

## Abstract

In this paper, I address how the oral history projects facilitate students in participating in delivering common good. These oral history projects include the Grade 9 Oral History Project in CAPs curriculum, the Chief Albert Luthuli Oral History Competition and several oral history projects held by the District Six Museum. The participants of these projects are all students from Grade 9 to Grade 12. I employed an ethnographic approach during one year and interviewed educators and learners about the Oral History Project. During the Oral History Project, students interview ordinary people about their experience in the Apartheid. The practice of the OHP varies largely because of the material, and social resources students have access to. The projects allow students to have a conversation with historical witnesses who they seldom pay attention to. By interpreting the students' work of the OHP, I argue OHP not only make students more aware of the historical roots of their living condition but also cultivates tolerance and respect. Township students conducting OHP discovers positive perspectives of their community and are inspired to alleviate the poverty and fight crimes. Through emphasizing with people who lived through Apartheid, young people care about history, care for the interviewees and care to bring about social change in the society. In regard to this, OHP plays a vital role in civic education. The research also reveals the problems in the OHP when interviewees are defensive or reserved about their experience during the Apartheid. To bring the multiple perspectives in history education and to cultivate understanding among different races, the necessity to bring different experiences into classrooms through OHP are addressed.

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## Introduction

### Theme and Significance

The origin concern of this research is the problems which emerged in current high school history education in China. China has a vast land and very diverse cultures and histories. A lot of the times, the territory divided into several different kingdoms. There are 56 ethnic groups in China while about 91% of the population are Han people. In the history curriculum, history of the minority groups and the political regime established by the minority groups are frequently marginalised.

Moreover, history is taught in a rote learning way. Students of the minority groups could not find their history and identity in the historical narrative. It is easy for them to feel history is irrelevant to them. In this case, history fails to deliver values of social justice and peace to the students and fails as a subject to cultivate students to be active participants in the civil society.

South Africa is also a nation with very diverse cultures, ethnic groups, and histories. South African history education has a special role in civic education as it has the responsibility to readjust the injustice in Apartheid. History teaching can bring to light the origins of the current institutions and people's living conditions. The poverty and crimes which rampage through black townships, the affluence of most white South Africans and the racial segregation which is still present in daily life in South Africa today are largely a result of the Apartheid. And there is significant evidence of continuing exclusion in classrooms throughout the country. (Engelbrecht and Green, 2017) If students could recognise the historical origins of their living condition and contemplate where their outlooks of the society come from, they will broaden their view of the society and take on a different way to look at themselves. For example, the privileged group will feel uncomfortable about their privilege and make an effort to compensate the unlucky individuals. The disadvantaged group will transform the anger towards the daily struggles they face into motivation to create social change. History, when taught well, can inspire learners to participate in the delivery of the common good. Only then would history's role of civic education be fulfilled.

South Africa history education during Apartheid is highly biased. Metanarratives about Afrikaans' nationalism were provided where the role of Afrikaners in South African history is glorified. The curriculum put great emphasis on the Great Trek, while other races are rarely mentioned. As Du Preez argues: "Afrikaners had a God-given task in Africa." (Du Preez as quoted in Hoadley, 2017) The textbook depicts other racial groups in stereotypical terms like "fearsome Zulus". Teachers must teach phrases like "as drunk as a coloured teacher" even if they are coloured themselves. History education aims to cultivate nationalism, promote racial fears and entrench segregation. The history of ordinary people and people of colour was falsely interpreted, went unrecorded or was silenced altogether (Wahlberg, 2008).

South Africa has gone through several reforms in history education after the Apartheid. To reverse the situation in Apartheid, the Department of Education introduced the concept of new history into the new curriculum. It emphasises that pupils should experience the past through imagination, empathy and drama. Kader Asmal, the former minister of the educational department set up a history and archaeology panel to review history education. The panel readdressed the importance of history education. It highlighted history as a subject which encourages civic responsibility, fights against amnesia and helps build a new democratic South Africa.

In contrast with history focusing on certain big figures during Apartheid, social history is written as a narrative to describe the everyday lives of people. Oral history is a part of social history. Now, oral history project about the Apartheid is part of the history curriculum for all the students in South Africa. The outcome-based education encouraged students to build links from subject knowledge to social and personal dimensions of learning. In the oral history project, through the communication of emotions of the interviewer and the interviewee, the Apartheid history is brought alive. Students are encouraged to think about the relevance of Apartheid to their life and make moral judgments.

In this article, I wish to demonstrate how oral history projects could help students understand the world around them and imbue them with a sense of responsibility to participate in civic or community activities. Moreover, I wish this could be an experience that history teaching in China could learn from.

### Literature Review

Oral history projects can facilitate student learning in many ways. Several researchers have already researched the related area. Doing oral history can help student learning in three major ways. Firstly, in an oral history project, students are required to do a research on their own. This largely motivates them and helps them to engage with the project and the topic they were researching on. Even though the project requires much effort, students usually find it more interesting than learning the textbook. Secondly, oral history is a treasure of most social groups, including those marginalised ones. No extra spending is necessary for doing such a project. Instead, students can utilise their social resources and use these narratives as a primary source to understand the historical context. Thirdly, oral history could provide students with multiple perspectives of the same incident in history and enhance mutual understanding and tolerance of different social groups. The oral history projects inspire students to become responsible citizens.

Orrie researched the oral history project in one of the schools in Cape Town. He found when the history educator invited other teachers to speak about their experiences on the Apartheid and let the students share their interviews, the classroom became a less policed zone for communication through less prescriptive formats of storytelling. Learners when presenting to their peers, could engage with the

project personally and emotionally. Learners learn history through their own experiences of subjects in their families or communities. The content of Apartheid history is reshaped this way (Staschen, 2016).

Whitman researched into the oral history project in American schools. He found minority students and especially African American students are marginalized in education. By giving them an alternate form of instruction, such as family histories, local history or biographies, African American students feel a heightening level of relevance. When the students become emotionally invested in the project, they work harder to learn history and develop a greater appreciation for historical content. He concludes that students are empowered by the opportunity to do history (Whitman, 2000). Crocco also regards doing oral history projects as an opportunity for students to become historians themselves and develop their critical thinking skills (1998). Mario shed light on how oral history projects in senior high school deepen students' understanding of the nature of history, improve their attitudes towards its study and develop in them some skills of the historian.(Fernandez, 1998)

Stories from oral history are valuable while oral history materials are cheap and accessible. Crocco demonstrates: "In periods of scarce resources, the use of oral history provides a means of including individual life stories without necessitating an investment in new classroom materials." (Crocco, 1998) Orrie expressed similar concerns that when other educational resources are lacking, oral history is especially valuable as a means of sharing stories and experiences (2016). Despite the emotional perspectives, oral history recordings and transcriptions in the classroom could improve historical understanding by making the historical context clear (Horn, 2014).

Oral history is also a valuable resource to reveal the constructive nature of historical narratives. Students investigate in primary narratives and reflect about historical studies during the process. In an oral history project, students commented: "It's almost like we are looking at history behind the scenes"(Edwards, 2006). Barry invited a pop star to be interviewed by his students and students are required to construct a narrative about the pop star. He called this doing history as the students are writing history themselves. He found that: "Learners appreciated that narratives are indeed just constructions that reflect the views (bias and prejudices) of the constructor. Four learners who participated in this deconstruction of these local historical characters appreciated that profound leaders in history like N Mandela are also the result of someone else's research construction."(Firth, 2012)

Only when the meta-narrative is deconstructed, the multiple perspectives of history can flourish. Crocco proposes to use oral history as an antidote to the textbook. She emphasised how oral history could bring families and communities in the classroom. The primary narrative it provides can be a balance of the panoramic version of the textbook history because it introduces a multicultural dimension to the class content (1998). "After doing the oral history project, some students conclude that their projects become a means to balance what the oral historian Clifford Kuhn describes as the 'master narrative' of history." (Whitman, 2000) Nussey argues it is also vital that the preservice teachers understand the key ideas in the different interpretations of South Africa's past by linking oral history narratives to an understanding of aspects of historiography. She emphasises that preservice teachers should put truth claims made by interviewees to scrutiny and internalise their understanding of historiography and put it into practice (2016).

While a grand narrative can only intensify the existing racial conflicts, implementing a multi-ethnic history based on communities bear the risk of separating people by their ethnic identity and creating a further divided society (Department of Education, 2003). The South African History Project stressed that with an exclusivist multi-ethnic history, students might end up studying their own ethnic history.

(Department of Education, 2003) In the meanwhile, Cubbin illustrated that in the light of Outcome-Based Education curriculum, community and microhistory should be the focus of study. She views local history as a way of restoring academic history to the realm of relevant community lives (Cubbin as quoted in De Bruyn, 2002). The interest in the local is important when South African's nation-building project centres around issues of identity and redress (Jewitt and Kress, 2003). Facing this dilemma, a history education which while focusing on the local, enhance mutual understanding among different races and cultivate a sense of responsibility as a South African citizen is at stake.

