

SCRANTON'S STORY

ORAL HISTORY
PORTRAIT
PHOTOGRAPHS

25 ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS & PORTRAITS

Part of the *Scranton's Story, Our Nation's Story* Project
Featuring Portraits by Photographer Byron Maldonado

OCTOBER 27 - NOVEMBER 17, 2023

www.scranton.edu/stories

ABOUT THIS EXHIBITION & PROJECT

The **Scranton's Story: Oral History Portrait Photographs** exhibition provides a visual and textual representation of the "Scranton Stories" oral history initiative, which is part of the broader **Scranton's Story, Our Nation's Story** project. This community-wide project has explored themes of history, belonging, and identity through a multi-year series of humanities-based programs. The exhibition photographs and interview excerpts are part of a collection of 25 interview videos giving voice to a broad array of Scranton experiences that connect our city to our nation's ongoing story, in anticipation of the 250th anniversary of our founding.



PARTNERS & FUNDERS

"Scranton Stories" oral history initiative is a project of The University of Scranton and these community partners: *Black Scranton Project, Lackawanna County Arts & Culture Department, Lackawanna Historical Society, Lackawanna County Immigrant Inclusion Committee, Neighborworks Northeastern Pennsylvania, and the Scranton Public Library.* Special thanks to *Posture Interactive.*

Scranton's Story, Our Nation's Story is funded in part by the *National Endowment for the Humanities*: Democracy demands wisdom. Additional support for "Scranton Stories" has been provided by the *Scranton Area Community Foundation* and the *Lackawanna Heritage Valley.*



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

PRODUCTION & CREATIVE TEAM

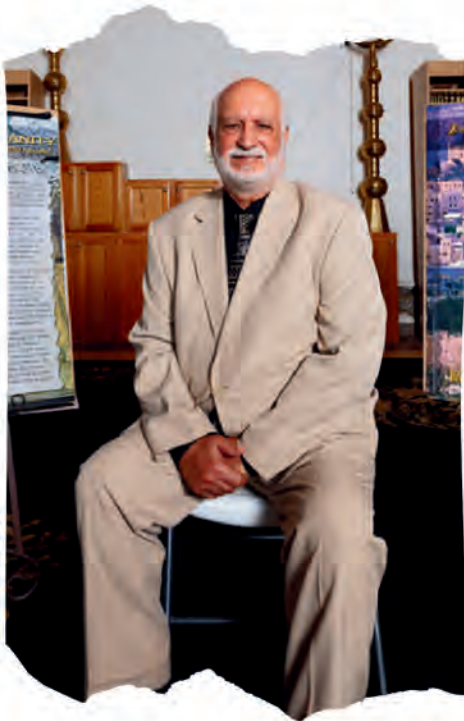
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Interview Videography:	<i>Posture Interactive</i>
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Special Thanks to "Scranton Stories" Oral History Committee Members: *Carolyn Bonacci, Tyler Brady, Colleen Farry, Jenny Gonzalez Monge, Gerard Hetman, Glynis Johns, Aiala Levy Ph.D., Alejandra Marroquin, Maureen McGuigan, Jessica Nolan Ph.D., Kimberly Pavlick Ph.D., Sarah Piccini, Sheli Pratt-McHugh, Mary Ann Savakinus, Scott Thomas.*

PARTNERS & FUNDERS

The 25 "Scranton Stories" excerpted oral history interviews (featuring 33 local residents) can be found online at: www.scranton.edu/stories and via The University of Scranton YouTube Channel, *Scranton's Story, Our Nation's Story: Oral Histories Playlist.* The full interviews will be archived at the University of Scranton's Weinberg Memorial Library.

Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in the oral history interviews do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities, The University of Scranton or its project partners.



