“When World War II started, I lived in San Diego. And they were advertising for women to replace the men that, of course, had to go to war. And so it was a big challenge to us women, and we were excited to see if we could do the men’s work. Which we did—sometimes better than them, after they taught us.

After the war ended, we knew we’d be laid off. We did other things; never thought about being a “Rosie the Riveter” or any of the exciting things that are happening now! And it took all these years for the country to realize that the Rosies did something.

I’m so proud of it: to pave the way for all these wonderful women I see with all of these top jobs. It just gives you such a gratitude that we were able to do that, even though at the time we didn’t think we were doing anything but helping the war effort.”

— Elinor Otto, America’s longest-working Rosie the Riveter
# ORAL HISTORY TOOLKIT

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction ........................................................................................................... page 2

**PART I: Pre-Interview Preparation**

Preparation Checklist .......................................................................................... page 4
Sample Interview Questions ................................................................................ page 5

**PART II: Interview Technique**

Beginning Your Interview .................................................................................. page 7
Helpful Guidelines .............................................................................................. page 8
Recording Audio on Your Smartphone ............................................................... page 9
Taking Photos on Your Smartphone ..................................................................... page 10

**PART III: Post-Interview**

Submitting Your Interview .................................................................................. page 13
Writing an Interview Abstract ............................................................................ page 14
Choosing Keywords ............................................................................................ page 15

Appendix

Frequently Asked Questions ............................................................................... page 17
Basic Information Form ..................................................................................... page 18
Interview Release Form ..................................................................................... page 19
Photography Log ................................................................................................. page 20
Home Front Reading List .................................................................................. page 21
Honor Roll
INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the National Home Front Project: a major new grassroots initiative under the leadership of historians at Washington College.

Through our research on World War II, we have found that histories of the war too often omit the experiences of “home front heroes”: the men, women, and children who bought bonds, built planes, endured sacrifices, and kept families together while loved ones served on the front lines. As a result, we are working with individuals, communities, and organizations across the country to record audio interviews with residents born in or before 1940 who remember wartime America.

Over the past year, we ran a pilot partnership program that trained new interviewers and archived pre-existing home front oral histories. Through the contributions of our student interns, community partners, and institutional collaborators, the National Home Front Project now has a collection of over 300 interviews—and growing!

We are continuing to help communities record these essential World War II stories through our ongoing partnerships and public submission program. The National Home Front Project preserves these oral histories in a digital archive to be shared with both current and future generations. Our staff provides guidance and resources for our partners, interviewers, and interviewees alike.

We would love to hear from individuals and groups who would like to join this effort. We’re also gathering names of potential interviewees nationwide, as well as information on existing oral history recordings. Whether you have a family member who grew up during the war, work with either students or senior citizens, or have your own collection of home front interviews, we are committed to helping you preserve these essential stories of World War II.

This Oral History Toolkit will lead you through the three important stages of preparing for an interview, conducting an effective oral history, and submitting your interview to our national archive. We will also soon have a separate Community Partner Guidebook available for local project planning and development.

Before you begin your first oral history interview for the National Home Front Project, please visit www.nationalhomefrontproject.org and reach out to program staff via info@nationalhomefrontproject.org to receive further guidance.

With your help, we will continue expanding this program nationwide and explore new ways to bring the generations together into conversation about World War II before the opportunity is soon lost forever. Thank you for your important contributions to preserving American home front history!
PRE-INTERVIEW PREPARATION

• Preparation Checklist
• Sample Interview Questions
PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Research
☐ Listen to an oral history on our project website to learn more about interviewing.
☐ Read a book from our Home Front Reading List to explore the history of World War II.
☐ Conduct research at your local library about the impact of the war on your town.
☐ Read our Community Partner Guidebook for project planning and development recommendations.
☐ Connect with prospective interviewees in your family or community.
☐ Google the person you are going to be interviewing.
☐ Compile a historical timeline or list of key themes you’d like to cover.
☐ Draft an outline of questions or topics you intend to explore in the interview.

