

OSU Multiracial Beavers Oral History Project, 2016-2017
Project Documents
OH 18 Oregon Multicultural Archives

Project Background: The OSU Multiracial Beavers Oral History Project, 2016-2017, was intended to capture the origin stories of the Oregon State University Multiracial Beavers initiative and share the experiences of Multiracial individuals at OSU.

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Project Proposal

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Project Proposal

For this social justice project, I wanted to support to an ongoing project on campus rather than do a program on my own. I have experience with social justice programming on college campuses and know that there is a lot of important work beyond that happening on campus that needs support. With that in mind, I was having a conversation with Charlene Martinez about whether or not she had any projects that needed support and she informed me of an oral history project with the Multiracial Beavers. Charlene is part of a small group of university staff, faculty, and students that have been working to develop a support network around multiracial identity here on campus. The Multiracial Beavers group has weekly conversational support meetings, a yearly Multiracial Aikido retreat, and an annual Multiracial Connect event at the beginning of the academic year.

The core professional faculty members that support the Multiracial Beavers initiative are working to capture the stories behind the beginnings of this group and build further resources on campus to help staff and faculty learn more about multiracial identity and supporting multiracial individuals. In order to do this, they are wanting to conduct oral histories with the founding staff, faculty, and students to contribute to the Multicultural Archive. Additionally, there is a Canvas site being developed where staff and faculty could go to find resources and information about multiracial identities. These tasks need to be completed this term by December 2nd in order to share them at a train the trainer session, Building Multiracial Consciousness. Because the professional faculty who work to support this group have full time jobs at the university and choose to do this important work in addition to their usual duties, they are in need of support to help facilitate some of this work this term. For this project I will be drawing on theories of critical allyship to engage with this project. As a white woman I am not a member of the community I will be working with, but I will be lending my skills, time, and energy to support the needs of this important work at the direction of the Multiracial Beavers organizers.

Through conversation with Charlene we determined that I will have 4 main tasks or outcomes for this project:

1. Reach out to Natalia Fernandez to be trained on conducting oral histories and work with her to house this project in the Multicultural Archives.
2. Coordinate and help conduct individual and group interviews with the student and faculty creators of the Multiracial Beavers group in collaboration with the group organizers.
3. Get the skeleton Canvas site fully flushed out by December 2 for the train the trainer session where it will be unveiled.
4. Create a blog post about working in collaborative allyship for this project about what I learned through the process that will be included in the Canvas site.

I propose these tasks will take place in the following timeline throughout the remainder of the term:

- Week Three: Reach out to Natalia Fernandez with the Multicultural Archive
- Week Four: Outreach and begin scheduling interviews with folks
- Weeks Five through Eight: Conduct interviews, work on Canvas Site
- Week Nine: Have completed all interviews and have the Canvas site ready for feedback from the Multiracial Beavers leaders
- Week Ten: Write blog post and make any edits to the Canvas site as need

The effectiveness of this project will be assessed through my ability to successfully schedule and conduct interviews, the completion of the Canvas site to the satisfaction of the Multiracial Beavers organizers, and feedback about the blog post.

Email to Participants

Dear _____,

Thank you for helping to build multiracial community and consciousness at Oregon State University. As you may know or have experienced, within the past two years we have been able to launch a Multiracial Welcome event for first year and transfer students, a regular drop-in group, and the Multiracial Aikido retreat. At these functions we have engaged in storytelling of our histories, families, and complex cultures, and benefited from the power of listening and building empathy for each other. All of these programs could not have transpired or been successful without your participation in various ways. Again, thank you.

Now that we have established a few offerings for students to explore multiracial identity and their own stories and narratives, we are interested in capturing the beginnings of multiracial support at OSU. We hope to document our processes, identify what has worked and what has not as we continue to improve programs for students, and to share with others about what we have learned (potentially leading to the creation of resources). Our hope is to increase the knowledge and awareness for staff, faculty, and advisors so they can better support multiracial students.

We would like to invite you to participate in an interview as a part of an oral histories project which will then be housed in [OSU's Multicultural Archives](#). The interview will take around 45-60 minutes. There is potential for the interview to also be reciprocal in nature. This means that you will both be interviewed and reciprocate the interview in the same setting. We are currently gauging availability of participants and will let you know in advance if you will be interviewing your partner in the session in advance.