Some scholars argue oral history can meet this requirement. Oral history is crucial in developing a sense of identity and enhancing mutual understanding of different social groups. The study of social history can foster an understanding of multiple identities, be it gender identity or an identity of class or colour. Social history has the capacity to nurture respect for diverse cultures and experiences (Callinicos, 2001). Oral history is a part of social history and has similar capacities. Sofie explained how mutual respect is achieved through studying history. By visualising the very situation of another individual, students might experience "empathetic unsettlement". This is a practice "in which emotional response comes with respect for the other and the realisation that the experience of the other is not one's own" (Geschier, 2008). Claire and Mary demonstrate that teaching through oral history can cultivate a spirit of justice and peace. "Oral history is a distinctive educational approach that has value to equip people for life-giving relations with others." (Bischoff and Moore, 2007) Geschier researched into using primary narratives as a tool to help learners engage in history classrooms. She argues that primary narratives can create a sense of justice in classrooms and to "encourage students to become active, critical and responsible citizens...which opens a dialogue on social change" (Geschier, 2008). Barabra argued that oral history in school should be a common practice in history classrooms and it would be very beneficial if the functionality of oral history is recognised and passed on to learners. " (Wahlberg, 2008)

These scholars discuss the benefits of oral history projects in three perspectives, respectively in engaging students with the subject, utilizing primary narrative resources in students' community, enhancing mutual understanding and bringing about social change. In my research, I would analyze to which extent oral history accomplishes these goals in the South Africa context and what are the obstacles involved based on extensive fieldwork.

## Research topic and methodology

### Research Topic

Although the South African Constitution is one of the most advanced constitutions in the world, separations among races in daily life are still very visible. Because legal equality does not translate directly into the transformation of social habits, within private living spaces, racial separation is still found to be the dominant practice (Denis and Ntsimane, 2008). The past is very close to the surface in present-day South Africa. There is hardly an aspect of life that is not still influenced by it (Siebörger, 1993). The legacy of the past is living with people day to day, and it remains to haunt the born-free generation. It is present in the power relations of society, the economic condition of different races, geographical segregation and so on. Due to the legacy of the Apartheid, many students still think in racism ways consciously or unconsciously. Educating students about the Apartheid to help fight amnesia and advocate social justice is significant to a democratic South Africa. The Apartheid history component is imbued into Grade 9 CAPS curriculum. Part of it is an oral history project. The curriculum gives an example of a project about how Apartheid influenced someone's life. Teachers nevertheless can choose other topics for the project. In Grade 9, it is compulsory to study social science. All students are required to do the project even if they would not choose history as a matric subject in Grade 10.

While dealing with the record of the oppressor and the oppressed as written history does, oral history has more capacity of showing a different perspective or evoking empathy when the interviewer experiences the pain together with the interviewee. By developing empathy with people living in the past, students understand the different perspectives better. Along with oral history projects usually comes a lesson about moral or humanity. These projects can make students critically think about the present power relations of society and motivate them to readdress the injustice in society. This applies both to the underprivileged group and the privileged group. For example, through these projects, students from township areas might gain a better understanding of their own community and poverty. And the white students from an exclusively white community might be more aware of their privileges and understand the struggles of other communities better. If done well, the students will get a glimpse of the multiple perspectives of history. According to Harris and Reynolds, history of a multi-perspective nature provides truer historical accounts, imbues the students with historical consciousness about their own identity and helps the students understand the other social groups as it promotes empathy and mutual acceptance in multiethnic societies (2014). Students learn to take others' perspectives through reason and emotion. This will help to eliminate the "us" versus "them" division and promote mutual understanding between different social groups.

The project assists learners to understand the present from the influence of the past. After receiving emotions from people experienced Apartheid, learners make moral judgments about what the Apartheid Regime did to people of different races and communities. This will shift students' assumptions and beliefs that they grow up with and facilitate their participation in a democratic society. In conclusion, when done well, oral history has the potential of helping students gain historical understanding, develop empathy, become more engaged citizens and community members and make better judgments when participating in their democratic life. Thus, the project plays a critical role in civic education.

### Theoretical Framework

This paper mainly adopts its theory from *Teaching History for the Common Good* (Barton and Levstik, 2004). The purpose of history subject has always been controversial. Some historians think that the aim of history teaching is to train students to do historical analysis and be future historians. Some argue that history is a tool to build a national identity. This book focuses on the unique role history teaching plays in civic education. Through empathy, learners imagine what happened to the historical agents and care for them. The caring relation is established through drama, role play and imagination, etc. and can boost students' interest in studying history. Empathy builds up an emotional connection between students and historical witnesses, makes history relevant to everyday life, thus makes history alive. Only when students are interested, will they care about what happened in history. When students empathise with historical witnesses, they care about the feelings of those who lived in a certain historical period, try to understand them with a certain historical context, and wish to support them. The author regards "care" or "empathy" as a tool, while the ultimate goal is to engage students in political participation and deliberation of the common good. On conditions that students are concerned about these groups of people in history enough, they will be willing to think for these groups of people in contemporary political issues. The authors give an example of how showing a video of LGBT's struggles of rights reduces the prejudice against the minority group among students (Barton and Levstik, 2004). In the book, the authors illustrate the theory with general history teaching. In this research, I will analyse the benefits of oral history projects with this theory.

## Methodology

To understand the influence of the project on students, I examined students' work, including their research projects and reflections. The reflections of these projects by students and teachers are the major materials of analysis. I also visited schools and conducted interviews with the students and teachers. I mainly have teachers explain how do they conduct the oral history project and how are students' feedbacks. The interviews with students focus on their reflection of the project and gains from the project. Despite the school oral history projects, my research also involves the Albert Luthuli Oral History Competition and some youth oral history projects organized by the District Six Museum. I interviewed some of the competitors and educators of the competition. Reflections from museum oral history projects called "Tell Your Story to A Born Free" and "Living Legend in My community" are collected. The competition and the museum oral history projects can be seen as a more complicated and demanding version of the school oral history projects. While the competition takes a more academic stream, the museum project lines towards people's education therefore provide a more innovative way of doing oral history. The schools and projects I researched about are as follows.

Name of the Project	School/Organization	Educator	Learners	Location	Racial Composition	Fee	Percentage to choose History G10-G12
Grade 9 Oral History Project	SE School	(E)SE	(L1)SE	Northern Suburb	Majorly White	R21500	27%
Grade 9 Oral History Project	SP School	(E)SP	(L1)SP (L2)SP	Newlands	Majorly Coloured	R30352	20%
Grade 9 Oral History Project	TH School	(E)TH	(L1)TH	Mowbray	Majorly students from Township	R800	45%
Albert Luthuli Oral History Competition	Unknown		(L1)UN				
Albert Luthuli Oral History Competition	CE School	E(CE)	(L1)CE (L2)CE (L3)CE (L4)CE (L5)CE	Cape Flats	Majorly students from Township	R1816	57%
Grade 9 Oral History Project	SS School	E(SS)		Newlands	Majorly White	R39278	47%
Grade 9 Oral History Project	FA School	E(FA)	(L1)FA (L2)FA (L3)FA	Northern Suburb	Majorly White	R24800	19%
Albert Luthuli Oral History Competition	FA School	E(FA)	(L4)FA	Northern Suburb	Majorly White	R24800	19%
Grade 9 Oral History Project	LU School	E(LU)		Stellenbosch	Majorly White	R30600	28%
Tell Your Story to A Born-free Community Project	District Six Museum		(L1)DS (L2)DS				

## History education and oral history education

### The importance of oral history education

Oral history is a historical and educational methodology. Oral history is a process whereby information is obtained, recorded and preserved first-hand through structured interviews. Broad sense of oral sources includes oral testimonies, interviews, oral traditions, poems, songs and stories. For this project, I am looking especially at the interviews in oral history.

Oral history serves as the tool to explore the history of black and coloured people. The historical studies during the Apartheid are deeply biased. June mentioned: "Oral history is a very important part of the black history. Without oral history marginalised voices will never be validated." In the context that a large number of people are under-represented in historical narrative during the Apartheid period, it is essential to ask whose history are students studying now. In contrast with history focusing on certain big figures during Apartheid, social history put narratives of the everyday lives of people at its center. It started to become a popular history stream since the 1970s. While the emergence of social history has greatly enriched the understanding of past societies, its main contribution may have been methodological. Social historians use nontraditional forms of evidence such as wills and oral history as



well as social sciences' methodologies to reconstruct the past lives of ordinary people. Oral history is essential to social history. Except for the oral history project, the content about TRC in Grade 12 can be considered as social history as well.

Oral history is also a tradition of People's Education. To fight against the history curriculum adopted by the Apartheid government, many teachers developed their own strategies to teach a more authentic history. Many educators joined people's education promoted by the ANC. People's education has a clear social reconstructionist aim (Hoadley, 2009). The teaching activity centres around learners and their daily experience of struggles against the state. Academic pursuit is secondary compared to political agenda. Due to lack of resources, and oral history's ability to tell the hidden history, it was widely introduced into classrooms in People's education. Furthermore, the concept of people's education and its learner-centred pedagogy were adopted by the new curriculum to reverse the Bantu Education policy. Sofie during her fieldwork in school history classrooms discovered teachers from poorly resourced schools taught about apartheid history to give hope to students. Through sharing their own stories, and the stories of struggle heroes, history teachers inspire students to fight for liberation and justice and make changes to the world they were living in (Geschier, 2003). Students learned to understand present South Africa through the past. This is an example of current history teaching following the example of people's education.