Outreach
☐ Schedule a short pre-interview phone call with your interviewee to introduce yourself.
☐ Help them prepare for the interview by explaining the project and broadly sharing the topics you are interested in.
☐ Remind them that they have an important story to tell and that you are excited to record it for future generations.
☐ Fill out the Basic Information Form together as an icebreaker during the phone call.
☐ Ask if they have personal artifacts like photographs, albums, yearbooks, journals, letters, newspaper clippings, ration books, wartime memorabilia, etc. that they might like to bring to the interview.
☐ Collect referrals to other prospective interviewees and new reading materials.
☐ Finalize the interview date and time with your interviewee, booking out at least two hours per interview.
☐ Revisit and revise your interview outline.

Planning
☐ Book a comfortable and accessible space in a quiet location, without background noise and interruption.
☐ Download a free recording app like Voice Recorder Pro onto your smartphone or purchase an audio recorder.
☐ Make sure that you have enough recording space and battery life in your equipment.
☐ Bring an extra charger, batteries, and headphones with you to the interview—and even a backup recorder, if you have one.
☐ Print copies of the Interview Release Form and your interview outline.
☐ Bring the Basic Information Form along with you, as it will include the interviewee’s contact information and the address of your interview.
☐ Call the interviewee with a quick reminder a day or two before you are scheduled to meet.
☐ Arrange transportation with plenty of time for travel.
Can you please introduce yourself by name, and say when and where you were born?
Can you begin by sharing a little about your childhood and family?
Who were some of your role models growing up?
What kind of games did you play as a child?
Where were you living during World War II?
What were your parents doing during that time?
What impact did the war have on gender roles in your family?
How did you first learn about the war and how did you feeling about it?
How did they teach about it or prepare you in school?
Can you describe how you first heard about Pearl Harbor being attacked? What was your reaction or that of your family and friends?
Tell me a story about one of your most memorable experiences during World War II.
Can you please speak about any of the changes to your lifestyle during the war?
Describe what you would wear at home or to work during that time period.
What movies or songs remind you of the 1940s?
Do you have any memories of war bonds, scrap drives, V-mail, Victory Gardens, or rationing?
Did you lose anyone close to you during World War II? What impact did that have on you and your family?
What kind of news were you consuming during the war?
What were your reactions to any major developments like D-Day, V-E or V-J Day?
Can you describe how you first learned about wartime atrocities in Asia or the Jewish persecution in Europe/the Holocaust? What was the impact of hearing that news?
How did racial relations play out in your community during the war? Did you hear about Japanese American internment or meet any refugees from abroad?
Where were you when the war ended and how did you feel when you heard the news?
Can you tell me a little about what you went on to do after the war?
What impact do you feel that World War II has had on your life?
What lessons or wisdom would you like to pass on to today’s youngest generations?
Is there anything further you’d like to share?
INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE

• Beginning Your Interview
• Helpful Tips & Tricks
• Recording Audio on Your Smartphone
• Taking Photos on Your Smartphone
BEGINNING YOUR INTERVIEW

Arriving

Arrive on time—calm, prepared, and well-rested.
Build rapport by introducing yourself, and being warm and welcoming.
If you are hosting the interview, offer water and refreshments.
Arrange your seating in a way that will be comfortable and conducive to your equipment set up.
Reintroduce the project and outline the goals for the interview.
Explain the release form and have the interviewee sign it.
Close doors and hang a “do not disturb” sign in public spaces, where appropriate.
Turn off all noise-making devices and set phones to airplane mode.
Set up your equipment and do a sound check, making sure that the microphones are pointed in the directions of both people speaking.
Ask the interviewee to pronounce their full name off tape, if you are not already familiar with it.
Notify them when you are beginning the interview and make sure that you have successfully started recording.

Identifying the Recording

Interviewee’s name
Interviewer’s name
Date of interview
Place of interview
Session number
Community partner name (if applicable)
Oral history project title

“This is an interview with Michael Buckley, conducted by Erica Fugger. Today is Monday, October 1 and we are in the Custom House in Chestertown, Maryland. This is the first session with Michael for Newark Public Library’s interview collection in the National Home Front Project.”

