

Oral Histories of Tompkins County

Archival Finding Aid

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2019 - Immigration & Food - Generation to Generation Oral History Project

The *Immigration & Food Oral History Project* contains ten interviews recorded in 2019. The interviews were conducted by The History Center Youth Ambassadors. Under the supervision and coordination of History Center staff the teen ambassadors explored the history of immigration in Tompkins County by conducting interviews with people who had immigrated to the United States, live in Tompkins County, and own a restaurant or food-related business (or whose parents/families owned the business). This project was supervised by History Center Director of Youth Education Julia Taylor.

Trigger warnings: poverty, war, descriptions of state sanctioned violence.

Interviews with:

Akua Akyea* (15 minutes)

Akua Akyea reflects on her childhood spent in Africa, Western Europe, and Canada and the lifelong connection with food that led her to opening Mama Loye's Cafe in Dryden. She also discusses her personal philosophy of the importance of growth and trying things outside of her comfort zone.

Trigger warnings: war, descriptions of state sanctioned violence.

- *Recorded 4/27/2019*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-4-27_Akyea-Akua*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-4-27_Akyea-Akua_Transcript*

Abner Argueta* (25 minutes)

Abner Argueta discusses his childhood in Guatemala and the process of immigrating to the United States, where he worked in California and Oregon before opening Argueta's Coffee in Ithaca. He also reflects on his lifelong dream of owning a coffee farm where he can grow and sell his own coffee.

Trigger warnings: poverty, war

- *Recorded 5/16/2019*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-5-16_Argueta-Abner*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-5-16_Argueta-Abner_Transcript*

Tal Oron Cohen* (50 minutes)

Tal Oron Cohen discusses spending time in Israel, Denmark, and New Mexico before coming to Ithaca in 2006. She reflects on running her business, Ba-Li Cravings, building a commercial kitchen in her basement, and her experience as an immigrant in the United States.

Trigger warning: war

- *Recorded 4/20/2019*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-4-20_Cohen-Tal-Oron*
- *Transcript: OHTC_2019-4-20_Cohen-Tal-Oron_Transcript*

Addisu Gebre* (54 minutes)

Addisu Gebre discusses opening Enat Ethiopian Cuisine, a business that sells at the Ithaca Farmers Market and caters in Ithaca, with his wife. He also speaks on his education in Ethiopia and at Cornell University and his work in both countries as an engineer.

- *Recorded 4/20/2019*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-4-20_Gebre-Addisu*
- *Transcript: OHTC_2019-4-20_Gebre-Addisu_Transcript*

Adil Griguihi* (7 minutes)

Adil Griguihi reflects on the transition from attending college in Morocco to moving to the United States to find work. He discusses the difficulties of starting and maintaining his restaurant, Casablanca, in downtown Ithaca, and the positive experiences he has had with it.

- *Recorded 4/17/2019*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-4-17_Griguihi-Adil*
- *Transcript: OHTC_2019-4-17_Griguihi-Adil_Transcript*

Ooy and Bonner Herren* (27 minutes)

Ooy Herren discusses her business ventures in Thailand, including a gas station and a bakery, and her restaurant in Ithaca, Thai Basil. She also discusses the time-intensive nature of owning a small business and the difficulties that the language barrier has imposed.

- *Recorded 5/5/2019*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-5-5_Herren-Ooy-and-Bonner*
- *Transcript: OHTC_2019-5-5_Herren-Ooy-and-Bonner_Transcript*

Dr. Abdul Jalil (34 minutes)

Dr. Abdul Jalil discusses his education in Bangladesh and Japan, employment as a scientist in several countries, and work at Cornell University. He also discusses his role in Ithaca's Muslim community and his business, Ithaca Halal Meat and Grocery.

- *Recorded 4/15/2019*

- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-4-15_Jalil-Abdul-Dr*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-4-15_Jalil-Abdul-Dr_Transcript*
- *This transcript is awaiting verification.*

Katherine Karakantas* (22 minutes)

Katherine Karakantas reflects on the diner that her parents owned as Greek immigrants in Ithaca during the twentieth century. She discusses her role in the diner as a teenager, the Greek tradition of opening diners in the United States, and the evolution of social and restaurant culture in Ithaca.

- *Recorded 6/21/2019*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-6-21_Karakantas-Katherine*
- *Transcript: OHTC_2019-6-21_Karakantas-Katherine_Transcript*

Edward & Michael Mazza* (43 minutes)

Ed and Michael speak to the life of Ed's grandparents, who founded Ithaca Bakery, a bar room, a grocery store, and a dance hall as Italian immigrants in Ithaca. They speak to the hard work that has been a centerpiece of their family values and how it has shaped them and the memories that have been passed down from generation to generation.

- *Recorded 4/10/2019*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-4-10_Mazza-Edward-and-Michael*
- *Transcript: OHTC_2019-4-10_Mazza-Edward-and-Michael_Transcript*

Baldev and Kamaldeep Sekhon* (61 minutes)

Baldev and Kamaldeep Sekhon discuss moving from Punjab, India, to the United States, where Baldev first worked in agriculture in California, then in construction in New York City, before opening New Delhi Diamond's restaurant in Ithaca. They reflect on the downsides to being disconnected from their family and friends in India and discuss traditional family structures and activities where they grew up.

- *Recorded 4/23/2019*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-4-23_Sekhon-Baldev-and-Kamaldeep*
- *Transcript: OHTC_2019-4-23_Sekhon-Baldev-and-Kamaldeep_Transcript*

CITATION FOR THE COLLECTION

“Immigration & Food” Oral History Project, 10 oral histories recorded in 2019 by Youth Ambassadors of The History Center in Tompkins County, Generation to Generation Program, The History Center in Tompkins County. Oral Histories of Tompkins County Audio Archives, Ithaca NY, 2021.

Generous support for processing these collections came from a two year grant from the Museum Association of New York and the Institute of Museum & Library Services between 2020-2022.



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