Watch Farouk's
excerpted interview



FAROUK ABEDRABBO

On an exploratory excursion from Patterson NJ, where he lived and worked, Farouk Abedrabbo fell in love with the small-town charm that proliferated across neighboring Pennsylvania. He then moved to and ran a successful business in Stroudsburg for many years. Later, seeking a farm for his animal-loving wife brought him to the Scranton area, where they relocated. Farouk later became President of the Islamic Center of Scranton that serves Muslim populations from many different countries and is a venue for multicultural and interfaith gatherings. The Center values deeply the good relationships they have with their neighbors and enjoys opportunities to bring people together to learn about one another, to share food and resources, and to engage in cross-cultural discussions. A Palestinian who fled his hometown of Jerusalem in 1967 after the Six-Day War, Farouk hopes that the accepting and diverse community that he has found in Scranton, and more broadly across the United States, can serve as an example for better social relations in the Middle East, and globally.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: ISLAMIC CENTER OF SCRANTON



Watch Ana & Maria's
excerpted interview



ANA BECERRIL AND MARIA LUNA

Driven by a desire to be reunited with her mother who had come to the U.S. a couple years earlier, Ana Becerril and her brother embarked on a long and difficult journey from Mexico through the desert and crossed the border as undocumented immigrants. After being reunited, the family finally settled in Scranton, where Ana has since been building a new life and feels Scranton to be her second home. Maria Luna, Ana's younger sister, was born in the U.S., and after moving back and forth between New York and New Jersey, grew up in Scranton. She recalls struggling in school due to being the only English speaker in her home but appreciates the help of her sister Ana and her teachers, especially one mentor, Mr. Garvey. While she was born in the U.S., Maria feels Mexican due to her familial and cultural roots and is grateful for the efforts her family made to make life in the USA possible for her. Maria hopes for a safer, more peaceful future in the United States with less gun violence and is excited for her sister Ana who recently received her U.S. work permit.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: MCDADE PARK

CARMEN CASTILLO

Carmen Castillo's work with the National Book Company brought her to Scranton when she sought to escape the noise of New York where she lived after being raised in Puerto Rico. In Scranton, she found a quiet and hospitable community in which to raise her family, and quickly got involved with church and local volunteerism programs. When Carmen first arrived in Scranton, she could not find many restaurants that carried Hispanic cuisine, grocery stores with ingredients familiar to her, or a Catholic Mass in Spanish. Now, after years of diversification, she is hopeful that newcomers will not have to experience the hardship of being called "others." In her community, Carmen has found neighbors willing to help her at all hours because of the generosity of her late son, who himself had helped them whenever they needed. The spirit of reciprocity and acceptance she has found here is one she hopes to provide to any immigrant she comes across, with whom she finds much to identify - even though, as a Puerto Rican, she is quick to help educate people that the United States is her country of birth, since Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: HER HOME



*Watch Carmen's
excerpted interview*



*Watch Bill's
excerpted interview*

BILL COCKERILL

As a youth, Bill Cockerill would listen to his father speak at the dinner table about the myriad union meetings he had to attend as a business agent for the International Association of Machinists. Today, as a 49-year member of the Stagehand and Projectionists Union, Bill has his own network of local union representatives that keep him heavily involved in local labor causes. He serves as labor liaison at the United Way and on the Board of Agency for Community Empowerment (ACE) which runs Head Start programs, where hundreds of local children are provided meals. Through his work at the Scranton Cultural Center, he has met celebrities like Barbara Eden, Barry Bostwick, and Ted Kennedy. Bill is proud of Scranton's nationally important role in the field of theatre, starting in the early vaudeville days. He acknowledges the importance that both Scranton and the local labor movement have played in U.S. history and hopes to see future generations benefit by ensuring that social programs for children and the elderly are consistently well-funded.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: SCRANTON CULTURAL CENTER AT MASONIC TEMPLE

MAUREEN DUFFY

Maureen Duffy was born into a large, happy Irish Catholic family in West Scranton where her family traditions of hospitality provided life lessons about making others feel welcome. Growing up, she and her eight siblings would visit a family member in a nursing home, and her mother would send the children to visit with residents who had no visitors. This experience would propel Maureen into not only a life of service, but of endless social curiosity. A long-time Scranton business owner who is also active in promoting the local art scene, she goes out of her way to interact with anyone she comes across, especially those who may come from different backgrounds, in her community volunteer work and her job at the Scranton Housing Authority. She believes that Americans need to open themselves up to experiences and perspectives different from their own so that we can learn about one another in order to come together.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: SCRANTON PUBLIC LIBRARY