Introducing the Interviewee

Offer thanks
Ask interviewee to say their name
Ask spectators to say their name, if any are present
Begin with first question

“Michael, thanks so much for joining us and for taking the time to speak about your childhood memories of World War II. Can you please first begin by introducing yourself by name, and saying when and where you were born?”
Effective Question Styles

- **Definitional Questions:** “Can you explain what you mean by “WAC”?”
- **Clarifying Questions:** “Can you give me an example of that?”
- **Detailed Questions:** “Do you remember your coworkers’ names?”
- **Follow Up Questions:** “When you said that you didn’t experience discrimination...”
- **Researched Questioned:** “I read in the newspaper article you gave me...”
- **Emotional Questions:** “What did that feel like?”
- **Reflective Questions:** “What about your experiences do you think is important for my generation to understand?”

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<th>DOS</th>
<th>DON’TS</th>
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<td>Use a biographical approach by starting your interview with a strong opening question about their early life or family to place their experiences in context</td>
<td>Don’t jump right into asking difficult questions about the war and family members they may have lost overseas</td>
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<td>Go with the flow of the narration to see how the interviewee tells their story</td>
<td>Don’t keep to your interview outline like a script</td>
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<td>Provide some fluid direction to the interview that connects through chronology or topic</td>
<td>Don’t allow the interview to go too far off-topic and away from World War II</td>
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<td>Find ways to respectfully redirect the conversation as needed to get back on track</td>
<td>Don’t interrupt the interviewee in the middle of a story when a new thought comes to mind</td>
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<td>Ask open-ended and effective follow up questions that demonstrates deep listening and encourages elaboration</td>
<td>Don’t ask closed-ended questions that elicit one word answers or bring in your own preconceived opinions on a topic</td>
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<td>Become comfortable with silence and give your interviewee space to think</td>
<td>Don’t feel as though you need to fill the space with constant questions</td>
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<td>Show respect through engaging body language, nonverbal affirmations, and direct eye contact</td>
<td>Don’t speak over the interviewee with ums, ohs, uh-huhs, or become conversational by offering too many personal connections</td>
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<td>Hold space for your interviewee to share their emotions and care for yourself as well</td>
<td>Don’t quickly move on when they touch upon loss or regret</td>
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<td>Keep open-minded, simple, and nonjudgmental</td>
<td>Don’t be either insensitive or complex about the ways you frame questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remain alert by drinking water, taking breaks, or jotting down quick notes with your interviewee’s permission</td>
<td>Don’t lose your place and trail off in thought in the middle of an important question or story</td>
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Quick Tip: One smartphone recording app we particularly appreciate is Voice Record Pro on iOS because it creates high quality audio, syncs up with cloud storage services like Dropbox, and allows you to easily send copies of the recording to yourself by email.

Set Up

Check your phone storage to ensure that you have at least 1 GB of space available and make sure that you charge your phone fully before the interview or have it in close range to an outlet.

Download the free version of Voice Record Pro on your phone and open the app.

Select Export with Dropbox and sign into your Dropbox account, if you would like to save the material that way. The app will ask to create a folder under Apps on Dropbox. Otherwise, you can choose the Send By Email feature.

Turn your phone to airplane mode so it does not interfere with the recording.

Record

Hit RECORD button. It will bring you to a New Recording screen. Under Preset, select High quality.

Under Advanced, select WAV (PCM) under Record Format. The other essential settings will read 44.1 sample rate, 16 bit depth, and Mono channels.

Do a sound check by plugging in your headphones for a test recording and listening to the audio quality.

Hit RECORD to begin recording. Hit it again to pause the recording and once more to resume. Hit STOP when the interview is complete.

Reposition the phone’s microphone as needed or adjust the Input Gain while in Recording Mode, to get in the range of approximately -9 to -12 dB on the top sound level bar where it says “VU.”

File Transfer

Rename the file with the interviewee’s name, the word “Interview,” and the date by selecting the pencil editing function. Ex. BuckleyMichael_Interview_100118.wav. Choose to also change the file name.

Turn your phone off of airplane mode and connect to steady wifi.