Oral history is also a part of New History. To reverse the situation in Apartheid, the Department of Education introduced the concept of new history into the new curriculum. Some of its characteristics include emphasising the process of learning about the past rather than the content of history and making sure student are trained as historians to enquire into the past. Another essential character is that students despite analysing the past events should also try to experience the past through imagination and empathy. Oral history project provides a chance for students to be researchers, fitting in well with the new history pedagogy. The South African History Project launched in 2003 reflected on the situation of history education in secondary education and suggested: "We also believe that when done well, social history oral history and historical biography are especially good at opening windows to the flux of individual experience and events in history, as are family and community histories." (2003) Also, this is linked to the decolonisation of history subject. One educator commented: " We must inform students about the African tradition, the idea that you must read through everything is a Eurocentric history. For centuries Africans learn the history through oral forms." Many learners could not achieve because they are not studying in their mother tongue. However, in the oral history projects, students could communicate in their mother tongue and even present it in their mother tongue.

### How to conduct the oral history project

There are a few skills required for the oral history project. After doing basic research on the Apartheid laws they are interested in, the students need to find the interviewee on their effort and draw questions based on what they know about the law. After finishing doing the interview, they need to interpret the words of the interviewee, decide which piece of information has significance and then put together a narrative of the interviewee's life history and construct a narrative about how the Apartheid Law influences the interviewees. This is the only time in the curriculum students are allowed to be an independent researcher. They need to use resources like the Internet and social relations to complete the task. The historical skills students can gain are getting different perspectives from different accounts, selecting and judging primary sources and constructing narratives.



## Topic choice

In the curriculum, the oral history project is about how the Apartheid laws influence people lived during the Apartheid. Learners need to do a background research on an apartheid law and identify an individual member of their community whose life was shaped by the apartheid system and do an interview with this person. The project is located at the second to third term in Grade 9. It makes up for 20% of the yearly mark. The curriculum writes: "The main focus in this phase is to acquire a critical understanding of the basic nature of the apartheid system and relate this to the everyday lives of ordinary people past and present." Most schools follow the curriculum. Laws chosen most are Immorality Act, the pass law, the Group Areas Act, the Mixed Marriage Act, the Bantu Education Act and the Defence Act. The laws are briefly introduced below.

### Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, Act No 55 of 1949

Prohibited marriages between white people and people of other races. Between 1946 and the enactment of this law, only 75 mixed marriages had been recorded, compared with some 28,000 white marriages.

### Immorality Amendment Act, Act No 21 of 1950; amended in 1957 (Act 23)

Prohibited adultery, attempted adultery or related immoral acts (extra-marital sex) between white and black people.

### Population Registration Act, Act No 30 of 1950

Led to the creation of a national register in which every person's race was recorded. A Race Classification Board took the final decision on what a person's race was in disputed cases.

### Group Areas Act, Act No 41 of 1950

Forced physical separation between races by creating different residential areas for different races. Led to forced removals of people living in "wrong" areas, for example, Coloureds living in District Six in Cape Town.

### Bantu Education Act, Act No 47 of 1953

Established a Black Education Department in the Department of Native Affairs which would compile a curriculum that suited the "nature and requirements of the black people". (Oral History Manual, 2014)

Variations of topics chosen include how the new constitution influences people's lives in a positive way, history of my school combined with the Bantu Education Act and research about the teenage life in the 1960s, 1980s and 2000s. In SP school, the Defence Act was added to the list as most students from the school are white students, and most of their parents went into commission. In FA school, the educator shifted the topic to school history considering students' difficulty to find an interviewee with impressive experiences of the Apartheid.

In the meanwhile, there are organisations and the Educational Department actively organising oral history projects. The District Six Museum in 2009 organised a cultural curator program. The topic is "Living legends in my community". They also organised a program called "Tell Your Story to A Born-Free" with youth in 2014. The project engages past district six residents to share their experience of the past with Born-Frees. The Albert Luthuli Oral History Competition started by the South African History Project is a national oral history competition. The participants are Grade 8 to Grade 11 learners. Students could

choose from a range of different topics including unsung heroes in my community, life stories of a student living in the 1970s and so on. All these projects shed importance on the life of ordinary people.

## Form of Practice

### *Preparation*

(E)SE started the first oral history class for Grade 10 with the Redemption Song by Bob Marley.

“Old pirates, yes, they rob I  
Sold I to the merchant ships  
Minutes after they took I  
From the bottomless pit....

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery  
None but ourselves can free our minds.”

After playing the song, (E)SE said: “I got so many questions for Bob Marley when I listen to the song. When we participate in oral history, we become part of history, part of that agent. When we are listening to a speech or a poem, we are simply receiving that information. What would you want to ask Bob Marley when you listen to that song? Who is he talking about when he said I? We might have an idea that the pirates are the slave traders. However, I don’t know if my interpretation is right. He talks about emancipating yourself from mental slavery. I got really good understanding historically. He is talking about the rise of black consciousness and the idea of black people empowering themselves. But that’s my interpretation of what he is saying. I might ask him: “Bob, tell me what is the mental slavery that binds you?” That’s why we have oral history. So we can start speaking and listening and engaging with people. That’s when history comes alive. Otherwise, it’s our receiving and believing.”

In LU school and District Six Museum educators organise group discussions and ask students to interview each other to prepare for the project, (E)LU pointed out: “Discussion is the best way to do research. Students would think of open-ended questions when they interview each other.” However, this is not likely to happen in big classrooms. (E)LU also uses Google Classroom for students to post questions and discussions for history classes. Video clips of other students’ interview are played as an example for oral history projects.

In comparison, township school CE and TH have few projectors, not to say Internet at school. Students from these schools find it difficult to do research as they have limited access to the Internet and other material resources. (L1)TH wrote in his reflection he had to use the money for lunch to buy airtime and go to Internet Cafe in order to do research. Teachers suggest students to go to the library in townships, but the condition of those libraries cannot be guaranteed.

### *Forms of interviews*

There are a few different ways that educators can instruct students to do the interview. One on one interview is the most common form. Most students choose people from their own community, their parents’ friends or neighbours to conduct the interview. Interviewees seldom cross the colour line. Students need to prepare for about ten open-ended questions to ask. Educators can also bring the person to be interviewed in the class. An educator taught in rural areas before said “In Grade 9, they interview ordinary people all in class. I bring the person into the class. Once I bring my wife. I have used a made-up name. She has to narrate, and the students construct her life story. They have to decide

whether she is telling the truth and what is she hiding. We prepare for the interview and discuss the questions beforehand. Students sit as a big panel during the interview.” In TH school whose students are majorly from townships, the educator would give explicit instructions and give out the question list instead of letting the students develop their probing questions. With the blanket under the questions, the instruction paper could be filled like a questionnaire. The educator explained if the interviewee doesn't have time to be interviewed, they could answer the questions during their break of work. (E)TH said “They leave early in the morning around 5a.m. to 8a.m. Some work seven days. Some don't have time to sit down. I take it positively that these are the challenges that a researcher face when he conducts the research. Now it is an opportunity for them to learn. Researchers need to be flexible.” (E)SP organise students into small groups to let them interview together so that they could discuss their different opinions after the interview.

Regarding transcription, some educators ask students to transcribe not only word by word what the interviewee says but also their emotions, facial expressions and so on. Other educators choose to save students the trouble and let them hand in recordings and scratches of the interviews. The educator will listen to recordings and give marks.

### *Forms of presentation*

The presentation form of the project is more varied. Usually, students are asked to write a research essay of life during certain social circumstance or a biography about the interviewee. The oral history competition has a strict requirement for the research essay handed. It has to be more than ten pages long. In FA school, students are required to write a poem about interviewee's experience of Afrikaans Medium Decree. Students' work is creative and well decorated. They also had to attach a memory stick to their work. Another school asks learners to hand in edited video clips of the interview. The oral history project run by District Six Museum does not require students to write research essays. Usually, the workshop will invite former residences of the District Six Museum to be interviewed by the students. The students are asked to present their work with stories or exhibitions, including photography, oral presentations, videos or drawings that can show the students' understanding of the forced removal in District Six in Cape Town. Despite writing a research essay longer than ten pages, students who attend the Albert Luthuli Competition have to make a presentation for about ten minutes in front of the adjudication panel. Thus, in addition to research quality, the competition also tests the students in their public speaking skills.

## Oral history encourages political participation through empathy

Although there are a lot of suspicions among historians towards empathy as some historians think history should be rational analysis, empathy is essential in intriguing students so that learners engage in topics they are studying and care for the historical agents. The caring relation itself is not the end of this history teaching. It serves as a tool for social experience to become more salient to students and a way to increase students' engagement. (Barton and Levstik, 2004)

Being emotionally connected to the actors in history, putting oneself in their shoes and caring for them will enable students to understand the contemporary society better as well as increase their motivation for political participation. Feeling shocked angry or sorry for the interviewees with the facts told in person with emotions invites students to look at themselves from others' perspectives and challenge their own outlooks of the society. Interpersonal relationships also build a bond between the interviewer and the interviewee. Through this bond, the young students who are sometimes quite self-concerned

gain more understanding and pay more attention to the social group of the interviewees. With such a kind of care and respect students are more likely to fight for a common good of the community or the society.

### Oral history makes history alive

Exploring border human experience triggers students' interests. Such experience includes fear, discrimination, or inhumanity. "Students cared about topics that allowed them to explore the feelings and experience of people in the past and relate them to their own." (Barton and Levstik, 2004) Apartheid history falls into this category. During the interview, students face the injustice the interviewees experienced during the Apartheid. They might feel angry and wish they could care for or support the victims. Students would imagine themselves in the situation of the certain historical context and build a personal connection with the past. Emotional stimuli serves as a motivation for students to study history.