*Watch Maureen's
excerpted interview*



DOREEN WOODYATT FAZZI & KITTY JENKINS PUROSKY

Doreen Woodyatt Fazzi first crossed paths with Kitty Jenkins Purosky when their churches merged. Originally, First Baptist Church was the Welsh church where Doreen's family had attended services in English, while Kitty's First Welsh Baptist Church worshipped in their native Welsh language (Kitty came to Scranton from Wales after World War II as a "G.I. Bride"). From that merging of their churches, the two have built a friendship spanning decades, built upon the foundations of ardent cultural memory, a shared sense of identity, and the joys of community involvement. Currently, the church they met in and to which they dedicated years of their lives has transitioned to serve a more racially and culturally diverse community. They both welcome that change while continuing to preserve their own treasured heritage. They each hope that, going forward, both Scranton and the United States ensure that education is prioritized, supported, expanded, and improved upon for future generations.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: UNITED BAPTIST CHURCH

*Watch Doreen & Kitty's
excerpted interview*



CATHY ANN HARDAWAY

Cathy Ann Hardaway's parents, a Black man whose family settled here in the early 1800's and a white woman whose Welsh immigrant family arrived in the later 1800's, met during a time when there were beliefs held by the community and their respective families that their inter-racial marriage was wrong. Despite this, they married and raised a family in the home they owned in Center City, where Cathy recalls the rich sense of community growing up. Life changed in the 1960's when her father died and, shortly thereafter, the Scranton Redevelopment Authority (SRA) demolished their home and neighborhood, as part of national urban renewal efforts. Cathy sees this "redevelopment" as fundamentally destructive to a community she treasured in what had been a diverse, predominantly African American neighborhood and questions why specifically that area was eliminated. As a longtime community leader, Cathy feels a sense of belonging in Scranton but has also had that called into question at times because of the color of her skin. She is hopeful that, with education and because of the struggles they've faced, the youth of today will guide us to a kinder future.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: BETHEL A.M.E. CHURCH



*Watch Cathy Ann's
excerpted interview*



*Watch Norma's
excerpted interview*



NORMA JEFFRIES

Norma Jeffries' father came to Scranton to work in the coal mines but was soon injured and had to seek other employment. She grew up on Kressler Court in a large family in a neighborhood which was the center of Scranton's Black community at the time. Her home, and the neighborhood, was demolished during the Center City Housing Redevelopment, which Norma felt was necessary due to the unhealthy living conditions she remembers, though her family was not assisted with securing a new home and had to move. She recalled fondly the community of her youth and the sense of belonging before redevelopment. After raising her family and having a successful career elsewhere, Norma returned to Scranton where she became a regular attendee at City Council meetings and an advocate for many things, including a campaign to replace missing or worn street signs. When she is disappointed by something in the city, Norma always asks herself, "What can I do?" and hopes for a future for Scranton and the nation where people of color have a place at the table, are well-represented and included, and are able to achieve their aspirations.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: DAVID WENZEL TREEHOUSE, NAY AUG PARK

SISTER DONNA MARIE KORBA, IHM

In her youth, Sister Donna Marie Korba, IHM, loved visiting the halls of the Everhart Museum, remembering fondly the natural history and art exhibits, as well as Nay Aug Park. A “Diamond City Gal,” she moved to Marywood University in Scranton to join the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Then, after 12 years of living and working in Guatemala, she moved back to become the head of the IHM Sisters’ Office of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation where she continues her life’s work of service, engaging with marginalized communities and with the natural world. She brings up difficult questions about whether vital social services and safety nets are missing the deeper justice questions about what each individual needs to achieve greater stability and independence. Additionally, she hopes for the reintegration of green spaces throughout the city, imploring people with the means to plant native species, even if only on their windowsill. She and the IHM Sisters model this work through their land restoration project and “Welcoming Space.”