Choose Save to Dropbox and export file. In your Dropbox account, access the Apps folder and Voice Record Pro subfolder. Alternatively, choose Send to Email » Audio » Password Protected Link » and add in your email address. You can then access the email on your computer and download the file.

We would also recommend the Tascam DR-05 for a decent audio recorder under $100. To learn more about alternative recording equipment, visit the Ask Doug resource on Oral History and the Digital Age at http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/askdoug.
Preferred Photo Submissions

A headshot of the interviewee in portrait orientation
A photo of the interviewer and interviewee together in landscape orientation.
An artifact portrait of the interviewee from World War II
Photographs of any other artifacts from World War II

Set Up

Take the photo at the end of the interview when everyone is most comfortable.
You can use the camera built into your smartphone, as long as it takes decent photos.
Make sure your camera is not facing directly into a light source like a window.
Try to avoid a busy background or try a different angle.
You can take either photos or scans of flat artifacts, just make sure that you take the photo straight on and prop it up for the best result.
Watch out for any light that will show reflections on the historical images you’re photographing
Ask questions about these artifacts and write down notes about them.
Keep the recorder rolling and fill out the Photography Log together if possible.
Take photos of the completed Release Form, Basic Info Form, Photography Log, so you have a digital copy.

File Transfer

Finally, if you have the Dropbox app on your smartphone, you can create a folder to upload these images to.
Select + Create and Upload Photos. Select all photos you took and hit Next. You can change the file name before you upload the photos or more easily do it on a computer.
You can also scan copies of the Release Form, Basic Info Form, Photography Log, and any notes or research materials you’d like to include. Go to the relevant Dropbox folder on your smartphone. Select + Create and Scan Document.
Make sure that the document is lying flat, that there are no shadows, and that the image reader is capturing the full sheet. The preset setting will be black and white. You can scan a second page of a document by selecting the + button at the bottom left of the screen.
Alternately, you can email copies of any photos to yourself, but be sure to choose the “actual size” option on order to yield the highest resolution.

If the interviewee has an extensive artifact collection or is feeling exhausted from the interview, schedule a time to come back soon as a follow up for more stories and photos. If they are interested in donating a physical artifact, email us we’ll connect you with one of our institutional collaborators that is actively collecting these materials.
POST-INTERVIEW

Submitting Your Interview
Writing an Interview Abstract
Choosing Keywords
SUBMITTING YOUR INTERVIEW

To submit your interview to the National Home Front Project, please first contact info@nationalhomefrontproject.org to begin a conversation about your interview and review our file formatting guidelines below.

After you’ve been in touch with us and are ready to share your oral history materials, please follow these five simple steps:

1. Organize and rename your files in a folder labeled under the Lastname_Firstname of the interviewee.
   For example, Smith_Jonathan. Please use their given name in the file naming and indicate any preferred or nicknames in the Intake Form listed below.

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<th>Photographs</th>
<th>Documents</th>
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</thead>
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<td>.wav or .mp3</td>
<td>.jpeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution</td>
<td>44.1 sample rate, 16 bit depth</td>
<td>400-600 pixels, 72 DPI</td>
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<td>LastnameFirstname_Photo-#_ Dateofinterview.jpg</td>
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<tr>
<td>File Name Example</td>
<td>BuckleyMichael_ Interview-01_100118.wav</td>
<td>BuckleyMichael_ Photo-01_100118.jpg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Within that folder, create Audio, Photos, and Documents subfolders. Add your interview file to the Audio folder; any current and artifact photographs to Photos; and digital copies of the signed Interview Release Form, Basic Information Form, and Photography Log to Documents.

3. Upload all interview files to our Dropbox uplink via tiny.cc/nhfpsubmit.

4. Next, fill out our Intake Form via tiny.cc/nhfpintake and be sure to use all formatting indicated in the example sections shown. If you do not have information for any given question, please leave the field blank. To complete the Intake Form, please refer to our interview abstract and keyword guides.