One of the biggest barriers to teaching history is that students find the subject boring or irrelevant. They do not feel emotionally connected to it. This applies to the learning of Apartheid as well. Students start learning about Apartheid since Grade 5, and many of them feel boring just hearing about Apartheid. Many teachers mentioned that "The students are born free. It is hard for them to imagine Apartheid." "Students are more interested in present issues compared with past issues". (E)LU illustrated: "The problem with history is that they do not feel emotionally connected to it. Oral history hears from someone you know, so it's different."

Students tend to have more interest in history when they can link their own experience to it. This is why in British schools, the study of history always begins with local history and family history. Making links between everyday life of students and historical events is an important part of history teaching. Contemporary issues can easily be topics of discussion in the classroom. Personal and emotional issues are a good start for historical studies. Analytical skills can be developed more easily if students are interested in the subject.

The importance of personally relevant topics was also evident in these students' interest in aspects of daily life. Learners enjoy developing projects on the history of everyday life and often express a desire to know more about how people in the past dressed, went to school, made a living or went about routine aspects of their lives. They are interested in how people experienced dramatic events such as wars, violence and criminal punishments. They continually draw comparisons with their own experiences, project themselves into past times and imagining how they would have feel their circumstance. (Barton and Levstik, 2004)

One way of making history alive is to make history more connected with students' everyday life. "There is something innate in the human that makes the narrative form an especially attractive medium in which to contain, transmit, and remember important information." In contrast, metanarrative tends to distant students from history as a subject. In oral history projects, students are exposed to primary narratives and inquire about the everyday life of people living in the Apartheid. The narratives quite often concern unfair treatment which might further interest students.

A good example of history made alive is that during interim curriculum, teachers from poorly resourced schools use oral history projects to do apartheid history. Students actively made a comparison of the 1998 world they were living in and the Apartheid times. They realised the world they were living in

became worse regarding crimes but better regarding rights. Then they further reflected what needed to be done in democracy. (Geschier, 2008)

Many educators mention how oral history makes history alive. (E)SE said :“You marry fact and feeling. So instead of getting only a one-dimensional picture of events, you start getting other dimensions. ” Several students in the reflection part of their oral history project mentioned the project intrigued them so much that they decide to choose history as a subject in Grade 10.

### Making emotional connection

Empathy is also important in that it cultivates students into moral citizens. Sometimes in historical studies, students are asked to see things from both the victimiser and the victim’s perspective. This, however, “might obscure the experience of the victim and the reality that the two sides are not equal and can be used to rationalise inaction, evade decisions or shrewdly manipulate others into complacency in the face of evil.”(Barton and Levstik, 2004) If no personal significance is allocated to the consequence of the inhumane events happened in the past, the victimiser’s perspective might be similar to the victim’s. If history is viewed as a purely academic discipline which emphasises on gaining facts of past regimes and analysing the causes and consequences of historical events, there might be no differences between the Apartheid government and Mandela. Hence, it is important to emphasise the emotional connection in history classrooms. Oral history education serves this purpose well as it requires students to develop interpersonal relationships with the historical agent. There is a danger that students learn Apartheid in a clinical or superficial way. Through learning oral history, students hear a narrative about a person’s past experience and learn history from someone who experienced it. It encourages students to make an emotional connection with the people they interviewed.

After conducting the interview, a common student reaction is: “I didn’t know it was like that in their time” or “I never knew my parents had that experience”. (L1)SE wrote “Mr Kamaar’s told me about how he was split from his family and this really touched me because I could never imagine being torn away from my family. I learned while doing the project was that life back in the days was harsh and cruel and that we should start appreciating what we have today. ” The student’s reflection depicts vividly how emotionally shaken she was by the life of the past.

The District Six Museum held a youth project called “Tell Your Story to a Born-Free”. The museum connected the selected youth with people who used to live in District Six and asked them to conduct interviews with these people. It was done more casually, baring more resemblance to story-telling activities compared with historical investigations. The students were asked to reflect on their position as a born-free after the interview. (L1)DS mentioned:

“There are things that he mentioned that shocked me. He told me like three people that he saw – men beaten and insulted by strange words that I can’t even mention. And he also shared something about his former work. ‘We had to earn just a lower salary, working for the whole day, the whole week.’ The salary they earned was less than even R500 a week. That is so shocking to me because we find out our families, we have one breadwinner. For one breadwinner to earn that income is not going to make any difference. It’s just disappearing to food and transport. And it’s not going to exceed maybe to education and some stuff.”

(L1)DS put himself in the shoe of the interviewee. He compared the amount of money the interviewee earned back then with the cost of his own family, then considered their access of education ensued from the financial difficulties. He was obviously caring for the interviewee.

(L2)TH wrote in her reflection:

“The way she was talking really got to me and made me realise that it was very painful living in those days and I also became very emotional and upset when she told me about the segregation and how they were moved like animals who did not have any habitat. Even if she was still angry and sad she still said these inspiring words ‘forgiving is a weapon to self-healing’. Those words really inspired me and I would want to put them in life so that I can live a life with no regret.”

When exposed to narratives about life experiences during the Apartheid, students appear shaken and shocked. If the narrative touches the bottom of students’ heart, they would possibly allocate personal significance to the historical event and emphasise with the historical agents. The emotional connections between the students and interviewees lay the foundation for better understanding and more tolerance towards others in the society.

### Mutual understanding and tolerance

Citizens participating in public affairs need to listen to each other and take seriously ideas that are different from their own. This ability is also required by the oral history project. Only when citizens care what happens to others, would they demonstrate a commitment to the multiple communities of which they are a part. During the oral history project, students communicate with people from different backgrounds whose opinions and ideas they might not have an idea of. The project is a training process for students to listen to dissents and cultivate tolerance.

### Inter-generation Dialogue

A lot of school oral history projects assist intergenerational understanding since students often interview their family friends or neighbours. SE school is a former model C school but is mostly made up of coloured students now. This is a common phenomenon in Cape Town. As some former Model C schools opened up to the black and coloured students, some white parents stopped sending their children to these schools. (E)SE recalled when I asked her about the impressive oral history projects in her class:

“In one interview, the father explained how he grew up in a shack and wasn't well educated. But he was trying to give the son a better life. That's why they want the son to work hard. In the reflection, the boy says now he understands his father's situation better. He thought about his father used to live in an informal settlement which doesn't have heat and running water. He started to understand that his father cannot help him with his work because he himself didn't have the chance to get an education. Now he knew how much his father achieved by sending him to a good school and he is proud of him. The father then explains to me that he has waited for such a chance to talk to his son for a long time.”

Through this oral history project, the social hierarchy is interrupted, and the son understands and respects his father more. The son gained an understanding of his current poverty and started to view his living condition and his father from a different perspective. After the project, he became more respectful of his father.

On the other hand, many white parents have difficulty opening up. This is a barrier for their children to achieve understanding and contextualise their living condition.

Contextualization is the ability for people to recognise that their perspective is a product of historical context and socialisation within a certain cultural group instead of logical and dispassionate reasoning. Although people are quick to pick up the cultural or religious and political factors that influence other people's opinions, many people are blind when it comes to themselves. Questioning oneself needs much effort and when it comes to history "many parents might not want students to know that the beliefs they take for granted are not timeless truths but result from a long line of historical change and development."(Barton and Levstik, 2004)

In the oral history projects, many parents could not contextualise their own opinions. An educator used to work in a school made up of 80% white kids, she mentioned to me: "When they ask their parents how they benefit from Apartheid, many say I did nothing. Coming to this topic, the parents are vulnerable. It is especially harder for the students to question their own opinions as well when their parents choose to stick to their own unexamined opinions and personal prejudices. FA was a school located in a suburb of Cape Town. It used to be a white only community and has largely remained so until today. FA school was established for the English people in that community during apartheid in the 1970s as all the existing schools in the community were Afrikaans schools. (L1)FA said my grandparents do not want to talk about Apartheid with me. (E)FA commented: "Parents shut them up, some parents are narrow-minded. They don't want to feel guilty." (E)SP explained the situation to me in this way: "After any dictatorship falls, the whole society goes into that period of pretending that they didn't know what was going on. But people were benefiting from what was going on. And they did know because things happened in their own streets. They chose not to look. They chose not to talk."

In addition, a lot of the white South Africans born after the 1990s were hidden from what was going on and definitely had less knowledge about what happened to the other colours compared to the people who experienced Apartheid themselves. For example, (E) SP told students that many white people do not know about the forced removal of Newlands. (L1)SP asked: "How do they not know? How do you move in when others didn't move out? You just wake up, and you were there now?" (E)SP explained "Because people are not taught about it. When I was in high school, we were never taught people were forcibly removed. The original owners would have known. But let's say they moved in in the 1960s, they would have been long dead. And the younger generation might never be told about it." That is why (E)LU complained she got few good works or stories from the white learners. She emphasised that students should find a good person to interview, someone who is not sheltered from it.

As a result, according to the students' work, few students from FA school could get emotional perspectives or real connection from interviewing their community about the influence of Apartheid. FA school asked students to do an oral history project about the teenage life in his community for people grown up in the 1960s, 1980s and 2000s. (L2)FA did several interviews and concluded.

