

June/July 2021 News from the OHC

Director's Column from Martin Meeker

OHC Director Martin Meeker takes a nostalgic look at the band Sparks after watching a documentary about them. He remembers them as a genre-band, where they've remained categorically in his memory. However, watching the documentary challenged what he thought he knew about them. This made him think about oral history, its value, and how taking a life history approach to interviews can challenge what we think we know about people and larger historical narratives.



He also pays tribute to Bancroft staff who have recently retired, such as Bancroft Director Elaine Tennant (who recently received a Berkeley citation), Deputy Director Peter Hanff, finance manager Meilin Huang, and photographic curator Jack von Euw.

Read Martin's column here for more on Sparks, oral history, and the Bancroft's recent retirees.

OHC Summer Book Club Selection: Let's Talk About Hard Things by Anna Sale

Good news for all of you book club fans out there! We are pleased to announce our next pick **Let's Talk About Hard Things** by **Death, Sex & Money** podcast host, **Anna Sale**.



And there's more! Anna Sale will be joining us for our virtual book club discussion!

We'll be welcoming Anna as our special guest on Tuesday, August 10, 2021 from 2-3 p.m. PT via Zoom.

You can find Let's Talk About Hard Things online, at your local bookstore, and at your local library. We look forward to seeing you in August!

If you'd like to join, please send an RSVP to Shanna Farrell at sfarrell@library.berkeley.edu. Once you've RSVP'd, Shanna will send you the Zoom information.



Learn About Juneteenth Through Oral History

“Juneteenth was usually two days of real fun. . . . For those big picnics, people would come from Dallas, Fort Worth, well, just from miles around. I would think hundred miles or two

hundred miles. . . That was a time of reunion when all the families would come back.”

— Selena Foster, the daughter of sharecroppers from Cherokee County, Texas

The Oral History Center has three interviews with narrators who talk about Juneteenth. While the references to Juneteenth in these interviews are brief, they reveal something about each narrator – the pride of starting the first Juneteenth parade in Richmond, California; the happy memories of family reunions in Cherokee County, Texas; and the involved approach of a teacher with her students' families. Beyond that, scholars from many disciplines will find much of interest in the oral histories of these three women from three different backgrounds, all of whom landed in the Bay Area. Scholars studying everything from African American history to urban development, women's history, community history, demographics, education, theater, migration, the World War II home front — **the list goes on** — will find something in these oral histories to enhance their research.

Read More About Juneteenth Here.

OHC in the News

Berkeley News recently featured an oral history project that highlights the Japanese American redress program. In this article, interviewer and historian Todd Holmes talks about his partnership with Stanford's Emi Kuboyama on an oral history project about the Japanese American redress program. Holmes discusses what made the program unique and why so few people have heard about it.

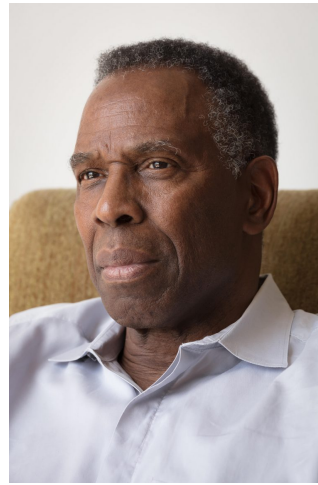


Read the article here.

New Interview Releases:

Charles Gaines: The Criticality and Aesthetics of the System

Charles Gaines is an artist specializing in conceptual art, as well as a professor of art at California Institute of the Arts. Gaines was born in South Carolina in 1944, but grew up in Newark, New Jersey. He attended Arts High School in Newark, graduated from Jersey City State College in 1966, and earned an MFA from the School of Art and Design at the Rochester Institute of Technology in 1967. Beginning in 1967, he taught at several colleges, including Mississippi Valley State College, Fresno State University, and California Institute of the Arts. Gaines has written several academic texts, including "Theater of Refusal: Black Art and Mainstream Criticism" in 1993 and "Reconsidering Metaphor/Metonymy: Art and the Suppression of Thought" in 2009. His influential artwork includes *Manifesto Series*, *Numbers and Trees*, and *Sound Text*; and he exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 2007 and 2015. Gaines is the recipient of several awards, including Guggenheim Fellowship in 2013 and REDCAT Award in 2018.



Read more about Gaines's interview here.

JoAnn Fowler: Building the Foundations of SLATE

The Oral History Center has been conducting a series of interviews about **SLATE**, a student political party at UC Berkeley from 1958 to 1966 – which means SLATE pre-dates even the Free Speech Movement. The newest addition to this project is an oral history with JoAnn Fowler, who was a founding member of the organization in the late 1950s.



JoAnn Fowler is a retired Spanish language educator and was a founding member of the University of California, Berkeley student political organization SLATE in the late 1950s. Fowler grew up in Los Angeles, California. She attended UC Berkeley from 1955 to 1959, where she became active in SLATE and served in student government through Associated Students of the University of California (ASUC). After completing a master's degree at Columbia University, she worked as a teacher, mostly in Davis, California.

Read more about Fowler's interview here.

In Memory of Art Gensler (1935–2021)

Arthur Gensler was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1935. He attended Cornell University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in architecture. Upon graduation, he worked for architecture firms in New York and Jamaica. After moving with his wife Drue to California in the early 1960s, Gensler worked for a few architectural firms, including Wurster, Bernardi, and Emmons. While at Wurster, he played a lead role establishing the design standards for the Bay Area Rapid Transit system, then under construction. In 1965, Gensler opened his firm by pioneering architectural interiors for newly constructed office buildings, including the Alcoa Building (1967) and the Bank of America Building (1969), both in San Francisco. His firm grew fairly rapidly with offices opening around the U.S. in the 1970s and 1980s and then overseas in the 1980s and 1990s. By the early 2000s, Gensler's firm was the largest architecture and design company headquartered in the U.S. In 2015 the firm is expected to complete the Shanghai Tower, which is the second tallest building in the world.



Read Gensler's interview here.

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