5. Finally, please send us a follow up email via info@nationalhomefrontproject.org when your submission is complete, so that we can begin processing the material for our archive. Congrats!
Biography

Who (narrator’s role during war and family’s role)

Where (locations and migrations)

When (changing role across war)

Written in past tense

Refrains from verbs related to memory or story-telling

“Elinor Otto was born in 1919. In 1942, she started working as one of the original “Rosie the Riveters” at Rohr Aircraft Corporation in Chula Vista, California. A single mother, Elinor riveted for 65 cents an hour to support her infant son. Elinor remained working until 2014, when she was laid off and finally laid down her rivet gun at age 95. Today, Elinor works as a Spirit of ’45 national spokeswoman.”

Summary

Written in present tense

Use verbs related to memory and story-telling (remembers, describes)

Refrains from judgments and praise

Refrains from generalities

Incorporates specific details from the keywords list

“In this interview, Elinor reflects on hearing about the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the impact it had on the start of her work in wartime production. She discusses her job at Rohr Aircraft Corporation and what it was like to work alongside men in factories. The interview wraps up with her advice to young women today in light of the Rosies’ lasting legacy.”
Each oral history in the National Home Front Project archive requires 10 keywords that quickly tell what the main subjects of the interview are. These should be terms associated with the most important stories of the interview or those that represent the biggest themes/subjects in the interview.

If the interviewee mentions something in passing and doesn’t talk about it again, it does not need to be listed a keyword. These are suggested keywords; if other words/phrases make more sense, please feel free to use those instead.

“Rosie the Riveter, Pearl Harbor, Chula Vista, California, Rohr Aircraft Corporation, women, wartime production, airplanes, mother, Spirit of ’45”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role during the War:</th>
<th>If they are a Veteran, specify their branch:</th>
<th>Main Locations:</th>
<th>Choose at least 1 from each category, if applicable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Veteran</td>
<td>• Army</td>
<td>• City, State (of origin)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Home front</td>
<td>• Navy</td>
<td>• Location During War</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Rosie the Riveter</td>
<td>• Marines</td>
<td>• Country</td>
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<td>• Child</td>
<td>• Army Air Corps/Force</td>
<td>• Battles (only those with specific details)</td>
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<td>• Teenager</td>
<td>• WAVES/WAACs</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Born After the War</td>
<td>• Red Cross/ Nurse</td>
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<th>People:</th>
<th>Specific Events:</th>
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<td>• Women</td>
<td>• Pearl Harbor</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Victory Gardens</td>
<td>• African Americans</td>
<td>• V-Day</td>
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<td>• Black Market</td>
<td>• Franklin Delano Roosevelt</td>
<td>• V-J Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Work</td>
<td>• Germans</td>
<td>• Air Raids</td>
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<tr>
<td>• News/Radio</td>
<td>• Japanese</td>
<td>• Japanese Internment</td>
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<td>• Loss/Grieving</td>
<td>• German POW’s</td>
<td>• Atomic Bomb</td>
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<td>• War Bonds</td>
<td>• Soviets/Russians</td>
<td>• The Holocaust</td>
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<td>• Scrap Metal Drives</td>
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<td>• Race Relations</td>
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<td>(German, Japanese, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• School</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Childhood</td>
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</table>
1. How do I know that my interview was received?
   After you complete the Intake Form and Dropbox file upload, please email program staff and we will be back in touch to confirm the receipt of your materials.

2. What if I have questions about recording equipment or submission procedures?
   Reach out to us by email, and we can direct you to some helpful resources or schedule a phone call to answer your questions.

3. How long will it take for my interview to appear in your archive?
   By uploading your interview to Dropbox, the interview is already being backed up on our college servers that maintain the project archive. Your interview will be immediately added to the processing queue, though completion time may vary. If you are interested in processing the interview on your own, we can provide a further set of resources that will help speed up this process.

4. How do I get my interview featured on your website?
   Once your interview enters our processing queue, it will automatically be considered for our website. Again, if you are interested in spending some more time to process your interview, we can share further resources with you that will allow us to review the material more quickly.

5. Which home front stories and communities are you hoping to reach?
   Our project has pursued a broad collection scope, but we have at times focused in on interviewing women, child, African Americans, and Jewish Americans. Our national partners have built substantial collections with Rosie the Riveters and children across multiple home fronts.
   There is also important work being done on conducting World War II oral histories with Japanese and Latinx Americans nationally. We are excited to work with new communities to record diverse perspectives on the war and its lasting impact.