By sharing your story, you can leave your mark of the contributions you have made to building multiracial consciousness. As a group which often goes invisible, our stories will be made public so that we are no longer invisible, individually and collectively.

Here is [the link](#) to sign up. Reciprocal interviews will be conducted by a member of the originating Multiracial Beavers team: Charlene Martinez, Kim McAloney, Vanessa Johnson, or Stephanie Shippen.

In addition, we would like to invite you to participate in a two-hour focus group facilitated by graduate student Kali Furman, who is also helping to coordinate the reciprocal interviews. Please let Kali know if are you available to participate in a focus group on Wednesday, November 30th or Thursday, December 1st from 3-5pm. .

If none of the interview times work for you, please contact Kali at Kali.Furman@oregonstate.edu to set up a time that works better for your schedule.

We value your voice and story. Thank you in advance for considering this request.
Best, Charlene, and the Multiracial Beavers team

Focus Group Questions

Preamble and goals

Hello everyone and thanks for joining together for this Multiracial Beavers focus group today. My name is Kali Furman, my pronouns are she/her/hers, and I am a Phd student in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies here on campus. This focus group is part of an ongoing oral histories project that is capturing the stories of multiracial students, staff, and faculty at OSU and today we are hoping to have a conversation about the beginnings of the Multiracial Beavers, your experiences together forming this group, and thinking about its significance and future. We have generated a list of questions that I will use to help guide our conversation, please feel free to talk to each other, change your mind, and build off each other's ideas. I hope that each person will participate, but I will try my best to ensure that each person has an opportunity to talk. We thought we could start with introductions and then we can jump in. Does that sound good to everyone? Great, so if each person could please share their name, pronouns, role on campus (or former role on campus and currently where you are) and a word or a phrase that comes to mind when you think about Multiracial Beavers.

Introductions:

Name, pronoun, role on campus, maybe word or phrase that comes to mind when you think about Multiracial Beavers

1. How have you been involved with Multiracial Beavers?
2. What is different because of your participation in Multiracial Beavers?
3. How do identify in terms of race and ethnicity and how has that identity been taken up through your work with Multiracial Beavers?
4. How is the Oregon or Oregon State context different from other contexts you've lived and worked in?
5. When you think about Multiracial Beavers, what do you think catalyzed this group to form?
6. Why, if at all, is visibility important to multiracial people?
7. When you think about how Multiracial Beavers formed, what was most exciting about that process? What does it say, if anything, about building community amongst multiracial people?
8. Did your involvement help you to understand your identity differently?
9. What are some of your hopes for the future for Multiracial Beavers?
10. What advice would you offer your younger self about your multiracial identity?

Interview Questions

Pre-interview introductions for recording:

My name is [name of reciprocal interviewer #1] and my name is [name of reciprocal interviewer #2] and we are participating in the Multiracial Beavers Oral History Project. Today is Monday, November 28th and we will go ahead and get started.

Interview Questions

1. What motivated you to participate in this interview?
2. How do you identify in terms of racial and ethnic identities? What are your other salient identities? How, if at all, has your identity changed over time?
3. What are some of your earliest memories of other people making assumptions about your racial and ethnic identity?
4. What are some more recent memorable experiences you've had related to your racial and ethnic identity?
5. Do you have any stories of belonging or not belonging by your ethnic or racial groups?
6. What is it like for you to be you in Oregon? What about OSU specifically?
7. What is a two sentence biography we can use for the Oregon Multicultural Archives?

Project Reflection

Multiracial Beavers and Interviews

Notes:

- Eric: Multiracial Beavs is necessary and greatly needed

How have you been involved in multiracial beavers?

- Kim: Racial aikido was the first event that was making space for multiracial identities. That fall started a pseudo organization/club that came together who identified as multiracial or family members of multiracial folks. Started conversations about multiracial aikido. Making space for more things to happen
- Charlene: Didn't have the capacity to coordinate multiracial events or opportunities. Brought in Stefanie to pair with CAPS to build a space or community where students who are multiracial could drop in and talk about identity.
- Tara: Did drop in on a whim and ended up being the best experiences all year. Through the drop-in sessions, connected with other multiracial people and built a community. Built canvas: purpose is to be a starting place from training people in understanding why having a space for multiracial students is so vital and critical and to have those responses available to students.
- Being part of multiracial beavers it was the first time I felt a sense of community and coming to OSU I didn't feel like I fit into any other parts of my identity other than that of multiraciality.