"Teenagers were still affected by the apartheid past as policies imposed by the previous government were in many ways reversed, creating a challenge for the youth who constitutionally were the same, yet were seen as different in an attempt to redress the past. The 80s teenager was majorly affected negatively by Apartheid as they were not exposed to other cultures, languages, and religions. In the 60s, teenagers didn't know anything better and didn't



think anything was wrong with it. It affected them their schooling and how they thought about other races.”

There are not many emotional elements from the narrative. The narrative carefully avoided the privileges that white people get from the Apartheid regime which is a cause of other people’s suffering. Moreover, it shifted the emphasises to how Apartheid failed to provide an opportunity for cultural integration. And (E)SP commented on this:

“What they are getting is fake. That's a very small part. I live where I live. My father earns an income he earns. My lifestyle was hugely privileged. Until kids can get an understanding of that they are a product of that privilege, their worldview and their worldview of other people in South Africa are shaped by that privilege, they are not gonna get it. And you will still have angry black students on the other hand.”

When interviewees are reserved about the topic of Apartheid, the oral history project became problematical. The project fails to achieve either emotional connection or mutual understanding.

#### Marginalized communities

The facilitator of the Western Cape Albert Luthuli Competition drove me to CE school in Mitchell’s Plain. It is part of the biggest coloured township in Cape Town. It was not a good idea to walk around. We did not dare to get off outside the school gate. The school is barred everywhere to ward off the criminals. During the oral history competition, (E)CE used to drive student participants to UCT to do research, copy achieves and so on. Sometimes they worked until midnight. Several learners from the school researched into the topic of a local hero from my community to join in the Albert Luthuli Oral History Competition. The topic is: “Socio-political biography of a local hero or heroine in my community who lived by the ideals of Chief Albert Luthuli and how these ideals impacted their lives and that of all South Africans. ”(2017 iNkosi Albert Luthuli Oral History Topics, 2017)

(L1)CE interviewed Anthony from Mitchell’s plain. Anthony used to participate in the uprising in 1976 uprising. He later became paralysed in an accident, but he stood up in front of difficulty and created the disabled sports club to promote rights for the disabled people and started several community upliftment projects. Through interviewing Anthony, (L1)CE learned that:“ Mitchell’s Plain was designed as a solution to the housing needs of Cape Town, but it was also part of the government's Apartheid segregation policy. Mitchell’s Plain took shape amongst the sand dunes, and it was calculated that a house was built every 15 minutes.” She commented: “The people who moved to Mitchell’s Plain during the Apartheid period should be proud for building up their communities from practically nothing. But the community is also caught up with cycles of unemployment and poverty.”

Despite deepening understanding of the community, through this project, (L1)CE learned more about a group of marginalised people. She respected and cared for them more. (L1)CE wrote in her reflection of her project:

“That the life of a disabled person is difficult, they also wish to do the things we do like go shopping, but some disabled people just remain trapped in their homes. That although life for a disabled person can difficult what could sting more is our: Inconsideration for the disabled people. For example, we are rude and insensitive by staring at the disabled person and being impatient with them when they are too slow at a pay point. You can make a difference, whether it is in your home or the community.”

(L1)CE won the competition in 2011, and she got a phone and stationery from the western cape educational department. However, just after that, she went to school early one day and was robbed right at the school gate. She was admitted by the UCT law school but couldn't afford the tuition, so she chose to work instead.

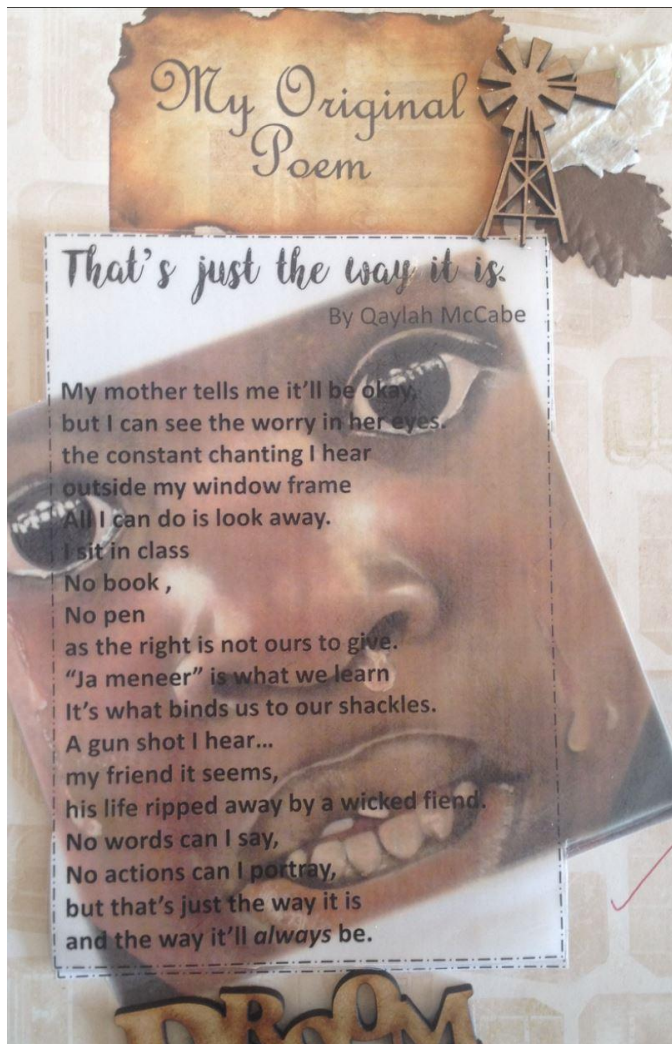
(L2)CE joined the competition in 2014. After interviewing Biran who started an outreach educational project in the community. She reflected: "The task made me more patient in understanding that everyone comes from different surroundings with different backgrounds." Despite delivering knowledge about a community's past, the oral history project cultivates tolerance and understanding of different social groups within a community.

### Encounter with a different race

The South African History Project claims: "Ideally all students need to acquire historical understanding of all people in South Africa, as the basis on which to forge a sense of a sacred human past." It is especially meaningful to learn the different experience of different racial groups in South Africa because they provide different perspectives of historical events and enhances mutual understanding when racism is still a big issue, and racial, geographical segregation is present in everyday life. Most black or colored people couldn't afford to live in areas like Newlands and they wouldn't feel comfortable to settle in a totally strange community even if they could afford it. In the meanwhile, there is not much possibility for the white to move to dangerous townships. For example, SP school is a coloured girls' school situated in Newlands. E(SP) mentioned in class that almost no black people would eat at a restaurant in Newlands because they do not feel comfortable about it whereas some white people say that black people in Cape Town don't like to go to restaurants. During the Apartheid, the railway line served as a tool to separate people. Physical segregation can contribute to further psychological and cultural segregation. Distrust between different races is a big issue in the society. TH is a school near town, but the learners came majorly from townships. They normally have to leave school around two right after the school is off and catch a taxi to get home before it gets dark. There are few opportunities for these students to socialise with the white people living in the area.

Cultivating tolerance and understanding of different social groups depends on socialisation and communication across the colour bars. Moreover, for the oral history project, interviewing people from different racial groups could provide different perspectives on the same historical events. Oral history has the capacity to introduce the different perspectives into history study. Many students from conservative white communities need to understand the other perspectives and hear about the other experiences in Apartheid to get an emotional connection with history and reflect on themselves. However, to have such a conversation, both the interviewees and the interviewers have to be open-minded and hold mutual respect for each other for such a conversation is extremely difficult not only because of language and cultural barriers but also because it involves exposing one's wound or humiliation to the other. The power relation of the researcher and the researched also play a part. (E)SS school mentioned when white students asked their domestic workers for an interview, a lot of them are turned down. "Some students just regard them as sources of material." The victims must be forgiving not to mind to reveal their wounds to a white student who might have no respect for them but wants to exploit them with their memories of oppression. However, when both sides hold respect, the oral history of this kind is especially precious.

(L3)FA interviewed her domestic worker about their experience of Afrikaans Medium Decree of 1974. In 1976, all South African students were forced to learn in Afrikaans which is not their home language for most students. (E)FA asks students to write a poem after the interview.



In this poem, the girl imagined herself is the interviewee who was forced to learn in a language she was not familiar with. Her interviewees did not join the protest. So she voiced a helpless attitude through the poem. It's quite pessimistic view as they could do nothing but to accept the way it is. Through the poem, (L3)FA attempted to put herself in the shoe of her interviewee, imagining the poverty and the violence that happened in the community. She wrote the poem in the first person and creatively imagined the interviewees' feelings according to their condition. Although this might not be the real feeling the interviewee experienced, the imagination and the initiative to take a different perspective is meaningful for mutual understanding of people of different social groups in the society. The conversation between the domestic worker and (L3)FA was incoherent. The interviewer had to repeat the questions for several times and when the interviewee was not responding to the question asked, (L3)FA did not further investigate it. The difficulties are largely due to the language barriers. But the project was still precious as few white students would talk to their domestic worker in daily life.

Encounters with the other races were not always pleasant. It could go to the other extreme, evoke anger and bring up historical problems when the interviewee acts defensively.