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: THE WELCOMING SPACE AT MARYWOOD UNIVERSITY



Watch Sister Donna's excerpted interview

BERNIE MCGURL

Now in the fifth generation of his family living in the United States since they immigrated from Ireland before the Potato Famine, Bernie McGurl fondly recalls swimming in Roaring Brook as a child. An early memory of the putrid odor coming off of the Lackawanna River ended up informing his life’s work. Bernie has, since his 20’s, dedicated himself to cleaning the river and restoring health to the ecosystem his family has long called home. Growing up exploring the Lackawanna Historical Society’s collections on Saturday afternoons with his dad, Bernie sees Scranton as a culturally rich part of the world, “a place to be from.” His involvement with the Lackawanna River Corridor Association has led him to understand that the love for the river extends far beyond himself, and is hopeful that such community cohesiveness can bode well in overcoming the challenges we face as a nation - to retain our freedom, with all the rights and responsibilities that come with it.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: STATUE OF DANTE ALIGHIERI, NOW ON THE CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SCRANTON



Watch Bernie's excerpted interview

ALEX MOLFETAS

The house in Lake Ariel that served as a getaway for his Brooklyn-based family would be the first step in Alex Molfetas' migration to Scranton. The Greek Orthodox Church that would serve as his personal emotional "center" within the city was located across the street from his now alma mater, Lackawanna College. Since his collegiate days, he has opened and operates a community-centered printing company on Penn Avenue with his business partner, Kurt, and has been heavily involved in the annual Greek Food Festival. Self-described as someone who hews to a middle line in politics, Alex observes that Scranton's tumultuous local politics are unlike anything he's ever seen. Alex's family, church, and Greek heritage are a vital part of who he has become. He hopes for a more representative, less "this is the way we've always done it" political future for Scranton and the United States; rather, one that is more fair and responsive to the people.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: THE TOP OF A DOWNTOWN PARKING GARAGE



Watch Alex's
excerpted interview



Watch Ana & Jenny's
excerpted interview



ANA MONGE & JENNY GONZALEZ MONGE

Ana Monge came to Scranton from New York - after arriving first to Los Angeles from El Salvador - to find work, and to offer a better life to her daughter, Jenny. At that time, the young family was among the early wave of Scranton immigrants from Latin America. Lacking documents, Ana's immigration status threatened their family unity on a daily basis. Her arrest by immigration agents at her beloved workplace, *New York Pizza Kitchen* (where Starbucks is now at the Marketplace at Steamtown), terrified the family, but eventually led Ana to procuring her citizenship with the help of the Catholic Social Services. Being bilingual and the oldest child, Jenny was responsible for translating conversations for her parents even at a young age. She recalls being called "a foreigner" due to her physical appearance in school, despite being a U.S. citizen born in New York. Both recount experiences of racism and hostility against them at times. While her parents worked, Jenny pursued an education and began a career in social services, choosing to stay in Scranton to raise her own daughter and to advocate for and with local immigrant communities.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: SITE OF FORMER "NEW YORK PIZZA KITCHEN"
IN STEAMTOWN MALL (NOW STARBUCKS)

ANN LEBOWITZ MONSKY

Ann Lebowitz Monsky was born and raised in the Hill Section, nourished by a close-knit Jewish community amidst a multi-cultural, accepting neighborhood. Her mother's volunteerism so inspired Ann that she felt destined for a similar life of service. The presence of Judaism within the community was stronger then than it is now. Nonetheless, Ann's lifetime of work within the organizations central to the Jewish community - she now serves as President of the Board at the Jewish Community Center - has persisted and has been a source of personal growth, alongside her career as a speech and language pathologist. In particular, she treasures the uniqueness of her lifelong Scranton friendships. She notes how events such as the Tree of Life shootings illustrate the extent to which antisemitism permeates our society, and remarks about a police car now being parked outside of Temple Israel every Saturday. Nonetheless, the outpouring of love and support from across the city gives Ann hope that with education, fortitude, and a good collective attitude, we can overcome hate.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: TEMPLE ISRAEL



