s and 1970s, she was involved in police reform activism, particularly because of the constant racial profiling of marginalized communities by the Austin police department:

⁶⁵ Gabriel Solis "Reflections on Archives of Violence and Transformative Justice," Sept 10, 2018. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/community-archives/reflections-on-archives-of-violence-and-transformative-justice-87e813f310fe>

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

“And the reform efforts were along the lines of professionalizing the police, requiring higher education standards for recruits, requiring a professional training academy, requiring psychological services, psychiatric services for them, requiring standards that involved—for example, if a police officer should be reviewed and if they were guilty of a domestic abuse, then the police department would hopefully have to get them off the force because you do need abusers to be out there with the community.”⁶⁸

Interviews such as Marta’s and many others located in TAVP’s digital archive offer a personal glimpse into individual experiences, thereby conveying the longevity of social issues and cause behind community activism.

Texas After Violence Project maps and identifies narratives that are too often repressed by lack of acknowledgement, silence, violence, trauma, and death. In an attempt to further combat ignorance and raise awareness about the continuation of violence perpetrated by the criminal justice system, TAVP owns social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. All postings consist of content related to events, stories on advocacy, mourning, memory, and informative articles published by a range of journals that discuss the current state of the prison system. Solis called on archivists ‘urging that we must practice accountability over disposability in our memory work, activism, and advocacy.’⁶⁹ Secondly, the significance of TAVP is that they provide a repository of oral stories “that guide the construction of new narratives, understanding, and visions of justice in the aftermath of reprisal.”⁷⁰ The archive’s approach amplifies the existing stories by offering a platform for people to share their experiences through recording oral histories and safekeeping original documents that are available for public consumption.

⁶⁸ Marta Cotera “ Interview with Marta Cotera,” Texas After Violence Project Collection of Oral History Interviews, Human Rights Documentation Initiative, University of Texas Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin http://av.lib.utexas.edu/index.php?title=TAVP:Marta_Cotera_1.

⁶⁹ Solis “ Reflections on Archives of Violence and Transformative Justice,” Sept 10, 2018. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/community-archives/reflections-on-archives-of-violence-and-transformative-justice-87e813f310fe>

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

Conclusion

The archival projects mentioned above deploy alternative ways of practicing community archiving that focus on communities in East Austin prior and during gentrification, memory and history that reflect the lives and movement of Black lesbians, and family and incarcerated persons' experiences that have been affected by state-sanctioned violence. It addressed questions such as: are there archives that openly share information that highlight individuals' stories in disparate communities? Does there exist self-determined archivists who initiate alternative archival models through engagement with their communities, documenting memory, while aiming to make community history a part of the mainstream and openly accessible? ATX Barrio Archives, the Black Lesbian Archives, and Texas After Violence Project build on the post-custodial archival framework using digital archives and social media as resourceful tools. They practice ethical memory work, engage with communities, work with individuals who are in control of their own narratives, and provide educational resources as a way to give back to those same communities.

By introducing the work of the community-based archivists and their unique archival projects, I argued that open access to social media and digital archives combats the misrepresentation and displacement of the memory and history of identity communities. Secondly, community-based archives stand as accessible memory repositories that move away from the privatization of valuable information that belongs to individuals and focuses on the deeply intricate characteristics that shape them. Thereby, the archives mentioned in this paper make an effort to engage with and represent the surrounding communities through ethical memory work. In order for academic archives and libraries to visualize communal and intellectual contributions to archival collections and scholarship, large archival institutions

should first make great efforts to transcend the confines of exclusivity in educational institutions and the privatization of documents and other materials to make history and memory accessible not only to scholars and researchers, but also to the public.

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