An Oral History Project on the first years of Coeducation at Yale

Our Goal: Capturing the History.

The Oral History Project (OHP) seeks to record, make available to researchers and others, and preserve an archive of high-quality audio-visual accounts of the early years of coeducation at Yale, as experienced by the women who lived it. The project will record individual and group first-person narratives, with a primary focus on the first three classes of undergraduate women – in the Classes of ’71, ’72, and ’73 – who arrived at Yale in September 1969.

Framing Principles:

• Our hope is to interview as many members of the first three classes of women - as well as select others - as time, funding, and geography allow. Rather than focus on “recognizable names,” we hope to interview a broad cross-section of women - with diverse backgrounds, interests, and life experiences.
• We wish to encourage interviewees to tell their own stories, about whatever they believe future generations should know.
• We want these interviews to be as open and unbiased as possible: we hope to avoid constricting material to pre-determined narratives or tailoring histories to fit present-day themes.
• The context of the world in 1969 is crucial to understanding these stories and Yale’s efforts during that time.

Products of the Oral History Project:

• The collection of whole digital interviews, minimally edited (e.g., to eliminate awkward intervals), will be archived in the Manuscripts and Archives division of Sterling Memorial Library at Yale where they will be available to library users and researchers.
• Transcripts of these whole interviews will be created to facilitate access and use and will also be available at SML.
• Select edited portions of individual interviews may be used to create a micro-website, most likely within the larger 50WomenAtYale150 website, where they will be publicly accessible.
• Shorter composite “reels” of excerpted interviews, that can be shown at gatherings and events during the 2019 – 2020 anniversary year and beyond, may also be created.
• Although a longer composite film is not currently contemplated, there is a possibility that one may be created in the future.

Timetable:

Interviews of the first women undergraduates who arrived in September 1969.
Professional-registered interviews will be offered in several settings:

• On campus during the reunion of the class of 1973 in May/June 2018 (This has been accomplished)
• On scheduled dates in a number of U.S. “hub cities” during 2018 – 2019 ....and possibly beyond.
• As new filming dates for spring 2019 are determined, information will be sent to women in these three classes and posted to the website.
• We hope there also will be an opportunity to record at the September 2019 event.
• For women who cannot access these formal options, cell-phone recordings may be made by alumnae themselves and transmitted to the project. We hope to have detailed guidelines to facilitate this at a later date.

Concurrent with these efforts to capture the history in filmed interviews, we are undertaking a parallel project to provide individuals a written option to record their stories – either instead of, or in addition to, the video effort.

Interviews with men who were at Yale before coeducation and during the transition, and members of the faculty, staff, and the administration:
  • Selected interviews with members of these groups may be conducted concurrently with those of women in the first three classes – or after the initial phase.

**Some useful information for prospective interviewees:**
  • Interviews will be scheduled in advance by Yale staff for a specific time and location.
  • Generally, interviews will be 45 minutes in length. However, if you prefer a shorter timeframe, please let us know.
  • We anticipate that many/most interviews will be of individuals - but small groups of 2 - 3 are also welcome to participate.
  • You will be asked to sign a release form before recording; we are using the standard Yale release for these interviews.
  • No other prep for the interview is necessary. However, we will provide some “big-picture” questions, as well as some related “food for thought” topics for those who schedule an interview and wish to consider potential topics beforehand. Ultimately, we want you to be able to tell the story you want to tell.

If you have any questions, you may email yalecoeducation50@yale.edu.