Watch Ann's
excerpted interview



SONIA MORGAN & PAULA MORGAN-FRAZIER

Sonia Morgan and Paula Morgan-Frazier and were both adopted. Their father worked at Tobyhanna Army Depot; their mother was a stay-at-home mom. They both recall fondly the importance of the gatherings of the Black community, from neighborhood get-togethers to activities at the Progressive Center and the Tobyhanna picnics at Rocky Glen. Paula describes the deep sense of community they felt where they lived in the Adams Avenue area of Scranton, home to many of the city's African-American families, an area later destroyed during redevelopment. They each shared experiences of racism they have had in the area, but also appreciate that they feel safe in Scranton. Sonia feels that racism will never truly cease to exist, while both of them hope for a kinder future where everyone's basic needs are met, and where more inclusion can be found. Sonia cites a growing excitement in the Black community and believes that the work of the Black Scranton Project has contributed to a renewed sense of pride through such cultural milestones as Scranton's Juneteenth celebrations, and its first raising of the Pan-African flag.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: BLACK SCRANTON PROJECT CENTER FOR ARTS & CULTURE

Watch Sonia & Paula's
excerpted interview



USHU AND PRISCA MUKELO

After fleeing the Democratic Republic of the Congo due to political instability and rampant violence, and after living for 12 years in a Ugandan refugee camp, Ushu and Prisca Mukelo eventually immigrated to the United States and began a new life in Scranton. As they were doing so, they never dropped the parts of their identities that represent their refugee status; to do so would mean they would lose their capacity to effectively advocate for those who remain in conditions like the ones that existed in the camp where they lived. While they are happy to be in Scranton and grateful to be in the U.S., they remain ever mindful that while they now have secure food, water, and housing, their friends and family who remain in Uganda, along with American unhoused individuals in Scranton, do not. Maintaining their identities as refugees, they will continue to advocate for those near and far. They recognize that we all must ask ourselves: what are we doing to help make our national union much more perfect?

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: THE CONGOLESE COMMUNITY GARDEN



*Watch Ushu & Prisca's
excerpted interview*



*Watch John's
excerpted interview:*



JOHN PIVOVARNICK

By 10 years old and while attending Catholic school, John Pivovarnick knew that he was gay. He did not feel comfortable coming out in Scranton, so he left for California where he learned quickly that he did not have the financial resources to support himself. He came back home and earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Scranton. Due to the outbreak of the AIDS epidemic and local hostilities against gay people, John moved to Philadelphia where he settled down with a partner for a decade, before his partner succumbed to AIDS. Drawn back to Scranton to care for his parents, John's now been residing in the area since 1997, comparing his returns to the city to a "bad penny" relationship. A local actor, John appreciates Scranton's proximity to his work in New York City and Philadelphia and feels that Scranton is a "good place to have a family." Despite receiving occasional vitriolic abuse regarding his sexual orientation, John's hopes for Scranton and the United States are one and the same - people have to "take care of each other and be a country again."

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: THE ELECTRIC CITY SIGN, COURTHOUSE SQUARE

LAWRENCE PUGLIESE

Lawrence Pugliese is a first generation American born to parents with southern Italian heritage. His mother's father worked in the coal mines and was killed in an accident, which has left generational scars on the family. His position as the senior most faculty member at Lackawanna College has given him great pride in watching students who come from difficult backgrounds prosper after being given the opportunity to pursue higher education in a relatively peaceful setting. A seeker of good conversation and ideas, Lawrence is inspired by the people of Scranton and the surrounding region. He has spent decades interviewing artists, scientists, and activists in print magazines, local television shows, and radio shows. He credits the art scene in Scranton as inspiring him and providing a deep sense of community. Lawrence is on the board of the NEPA Youth Shelter and values its role in the city, which he believes should be proud of its immigrant heritage and all that it has to offer. He hopes that Scrantonians continue to embrace and celebrate newcomers.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: VINEYARD IN PARENTS' BACKYARD



