



CALL FOR PAPERS

**An International Conference
Organized by The Women and Memory Forum
in cooperation with
The Supreme Council for Culture and UN Women
Cairo, 13-15 September 2015**

ORAL HISTORY IN TIMES OF CHANGE Gender, Documentation, and the Making of Archives

In the 1960s, oral history projects were at the forefront of liberatory social movements in general, and the feminist movement in particular. Feminist historians challenged mainstream historical narratives that fed negative cultural stereotypes of women's roles in history and society: they documented the marginalized voices of women and integrated their diverse points of view in historical narratives; they engaged in intellectual debates about the relation between the social and the individual, the workings of memory and the construction of subjectivity, the relation between personal memory and collective memory; they also played a key role in highlighting the value of subjectivity and subverting the pseudo-binary between subjective and objective histories. In short, feminist oral historians succeeded in creating a knowledge backbone to support women's movements in many countries in the world by creating archives of women's voices.

Until the end of the twentieth century in the Arab world, archives of women's voices were almost non-existent, despite the presence of many small documentation efforts tied to individual research projects. However, the twenty-first century witnessed a marked increase in documentation projects in general, and of Arab women's voices in particular. The second intifada in 2000, the war on Iraq in 2003, the invasion of Lebanon in 2006, and most recently, the wave of Arab revolutions in 2011, resulted in radical historical transformations whose meanings continue to be contested and negotiated between the warring factions. In addition, new technologies brought in new practitioners and new audiences and have transformed the field of oral history.

The increase in the radical shifts and upheavals in the Arab body politic poses a range of challenges to oral history practitioners about the role and limits of oral history in times of change. Many questions arise: what are the limits/potential of oral history projects in times of change; how can oral history empower women to become active participants in transitional politics; what are the challenges facing oral historians/practitioners in an environment marked by bitter political divisions; what are the perils/ dangers of doing oral history in times of radical change; what are the challenges posed by the digital revolution in the field of oral history; what are the

challenges to the construction of an ‘objective’ and ‘representative’ archive of voices in turbulent times.

The conference **Oral History in Times of Change: Gender, Documentation and the Making of Archives** aims to bring together scholars, researchers, students, artists and practitioners, to exchange views and experiences regarding the challenges facing oral history projects in times of change with a particular focus on gender. The conference will focus on the documentation of oral narratives related to the upheavals in the Arab world but also invites international participants to share experiences about the documentation of experiences of revolutions and transitional periods in other parts of the world. The conference will also focus on methodological and theoretical issues pertaining to the documentation of oral narratives and the creation of archives.

Suggested sub-topics:

- Archives and power
- Personal memories as collective memories
- The challenges and opportunities of new technologies
- Visual/Audio archives
- The politics of representing Arab women in oral history
- Interpreting memory
- Ethical debates in oral history
- Conceptual and methodological debates in oral history
- Women’s archives and the production of alternative knowledge

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The conference will take place in **Cairo, 13-15 September 2015**.

Scholarly papers as well as organized panels and testimonies are invited.

Languages of the conference: Arabic and English.

Please fill in the attached form and send an abstract of about 500 words, and a bio of about 200 words not later than **1 April 2015**. The accepted abstracts will be announced by **1 May 2015**.

For submissions and queries, please write to the conference secretariat at:

oralhistory2015@wmf.org.eg

On behalf of the Organizing Committee:

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