As a preparation for the oral history project, students from SP school went on the street in Newlands to interview shop owners if they know Newlands was a forced removed area. Three students went into a children's hospital. The lady who managed the hospital told the students the hospital was used to be for coloured kids. When (L1)SP asked what happened during the Apartheid, the lady turn to them and ask instead: "How many white kids are there in your school?" (L1)SP replied: "One, Two, Three, Four, Five." as counting by fingers. The lady said: "You see. We are disadvantaged. Not every white person is racist. Why are you still thinking about Apartheid? We should have moved on already." (L1)SP came out very angry, telling us: "I'm being the sweet me. Why does she get so personal? I'm not asking her to return the land." (L2)SP was the class monitor and a very good student, and she went in with (L1)SP. (L2)SP commented: "She talked to us in a very polite way but why does she take it for granted that we speak Afrikaans?" Later when we got back to class, (E)SP explained that the lady's reaction was out of defensiveness. But the students were still intimidated and shocked while their anger is hard to dissolve.

In this situation, students confront the first time this attitude of defensiveness and felt unfair. Most of the other people students talked to on the street that day were residents who barely knew about the forced-removal in this area. In my interview with (E)SP, she gave me the solution to prevent students from forming stereotypes of white people. She decided to choose some white people with different attitudes so that learners would start seeing people and stop seeing colour. She would organise a panel discussion of students with a white guy living in Newlands who was a former ANC member. After these interviews, students will do oral history in their own community with people who were forced to remove out of the area. In this way, students are expected to get a full picture of the historical event.

### Understand the society around them

In one class, (E)SP was introducing the forced removal to students. "They chased them out of the area they used to live and put them to the locations when the cement is not dry yet." The houses in the location are newly built and are much further from the city. (L1)SP responded instantly: "Yes. My grandfather is handicapped, so he used a wheelchair. The tracing rut of the wheelchair is still visible today."

This is a good illustration of oral history's function to students' understanding of the society. The tracing rut has been there all the time, but (L1)SP never knew why it was there. Similarly, the current social institution and the inequality people are born into has always been there. They are part of life. Oral history is like an illumination. Through investigating local history or community history, things in life make more sense. Each community has its own knowledge and local history anchored in different artefacts and historical agents. Oral history is a good way to explore microhistory with these anchors.

On condition that the oral history project is about students' own family or community history, it tends to be more thought-provoking for students. In the Albert Luthuli Competition, students from township get to interview struggle heroes in their own community who are unrecognised. This kind of community-based oral history project gives students pride in their own community. The social media usually portrays township areas as places where violence, abject poverty and crimes prevail. Ignorance of their own situation prevails in many township communities. (L3)CE explained to me: "Coming from a community viewed as violent, you will be like I think that is what I suppose to be. I guess that's who we

are. Some become proud in the wrong way. They start being gangsters. They start being violent.” The media can easily disguise youth. Youths might end up despising their own community, losing dignity, or being irresponsible for themselves, even turning to drugs as a result. The virtuous circle wouldn’t end until students see the positive part of their community. The community based oral history project provided a counter-image of the popular impression of the community and members of the community for the participants.

Students living in the townships are also overwhelmed with the daily struggles that they seldom relate their daily struggles to history. Mr Brown used to be a history teacher in high school. He later assigned his job and started a primary school in Philippi. We met in a bar. He looked all tired after school. He complained to me:

“The students when they think about poverty and their present living conditions, they wouldn’t connect it to history. They do not put the barrier in history into place. In the community centre, I talked about black consciousness to the kids. But they are bored. When I ask them to write poems, they write sarcastic jokes. We all laughed. Sometimes I feel there are too much get in the way of school and homework, like transport, food and gangster. They won’t care about philosophical problems.”

However, students living in the township need to learn history to understand that the current problems prevailing in the townships are because their community is based on a very disturbed foundation. These problems do not mean they are doomed but mean they need to fight the legacy of the past.

Oral history projects could give students living in township areas a different perspective on their lives and could help break their stereotypes. The Apartheid laws largely influence people living in township areas. Black and coloured people had been forcibly removed in township areas from 1912 to 1970s. The area is full of oral history resources about the Apartheid laws.

Of the tell your story to a born-free project by District Six Museum, many students reflect on their present status as a born-free after hearing stories of the older generation who experienced the brutality of the Apartheid. Quite different from their parents’ generation, “A-born-free” has been a rhetoric disgusted by many born-frees. It almost becomes a cliché when most youths have no idea about what it is not to be a born-free but are frequently told that they should be grateful as someone born after 1994 as a free person. In the meantime, the term is also not convincing when youth are still experiencing daily struggles against crimes and racism. After doing the project with District Six Museum, the students found the term more relevant and meaningful. They also picked up the differences between the present-day struggles and the struggles of people living in the 1980s.

“Firstly, I think it’s very important to distinguish the fact that our struggle is not the same as our parents and their parents. Even though it has similarities, I think it’s almost an affront to their suffering to say it’s the same. Even though the physical shackles which our parents were bound by in terms of oppressive laws and outright racism has faded away, the shackles which confine our minds are still very firmly in place. And that can be seen in our education system, in our higher education system our curriculums, Cape Town. So what happened was you know, we took a step back, and we asked ourselves what is freedom and do we possess it. And the answer that we all came to was no. We don’t have our own land. We don’t own our own minds. The majority of our wealth is still in the hands of a minority. The unemployment statistics is

ridiculous especially in terms of the youth. Three in 5 women in South Africa experience sexual assault at least once in their lives. That is not freedom. That is actually enslavement. We might not be as oppressed as our parents were. But this is a whole different type of oppression. Is it as bad? No. Does it share similarities? Yes. And it's these very similarities that are going to repeat the cycle over and over again until we as the youth decided to free ourselves."

After the interview, students changed their attitude towards the term. They become more aware of the fact that as a youth born after 1994, they are endowed with political rights, more economic opportunities and have more access to education compared to the older generation. The history textbook writes about the situation of Apartheid as well, but the text could hardly be as powerful as interpersonal story-telling when delivering the experience and emotional content. Oral history can evoke students' contemplations over the society that they live in. The born-free generation lives in a different world from the Apartheid world. Through the oral history project, the history of Apartheid came alive for them. With life during the Apartheid as a contrast, they realise the meaning of the term "born-free" and reflect on what still needs to be done in the democracy.

The District Six Museum started an oral history project engaging youth to investigate in their community history. Community E is ravaged by gangsters. Students interviewed small shop owners, vendors and neighbours and discovered that many of them are living legends who survived harsh conditions of life. Through investigating a dialogue between young and old, the project aims at creating mutual understanding and respect. The education director said: "We are bringing to life many aspects of a community so often overshadowed by hardship and adversity. " (District Six Museum, 2009) Students write in reflections that "I am really proud of living in Elsies River because now I really understand my history and I am proud of it. " (District Six Museum, 2009) The project helped students better understand their community.

The Albert Luthuli Competition assigns five topics each year and heroes from my community is one of them most of the time. After having contact with the inspiring figures of the community, students are often moved and motivated.

(L1)UN won the third prize in the Albert Luthuli Competition in 2009. His research topic was xenophobia. Xenophobia, defined as the deep dislike of foreigners of a recipient country has been on the news in South Africa for a while. Many foreigners from countries like Nigeria, Zambia are killed or injured.

(L1)UN interviewed people about their attitudes towards xenophobia. In his speech in the competition, he concluded:

"There is a link between xenophobia and racism, and there are regional variations in South Africans attitude to foreigners. Attacks on foreign people, especially poor foreigners trying to make a living in South Africa, by poor South Africans, only deter people from seeing the real causes of poverty which are high interest rates, high food prices and other legacies of apartheid.

From the information I got from my interviewees, I would say that the only reason behind Xenophobia is prejudice which is a disease plaguing the country and is soon to be an incurable disease that will chase foreign countries away. And nationality is nothing but just a difference in ID numbers and residence in different parchments of Africa our forefathers were divided into, on a larger scale of the Divide and rule that happened in South Africa. "

(L1)UN looked into the psychology behind this violent act and explained the real problems of poverty and scarcity of resources are left behind by the Apartheid. He showed great tolerance for unregistered immigrants and embraced a humanitarian view. The project revealed the historical reasons behind poverty in the township and criticised the attitude of xenophobia. He included many pictures of people injured for xenophobia and expressed pity for their unfair treatment. His emotional connection with the victims drove him to make a moral judgment of xenophobia and seek to investigate into the reason behind the phenomenon. In these oral history projects, learners gave deep insights into the community they came from.

Even though the oral history project can be very meaningful to the learners in townships regarding helping them understand their community, the school oral history projects are badly implemented in many township schools due to lack of resources and support from parents. Some schools do not have enough textbooks, not to say projectors to show video clips of interviews. Many parents do not care about their children's work. There is a lack of confidence in education. The drop-out rate was high and very few students could go to university either because they are not qualified or because they could not afford it. (E)CE explained to me: "They are following the foot of their parents and siblings. They see their brothers cannot find a job even if they pass the matric, how would they want to work hard. Even if they get access to a university, they might not afford it." (E)TH started with letting the students develop their own projects and ask questions for the oral history project. However, he soon found students struggle a lot in drafting the questions and ended up not doing it. To better assist the students and make the project more practical, he changed his strategy to give explicit instructions and give out the question list instead of letting the students develop their own probing questions. No matter which law the students choose, they use the same set of questions. With the blanket under the questions, the instruction paper looks like a questionnaire to me. It is difficult to tell how many students would actually conduct the interview. Limitation in resources is a major obstacle for implementing the Oral History Project in township schools. Educators might compromise on the standards of the project. On such condition, the designated purpose of the Oral History Project couldn't be reached.