*Watch Lawrence's
excerpted interview*



STEVEN RABY AND JAMES

Steven Raby and James unfold an intertwined story of reentry and recovery. Previously incarcerated, James moved to Scranton to begin a new life. Upon arriving, the halfway house he was in sat adjacent to a barbershop owned by someone he knew during incarceration. That person pointed James in the direction of Steven, who had arrived in Scranton as part of the Salvation Army Rehabilitation Program two decades prior. Since being in Scranton, Steven triumphed over substance abuse, achieved his Master of Social Work and now works to assist those managing addiction and reentering society from prison. He became James's first support system as James settled in. They see Scranton as a place for those in need of healing, a place that provides opportunities so long as one is willing to do the work necessary to realize them. James and Steven are both concerned with the concept of independence, in terms of strengthening it for those reentering society. Each of them works to ensure that Scranton continues to be a place where second chances are possible.

STEVEN PHOTOGRAPHED AT: SALVATION ARMY CORPS CHAPEL

JAMES PHOTOGRAPHED AT: NORTHERN LIGHT ESPRESSO BAR AND CAFE

*Watch Steven & James'
excerpted interview*



DHARTI RAY

After hearing of the job opportunities available in Scranton, Dharti Ray and her family moved from Florida to the Electric City, having immigrated from India. Through high school, while her school was populated with people from all over the world, Dharti connected with fellow Indian youth while also doing her best to blend in, acknowledging the difficult balancing act of holding on to her heritage while trying to live as an American teenager. She then enrolled at Penn State University where she started an Indian Culture club, which began her interest in a career centered on diversity and inclusion. Dharti is currently the assistant director of student services and engagement at Penn State Scranton. Her Hindu temple (BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir) has been a major source of community and guidance, Dharti has found a home amongst the diverse populations of Scranton who have made the city their homes as well. She hopes that, in the future, local government can identify and address the gaps that prevent some youth from attaining success.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: BAPS SWAMINARAYAN MANDIR (HINDU TEMPLE)



Watch Dharti's
excerpted interview



Watch Chandra & Smriti's
excerpted interview



CHANDRA & SMRITI SITAULA SHARMA

After being forced from their home in Bhutan into a refugee camp in Nepal, Chandra Sitaula Sharma and his family tried relentlessly to return home. When it became clear that they would be unable to, they were resettled to the Bronx, NY, where Chandra's daughter Smriti was shocked by the dazzling lights, unaccustomed to consistent electricity. They moved to Scranton two years later, where the natural elements of the Lackawanna Valley remind them of their country. Rejecting characterizations of refugees as people who are helpless - they had been landowners in Bhutan - Chandra revels in his opportunity to give back and began work immediately to strengthen ties among the local Bhutanese community. Having lacked a national identity, Smriti is grateful for her U.S. citizenship, noting how broad the world feels now. Since the opening of the Bhutanese Cultural Foundation of Scranton Assoc., they have offered ESL, dance, and other classes free to everyone in the community, and also make efforts to help those in need, including local unhoused people.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: LAKE SCRANTON

JERRY SKOTLESKI

Jerry Skotleski's family is embedded in Scranton's South Side; the house they moved into in the 1880's is still in the family to this day. He has fond memories of the neighborhood, specifically his before-school trips to the mom-and-pop stores where he would buy cupcakes. After being inspired to pursue teaching by his mentor, he realized in college that he was not quite ready for the world and saw to it that part of his educational approach was to ensure his students wouldn't face the same dilemma. Over the years he's watched both Scranton and his classroom evolve in a cycle of immigration and community. Those same mom-and-pop stores he bought cupcakes from as a youth, which had been run by European immigrants, are now owned and operated by Spanish-speaking families, some of whom send their kids to his Scranton High classroom. He believes the American dream - which is not so much about the procurement of wealth but rather about being able to care for one's family - is alive and well. He sees it in the eyes of his students.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: HIS CLASSROOM AT SCRANTON HIGH SCHOOL