What is different for you because of your participation in the multiracial beavers group?

- It's a place where I am able to explore my identity more and I haven't been able to that before. I've always done it individually and so it is nice to have that space and share it with others that are coming from similar places in life. Has enriched my life and wishes to continue that.
- Charlene: I feel like I finally have hope to be able to live in Oregon for more than 4 years. Rocky at first but the hope (growth of the community) was inspirational. Because we don't talk about race and whiteness is centered here in Oregon, it has become more necessary to carve out space for people to unpack multiracial identity and well as for those who are just now discovering that identity. Also for people who have been white passing that identify with people of color, for them to find their own agency and need to provide that to students and the community.
- Kim: connect with other people so that I can feel whole. I can bring my entire self. I don't have to explain who I am.

Oregon in Particular

- Race is more hidden is comparison to the mid-west
- Mainly due to denial

Sense of urgency to get together as faculty and staff?

“Didn’t think I could thrive until I had this community”

What clues were you getting from the environment that made multiracial beavers or making that community for urgent?

- Corvallis is a very family oriented place, so it felt lonely at times where you don’t have that family depth. Connecting with folks and need for not feeling so lonely, multiracial beavers provided that.
- It’s nice to be able to not have to explain everything when you come into the office and say something about your day and identity.
- Hard to be surrounded by people who are all about whiteness or white culture and don’t understand the view of other people (including multiracial and people of color).
- Here there are people who are white passing that identify as someone of color or have that within their identity but are not accepted into that group because the color of their skin is white. White skin privilege.

Reflection:

It makes a difference to have a space for people of multiracial identity because they may not have a space at all for them to go to; so, even if you feel like you are only effecting a few students, that could mean the world to those few people. It also only builds and as we continue to build this space for multiracial people and to have these conversations, then it can just continue to get better and better.

This really is necessary for students, especially for those who don’t have a community or sense of belonging.

What are the hopes for the future?

- Hopeful that OSU will fund multiracial beavers
- Challenge binaries that make people uncomfortable, talk about this and how we move forward and how we get out as an institution
- What does institution look like? Don’t necessarily need a center.
- What we are doing is building a community that can be integrate so no one is looking through a pair of glasses but can see across the different identities and how they impact and affect one another.
- How can multiracial beavs be sustainable??

Embrace yourself and there are others that identify similarly to you.

YOU ARE ENOUGH!

So, how can we create a space for multiracial individuals? Something more than the drop-ins? I myself as a multiracial individual would like a space outside of aikido to continue conversations but also to build a community around my journey to discover my identity with people who understand what I may be going through. It’s hard for me to discuss these topics when I am home because the people around me don’t understand or care enough to have a conversation about multiracial identity. So for me, a space for discussion would be nice because I don’t talk about it otherwise.

We know we need a space for multiracial people and that we want to continue to connect people together, but how and in what capacity are we able to do that? As I was doing some research on making communities for multiracial individuals, I came across a group called “Mixed in the Six” who get together to share stories over different ethnic foods. I think that if we were able to do a monthly food night where we enjoyed different types of foods from different cultures, it would be a nice way to ease into deeper discussion on multiracialism or just general topics. I’m not sure of our capacity or if we have access to any funds, but I know that during the aikido, meal time was time for us to elaborate on some of the conversations we were having, as well as ask more questions. This could be an introduction to more social gatherings with people of the aikido and everyone in the community. Then comes the question about where we are going to have these things and where our “space” is going to be. Do we have it at a cultural center, rooms in the DCE, the library? What is a time where everyone can meet or at least the majority? Maybe we do a survey that asks people of the aikido what their preferences are to get an idea of what they want out of aikido. If we have these types of events are these going to be things that they want to go to? Asking the people what they are looking for may guide us to a more specific focus of what we want to do with multiracial aikido.