## Reflection on Social Injustice and Incentive for Social Change

### From Empathy to Reflection on Social Injustice

Enabling students to take part in community or democratic activities is the goal of civil education. By learning about the past and empathising with the victims who were deprived of their human rights, students shall be willing to shift their values and make reasoned judgments over contemporary issues. The ultimate purpose of making students emphasise with the historical agents is to cultivate a sense of justice in them and motivate them to participate in public affairs that could bring up social changes in their community and in the whole society.

Political participation requires students to examine the historical root of contemporary issues. In South Africa especially, it involves acknowledging the inequality caused by the Apartheid and redressing social injustice in contemporary society. The oral history project about the Apartheid brought individual experiences in the history classroom, making history something students could relate to. The emotional connections with victims of the past injustice urge them to reflect whether the legacy of Apartheid is gone nowadays. After the project, some students listen to opinions different from their own more readily. Students compare the world they are living in with the Apartheid world and contemplate what still needs to be changed in the contemporary South Africa.



Quite a lot of the works of the Albert Luthuli Competition shows that students would bring up the topics about the current social status in South Africa at the end of their interview. Questions include “Has the struggle really ended? Do you think there is still some form of apartheid in schools today? Is the work of which you were part of laying the foundation now complete? Apartheid has been removed from the law-books, but after 20 years is it really gone? Are we a truly integrated country? Is our past just a reflection our present? Do you think there is evidence of the separation today? Is current South Africa better than the Apartheid era and how so?”

(L4)CE won second prize at the Albert Luthuli Competition in 2011. The topic she chose was as follows.

Life story of a former learner in the 1970’s and how the Bantu Education / Black Education Act of 1953 affected access to quality education for the African people. How did the Bantu Education Act of 1953 contribute to the 16 June 1976 Soweto Youth uprising?

(L4)CE expressed that she was shocked by the interview. In the reflection part of the project, she wrote:

“I learned about the Trojan Horse incident. How young children like me got hurt because they want freedom. It's devastating for me. Some people lost their mother or son. Before the interview, it was just a text to me. In the interview, these people were there, listening to what you said. That changes everything, and I feel really bad also. ”

She felt hurt for those lost their lives in the Trojan Horse incident. She emphasized with the historical agents and felt sorry for them. The emotional connection drove her to think about whether people’s struggles had fully succeed based on her own experience on education in her own community.

Forty years after the student uprising South Africa is witnessing a similar revolt from students where education has become a commodity since free education which is entrenched in the constitution is now the capacity to pay. The legacies of the past struggles had come back to haunt the democratic government because of the unfilled promise, and this disjuncture has produced new dynamics of struggle at tertiary intuitions.

If I reflect on basic education, it is the same thing the capacity to pay. All schools are open, but the township schools are still in a state of neglect and only attended by those who live in the area, the model C schools are open for all, but you need to stay in the area. So even if you would like to attend a better school, you are unable to do so because you do not live in the area..... Placements in schools are reserved for the middle class. A white learner is never in the newspaper as being refused from a school because they will make space for those learners and why is it so because whiteness is still linked to excellence in the minds of many.

That someone like myself comes with no baggage of the past, so when injustice and inequality present itself, I need to do something about it. That through the integration of cultures and races one broadens your own worldview. I can now listen with understanding. That one can go from nothing to greatness if you have the will to want to succeed.”

(L4)CE was inspired by the interviewee, and she reflected on the status quo of education inequality. As a student living in township, she claimed she would pursue her right to quality education. These thoughts originate from an understanding of the education system and the student uprising during the Apartheid.

The oral history project aroused her political awareness. With an understanding of the historical roots of nowadays inequality she is willing to contribute to readdressing the inequality.

Like many other participants (L4)CE also sharply criticised the government.

The real story is what the government of today does with the freedom, with apartheid society needed to remember who they are and with liberation they need to remember whom they want to be. So we must never forget that there is a huge gap between the haves' and the have-nots and for the poor like myself it does not mean if we do not have we do not have the right to quality education.

In the project (L4)CE criticized the government for failing the hope of people but also hold the deep belief to fight the current problems in the country such as unemployment, crimes and inequality of education. They were able to see today's problem as an extension of yesterday's problems. Such understanding would facilitate students in their political participation. After the oral history project, many students show their vision of a more democratic South Africa and inclination to work for social change.

#### Encouraged by the Struggle Heroes

Just like a person can gain strength from one's past experience of hardships and failure, citizens can have a broader perspective on the present social situation if they see themselves as part of a community extending through time, made up of generations of people fighting for freedom and democracy. When students emphasise with people who struggled to fight the Apartheid regime, the contemporary social problems would be viewed as something to fight against following the steps of these forefathers instead of a reason to give up on it. One of the topics for the Albert Luthuli Competition for 2017 is as follows.

Chief Albert Luthuli once said: "We have a vision of South Africa in which black and white shall live and work together and where there shall be neither whites, not blacks, just South Africans, free and united in diversity". As South Africa celebrates 50 years of the passing of Chief Albert Luthuli, South Africans are called to emulate the spirit of Chief Albert Luthuli of rising and standing in unity against the dangers of racism and divisions. (iNkosi Albert Luthuli Oral History Topics, 2017)

This topic honours those who fight against social inequality and encourage youth to do the same. In the Albert Luthuli Competition, learners chose unrecognised struggle heroes as interviewees. These struggle heroes went through extreme conditions or hardships. Students could draw strength from these Apartheid heroes and gain hope from the fact that more serious problems have been solved by ordinary people like the interviewees. Besides, through emphasising with these Apartheid heroes, students are imbued with a sense of responsibility to participate in public affairs and continue to fight for freedom and equality. To stop worrying about the society's problems would be a disrespect and disregard for the Apartheid heroes.

I felt this through my own experience. I met a veteran who was a former MK member. He was in exile in Angola and made a great sacrifice for the country. "There was no food that we had to eat flies. The bodies rote in ten days. Sometimes over 100 people die in a battle. It still comes back to me. I still suffer from the traumatic experiences. People are sacrificing their life the moment they decided to join." After telling me a lot of the veterans were living in abject conditions now, he said: "We can confront Zuma for

what he did. But we have such a great constitution. We have to treasure it. We should be happy to enjoy life but also need to think about the heavy stuff.” This imbued me with a strong sense of responsibility. I realised the struggle was far from finished and as a global citizen, there are many serious issues our generation needs to address.

(L5)CE did a project on how the neighbourhood watch created change in Mitchell’s Plain.

Neighbourhood watch is a security organisation made up of local residents to fight against crimes. A lot of the participants are parents who want to protect their kids from crimes. The learner was touched by the passionate people who try to protect their community and showed deep concern for the youth problem today as she is a teenager herself.

Doing this research, I had learnt things that had opened my mind and that has given me a chance to look at things in a different light. Sitting back I see that although I was not here during apartheid, those years had shaped my life as well. Just like others wonder how their lives would have differed if Apartheid didn’t happen, so do I. In every way possible whether we are 17 or 77, Apartheid is part of who we are today.

Statistics show that in February 2011 there were 861 children in Pollsmoor prison situated in Cape Town under the age of 18. It is estimated that the Cape Flats is home to tens of thousands of gang members. Gangs have done recruitment of many young children since the increase of gang groups in Cape Town. Another major issue is drug abuse, a great contributor to crime on the Cape Flats. Cape Town drug users are becoming younger. Statistics show that many of those addicted have started using drugs from before the age of 13. On average, it takes about R5000 a month for addicts to feed their addiction. The question of where a 12-year-old will find R5000 a month seems quite unrealistic, but today young kids find everything they need from gangs and drug lords needing them for working purposes. So the question stands, has the Cape Flats youth of 1976 fought for the freedom of young people or for the exploitation and ungratefulness we see today? One of the biggest concerns neighbourhood watch has is preserving the future, while remembering the past. One of my interviewees recalls having his heart broken by the fact that he has to book a 15-year-old into holding cells because of the possession of drugs or gang violence. He remembers Mitchell’s plain as being manageable. The reason for these men and women(of neighbourhood watch) we have today is because of the gratitude they were taught for freedom when they were our age, what would happen if in the next 20 years we do not have them anymore because of the fact that we do not preserve them as well? What can we as the remaining sensible youth do to carry on where great men and women leave off, can we accomplish what the neighbourhood watch has over these past years? These are all things that should be spoken about in schools and communities.

The oral history project made her aware of the efforts and contributes people from the Neighborhood Watch made to diminish crimes in the township community. She made a comparison of the youth in the 1980s and the youth today. She questioned what the youth today are doing with the freedom which the youth of 1980s fought hard for. She felt the effort the forefather made didn’t get paid back. Moreover, she felt sorry for the youth in her community and felt sorry the gratification for freedom didn’t pass on. With a call at the end that these things should be spoken at school, she displayed senses of responsibility for the future of the community. Students who interviewed struggle heroes learnt from the interviews about the continuity of the country’s struggles. Inspired by the interviewees, they take on

the responsibility to solve contemporary problems and are mobilised to bring about social change by participating in public affairs.

## Limitations of the oral history project

When discussions of the common good or injustice about topics which threaten students' deeply held beliefs or the interests of their own community, students may be less willing to act on good intentions that might put themselves in a more difficult situation.