Watch Jerry's
excerpted interview



Watch Mary-Pat & Izzy's
excerpted interview



MARY-PAT WARD & IZZY DEFILICE

After losing both of her parents early, Mary-Pat Ward moved to Northeastern PA with her infant daughter, Izzy DeFlice. When Izzy became ill and spent three weeks at Janet Weiss Children's Hospital, Mary-Pat was fired for missing work. The pair found themselves homeless. An ad posted by the Catherine McAuley Center offered them a second chance by providing shelter and a structure to begin building a "life worth living." Today, Mary-Pat is the Center's development director while Izzy attends Rutgers University in N.J. The mother-daughter team recalls a life in the public eye as they worked to give back to the community through Izzy's youth philanthropy campaigns. Mary-Pat feels compelled that people know their rise was only possible through a community effort - specifically crediting her husband, Doug, as always being there even while the community was highlighting their story as "Single Mom Does Well." Both hope that Scranton and the nation continue to offer compassion and safe places for people struggling through the devastating effects of poverty, racism, classism, homophobia, and systemic discrimination.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: ADEZZO COFFEE SHOP

MIKE WASHO

Having an interest in politics from a young age, Mike Washo recalled with a bit of humor how part of Scranton's political culture was the now-defunct practice of "erasing" parking tickets issued to citizens of Scranton. After living and working in Michigan as the state deputy historian, he returned to Scranton to be with his ailing father and to work in Mayor Jim McNulty's administration. After working across multiple administrations, Mike ultimately served six years as Lackawanna County commissioner and was deeply touched by the responsibility of advocating for the needs of county residents. Regarding Scranton's role in the politics of the United States, he recounts many occasions where Scranton "played way above its weight" on the national stage. While Mike hopes for increased vocational and research opportunities for the people and institutions of Scranton, he is also deeply worried about today's national political climate, including the race and sexual orientation-based hatred currently raging in the United States.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: THE STEPS OF CITY HALL



Watch Mike's
excerpted interview



Watch Keith's
excerpted interview

KEITH WILLIAMS

Keith Williams is a life-long wheelchair user. Born with arthrogryposis, a grouping of conditions that cause joint stiffness, Keith's mother fought for his inclusion in the general student population, into which he was "mainstreamed" when he was 15 years old. In his work at the Center for Independent Living, and as a proactive and caring member of his community, Keith advocates for increased accessibility and programs for people with varying disabilities, noting that not all disabilities are visible. Helping young people and families dealing with disabilities to understand their rights and responsibilities gives him particular satisfaction. Keith also gets joy from his volunteer work with the ACLU advocating for civil rights issues across the board. Knowing how invaluable it is to be part of the movement towards a more truly inclusive and accessible world, Keith encourages communities to ensure that members of the disability community are at the table where city planning decisions happen. "It takes a village to build a ramp!"

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: THE CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

SHERMAN WOODEN

As a youth, Sherman Wooden had a harsh stutter. His military family moved from Washington D.C. to Susquehanna County, where they encountered a friendly community through their involvement with their local church. In high school, Sherman had to decide between pursuing a basketball scholarship, or continuing a program run by Marywood University specifically curated for students who stuttered. After his mother advised him that he could play basketball anytime, anywhere, Sherman enrolled in the program at Marywood and found a new freedom in being able to talk. He later attended Howard University, an historically Black college/university and from there, he dedicated his life to education, and the improvement of accessibility to higher education for all students, regardless of background. He worked for 20 years as the director of multicultural affairs at the University of Scranton, where he is proud to have provided a welcoming environment for diverse students and built stronger relationships between the institution and the city. He challenges people to participate in all aspects of their community.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT: LOUIS STANLEY BROWN HALL, UNIV. OF SCRANTON



*Watch Sherman's
excerpted interview*



THEME SONG "LIFE STORIES"

Another important "Scranton Story" comes in the form of our theme song, an original composition whose lyrics and music both encapsulate the spirit of this oral history project - the idea that we are each, individually and collectively, the sum of our different stories. As the lyrics explain, our "stories are many, not one"... and they do indeed "shape us into who we become."