6. What if I have an interview with or artifact from someone else who experienced World War II, but who is instead a veteran or lived in another country during the war, etc.?
   We have close collaborations with organizations that focus on these other important aspects of World War II history. If you email us, we can put you in touch with staff members at these other institutions, who can provide you with further support. We will on occasion also make exceptions to our submission criteria, if the interview has some home front resonance.

7. Can you conduct the interview for me?
   While our focus is on training new communities to record their own oral histories, we may have a community partner or institutional collaborators in your area, who we could connect you with by email. We also have a limited capacity to conduct some phone interviews.

8. If I have someone I cannot reach in person, can I also conduct an interview by phone?
   Yes! We recommend using the video and phone conferencing platform Zoom (https://zoom.us) to conduct phone interviews because it has a steady connection and built in recording features.

9. Do you accept video interviews?
   Our archive generally operates in audio, but we will consider video interviews on a case-by-case basis. Or we can direct you to another suitable archival home that can better support your preservation needs.

10. Who do I contact with questions about community partnerships or pre-existing archival collections?
    The main person to get in touch with about our national community partnership program is Starr Center oral historian Erica Fugger. She can be reached at (410) 810-5772 or via info@nationalhomefrontproject.org.
NATIONAL HOME FRONT PROJECT BASIC INFORMATION FORM

Name (including preferred name and title)

__________________________________________________________

Mailing Address

__________________________________________________________

City ____________________________ State __________

Zip ___________ – __________ Tel (home/cell) (_____ ) __________

Email ________________________________________________

Place of Birth ____________________________ Birthdate ___ / ___ / _____

Hometown ______________________________________________

Family Contact __________________________________________

Relationships to World War II ______________________________

Location during War ______________________________________

Work/Profession __________________________________________

Race/Ethnicity (optional) _________________________________

Sex/Gender (optional) ____________________________________

Artifacts to Share? _______________________________________

Interview Referrals _______________________________________

Community Partner (if applicable) __________________________

Notes ___________________________________________________
NATIONAL HOME FRONT PROJECT INTERVIEW RELEASE FORM

I, ________________________________________________, consent to be interviewed and for my oral history to be shared with the National Home Front Project, an oral history initiative collecting, preserving, and making accessible memories of the American home front during World War II. I hereby give and convey to Washington College all right, title, and interest in the recordings, photographs, transcripts, and other materials that result from the oral histories conducted with me as listed below.

I understand that these interviews will be protected by copyright held by Washington College, shared with researchers and the general public via digital and non-digital platforms, and may also be used in public programming including but not limited to audio and/or video programs, internet publications, exhibits, print publications, and any other form.

The National Home Front Project will, upon request, freely provide to me or my family copies of all recordings, transcripts, or other materials created from my interview. This agreement does not preclude any use that I myself want to make of the information in the recordings.

Printed Name

__________________________________________  ____________________________________________
Date of Interview  Place of Interview

__________________________________________  ____________________________________________
Home Address  City, State, and Zip code

__________________________________________  ____________________________________________
Telephone (home/cell)  Email Address

__________________________________________  ____________________________________________
Signature of Interviewee  Date

__________________________________________  ____________________________________________
Signature of Interviewer  Printed Name of Interviewer
NATIONAL HOME FRONT PROJECT PHOTOGRAPHY LOG

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The National Home Front Project’s Oral History Toolkit was compiled through contributions by Starr Center staff and interns, including Adam Goodheart, Dr. Patrick Nugent, Erica Fugger, Lani Seikaly, Michael Buckley, Cherie Ciaudella, Katy Shenk, Maria Betancur, Brianna Bricker, Gaviota Del-Mar Hernández-Quíñones, Veronica Washington, Austin Maddux, and Melissa Sue Lopez Neely.

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For more information about the National Home Front Project, visit wwwnationalhomefrontproject.org or contact program program staff via info@nationalhomefrontproject.org.