The oral history project is sensitive since it can reveal unresolved injustice from the past. The land problem is one of them. (L2)SP commented after doing the oral history project on the Group Areas Act: "My dad used to live in lands down near Rondebosch. My dad's family was removed from there. The house still stands there, and there is an old white couple living there. They probably moved in there when my dad moved out. And my dad is very sad to go back because that's exactly where he used to live. I don't know do I really want to approach these people and say hi my dad used to live here and he was forcibly removed." After (L2)SP said this, the students laughed in the classroom. It would not be socially acceptable for (L2)SP to do so. When (E)SP asked her students what would they like to ask about the people living in Newlands. Some students answered: "If you could, would you want to give back the house or give some repatriation to the people who were forced to leave. Do you think people should be compensated for the loss of their homes?"

The students requests are reasonable. But when issues concern one's own communities' interests, the student might take a personal stance. Fighting for social equality might become fighting for one's self-interest. Students might also become too emotional because of the personal relevance which is not desirable in a history classroom.

(E)LU is teaching in a very prestigious school within a conservative community. The area is a formerly white-only area. Over 80% of the students in her classroom are white. She mentioned to me in the interview that: "Although race is a big part of the society, students do not understand the concept of race. They also don't understand discrimination because people from their community are majorly white. (L1) FA told me: "Our geography teacher tells us most of the South African students don't study in an environment like us. Some don't even have classrooms. But we don't know. We have no contact with those things." Such conditions largely exist in these schools.

When I interview (L1) FA about students' opinion on the policy which gives black students easier access to university, many white students felt it was not fair. Most white South Africans are still enjoying the privilege they inherited from their family which was given by the Apartheid regime. Pursuing social equality means to an extent giving up their own privileges. Being in their own boxes without contact with the underprivileged learners and with a community surrounding them actively avoiding to challenge themselves and admit the privilege they get from the Apartheid, even if the students living in the community might understand the reason and the necessity of affirmative actions, they might not want to sacrifice their interest for the readdressing the social inequality. The segregation between the white and the black community exacerbate the difficulties to work for the common good despite one's own interests.

Provided students interview people of different colours, they would get different perspectives of the Apartheid. Nevertheless very few of the interviews cross the colour line. The limitation comes from the

social group students interact with. Students rarely have families or friends cross the colour line. Although some white learners interview their domestic workers, people work in petrol stations or other races employed by their parents. Among all the oral history projects I observed, only black and coloured learners from SP class interviewed white people living in the community as a preparation for the oral history project. (E)SS commented "Learners interview quite a wide socio-economic range and educational range." However, he also admitted: "They might have friends but it is difficult to have friends across the colour line."

(E)FA set the theme of this year's Oral History project to the history of my school after finding out it is hard for students to find interviewees who are affected by apartheid. This is a school dedicated to people of British descent during the apartheid. Many students' parents also graduated from this school. This project became very convenient for students in this regard. After browsing the students' homework, I found that though students all mentioned the Bantu Education Act in the project, the interviewees presented the image of a white community during the apartheid whose life was not much different from nowadays. Whether these projects meet the curriculum's supposed outcomes is problematic. Although the project shows the lives of ordinary people, it is not functional regarding civic education or improving tolerance in society.

At the same time, most of the students who participated in the Oral History Competition and the Oral History Project of the District Six Museum were black or coloured students. (E)LU School believes that the most meaningful part of the competition for students growing up in a conservative white community is to reach out to young South Africans who have grown up in different communities. However, in recent years, none of the students in her school was able to finish the competition. (E)LU explained: "Some students participated in this oral history competition and made much effort but did not win the award. And the school did not fully recognise their achievements. Some students' parents were frustrated because the children did not get recognised. " Students from these communities often have plenty of extracurricular activities which make the oral history competition less appealing. On the contrary, there are few opportunities for pupils living in the township to participate in national competitions, so they cherish the chance.

In this regard, the role of oral history to enhance understanding and tolerance of different racial groups could not be fulfilled. Its role of encouraging students to work for social justice and equality is also limited. When different racial groups rarely socialise with each other, it is very difficult for those privileged to understand those who struggle. The segregation entrenched after the Apartheid is part of the reason why the oral history project could not reach its full potential in bringing about reconciliation or democracy.

## Conclusion

Oral history can bring history alive and cultivate students' interest in the subject. At the same time, through oral history, students deepen their understanding of their own community and their living conditions. The oral history project on Apartheid history promotes intergenerational understanding, and tolerance towards different social groups. Some oral history projects focus on marginalised groups of society, such as people with disabilities, unregistered immigrants and so on. Oral history speaks for ordinary people and the marginalised or oppressed groups. The oral history projects put these people who might be invisible to the learners in daily life in the spotlight. Learners make an emotional

connection with these historical agents and wish they could care for or support the victims. Empathy with historical witnesses also allows youth to contemplate their own lives and reflect on how they view the society. In townships, problems such as alcohol abuse, poverty, violence and drug abuse are prevalent. Youths growing up in such environments can easily go astray and give up on themselves. The Oral History Project on communities inform youth about their communities' disturbed history and show them the strength and dignity of the survivors of Apartheid in their community. Students' perception of their township identity can shift from a mark of shame to a source of confidence. A few oral history projects break racial boundaries, providing white learners with a better understanding of the experience of black people during the Apartheid. Nonetheless, when it comes to encounters with a different race, the conversation might not be pleasant. It largely depends on how open-minded is the interviewee. Learners might be insulted by white people who take a defensive stance. It is essential for educators to show different perspectives in such situations.

After doing the project, students actively reflect on the differences of life today and life during the Apartheid. This brings the history subject out of the history classroom and into contemporary society the students are living in. Interviews with a generation of people who have undergone Apartheid remind born-frees to cherish the freedom and rights they have and that the struggles today are different from the struggles then. The oral history projects also arouse students' political awareness. After discovering the historical roots of the contemporary problems, some students figure out they should continue to fight against the past legacy, including racism and social inequality. They show willingness to take on the responsibility to bring about social change towards a more equal and democratic South Africa. Interviews with apartheid heroes or community heroes demonstrate learners vividly the harsh living conditions and hardships during the struggles. The success of their tough struggles imbue students with a sense of responsibility and encourage students to continue the unfinished struggles for social injustice.

The practice and process of the oral history projects vary greatly among different schools. This reflects the differences between distinct communities in Cape Town. Some students prestigious schools have rich material resources, but can not find interviewees with Apartheid experience. Students living in township communities have rich oral history resources. However, they do not have the material resources to do the project. This is a paradox which displays the social injustice and inequality extending from economical to cultural, educational opportunities and other fields.

Racial prejudice is still prevalent in South Africa. The oppressors and the oppressed in history are all included in the rainbow nation. However, the colours of the rainbow do not merge with each other, just like the social segregation among races many areas in Cape Town. Hence, tolerance towards the other racial groups are hard to achieve. Some white parents in the oral history project refuse to talk about Apartheid experiences with their children. Avoiding to talk about Apartheid would only entrench the intolerance and racism in society. Apartheid will not die with the generation of people because beliefs live through generations. The ignorance and amnesia of the privileged group will cause the continuous deterioration of the wounds of apartheid. The lack of mutual understanding of different races coming from diverse social backgrounds also resulted in the racial tensions in the student movements these years. Three years later, some of the students I interviewed would be in college. When isolated groups of black and white students go to the same university, the impoverished will meet with the privileged, and the privileged might be defensive. The racial gap would deepen with shock or clash.

We hope students would gain a historical understanding of their lives after taking part in the oral history project. We hope they would be aware whether they are poor or privileged, it is a result of the Apartheid to some extent. Through the oral history project, they emphasise with the historical agents and learn about the social injustice of the past. The caring relation with the interviewees will motivate them to fight the social injustice and participate in delivering the common good for the society. However, the racial prejudice, isolation of social groups and unequal distribution of resources caused by the Apartheid greatly limit the potential of the oral history project in promoting social justice and mutual understanding among different races. Changing the topic to my school history in FA school to make it easier for students to find an interviewee or lowering standards for the project in TH school to make sure students get the marks could be regarded as compromise to the legacy of the Apartheid. For the oral history project to play its role in civic education and promote racial harmony, more cross-ethnic interviews need to happen and teachers need to bring different racial experiences and perspectives into the classroom.

There is no oral history project in Chinese history curriculum. In China, Marxist history narrative flows with the logic that economics determine the ideology. In the meta-narrative like this, individuals are invisible. Students' identity is invisible as well. Empathy is neglected in historical teaching in high schools. Social history and oral history content would be a compensate for the Marxist history. Bringing in the personal experience through the oral history project is necessary. With oral history, students would be more interested in the subject and would be able to see contemporary issues in the light of history. With a population of 55 ethnic minorities of distinct cultures and histories, it is essential to think about how these people find their voice in the historical narrative. Some of these minority groups are also depicted by the Chinese media as impoverished and backward in development. If students of these social groups learn about their own communities through oral history, students will be more confident and likely to contribute to their community. Many young people from these communities are unaware of their traditions and history. Oral history projects on their own community would promote mutual understanding of them with older community members. In areas habituating mixed ethnic groups, sharing and presenting oral history projects in the history classroom will enable students from different ethnic groups to deepen their understanding and tolerance for each other. Also, the oral history exerts a doing history method which is also lack in history classrooms in China. During the oral history project, learners instead of being passive recipients, work as researchers, take the initiative to collect historical materials, expose themselves to a handful of primary narratives and learn how is history constructed. In China history is still taught in a rote learning way. This learner-centred approach is worth learning for China.



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