Deepest thanks to Clarence Spady Andy 'Babe' Pace, and William 'Wes' Weller who collectively wrote "Life Stories." Thanks to Clarence and Andy who, along with Jon Ventre and Tim Bell, recorded both the slow groove and the fun country swing versions of it; and to Eric Ritter at Windmill Studios for the recording and mixing. Clarence and Andy are the producers.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY KIMBERLY CRAFTON AT:
WINDMILL RECORDING STUDIO, LAKE ARIEL

ADDITIONAL SCRANTON STORIES INCLUDED IN THIS EXHIBITION



LACKAWANNA AVE. WALKUMENTARY

A Walkumentary combines technology with real-life settings in order to create an immersive storytelling experience. The Lackawanna Avenue Walkumentary, created by Tyler Brady, can be listened to anywhere, but was designed to be engaged with while strolling the streets of Scranton - so as to provoke thought about both its history and the modern state of our city. What does Scranton look like? Did you think it had always looked like this? How did it change? What do these changes mean for you and for your city? Take a Walkumentary to see Scranton with new eyes.

Lackawanna Avenue Walkumentary
QR code above.



CENTER CITY AREA REDEVELOPMENT

A significant and under-told story of Scranton is the redevelopment of Center City in the 1960's that demolished a neighborhood which had been home to the city's African American community and which today is the site of Midtown Apartments. Several of the oral history interviews share different experiences of this redevelopment. On display are items curated by Glynis Johns of the Black Scranton Project, which share particular aspects of this history. The QR code above links to a Feb. 9, 2023 lecture about this topic.

"Black History & Housing in Scranton"
QR code above.



FORCED REMOVAL OF LENAPE PEOPLE

The "Scranton Stories" oral histories are not exhaustive. Due to the realities of forced removal and cultural erasure of original Indigenous inhabitants of this area, including the Lenape, Munsee, Susquehannocks, and Shawnee, the oral histories do not feature an Indigenous participant. Instead, we encourage you to watch this November 2022 keynote lecture delivered by Curtis Zunigha (enrolled Delaware Tribe and co-director of Lenape Center). Curtis' informative talk provides a more in-depth look at the local and national impacts of displacement and colonialism.

"Forced Removal - History & Homecoming"
QR code above.

SCRANTON'S STORY: ORAL HISTORY PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY - CREATIVE TEAM

BYRON MALDONADO PHOTOGRAPHER

Byron Maldonado is a native of Guatemala with more than 20 years of experience in photography. His work has been published in multiple places, including Black & White magazine. He has exhibited his photography during Art Basel in Miami, and in multiple spaces through Scoop and See.me, in New York and London. His main work focuses on San Lucas Tolimán, Guatemala, where he born. In 2022 he had his first solo exhibit at the University of Scranton, with 30 portraits of people from his hometown entitled "Mayan Narratives". *"I continue to see the power of the stories that are told through the medium of a photograph. An image can capture a moment, express something about our humanity at that moment when words are not enough. I hope you enjoy some of the stories I help tell with my photographs."*

JULIE SCHUMACHER COHEN PROJECT DIRECTOR

Julie Schumacher Cohen is Assistant Vice President of Community Engagement and Government Affairs and Chair of the Community-Based Learning Board at The University of Scranton. She leads a variety of community and civic based initiatives, including serving as Project Director of the Scranton's Story, Our Nation's Story grant-funded project. Throughout her career, Julie has coordinated a wide range of dialogue, community-building, advocacy, and solidarity programs addressing such issues as polarization, economic inequality, and refugee accompaniment. Prior to Scranton, Julie served as Deputy Director of Churches for Middle East Peace among other roles with cross-cultural and social justice organizations. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Political Science at Temple University.

KIMBERLY CRAFTON ORAL HISTORIES COORDINATOR

Kimberly has been a respected leader in cultural projects, tourism, heritage, and the arts for over two decades. Founder and director of Crafton Cultural Management, she is known for fostering cross-cultural relationships and innovative partnerships that endure. Her career has been focused on connecting people to their forgotten histories, their neighbors, their communities, and on exploring how those connections inform the larger world. Kimberly has worked on community engagement projects at the local, state, and national levels with both grass-roots and internationally-recognized organizations, and is currently designing new international arts exchanges. She's been honored to engage with each Scranton Stories interviewee and help preserve those vital conversations.