Joan Kjaer: Hello and welcome to WorldCanvass from International Programs at the University of Iowa. I'm Joan Kjaer and we're coming to you from MERGE in downtown Iowa City. Our topic tonight is Against Amnesia: Archives, Evidence and Social Justice and we're kicking off the activities related to this year's Provost's Global Forum of the same name, which will take place on the UI campus March 1st through the 3rd. Don't forget that you're invited to attend any of the forum activities and you can find out where and when they take place at archivesagainstamnesia.com. The word "archive" can cover an endless array of collections of one sort of another. They might include books, photographs, public records, physical objects and much more as we'll learn in this segment, and the archive itself can be found online, in a school library, at a state historical society, in a private collection or maybe held in a museum or at the office of the state archeologist.

Our guests in this segment have used and overseen such archives and have joined us to consider some of the ethical challenges related to archives. Just next to me is John Doershuk, the state archeologist of Iowa. Good to have you here, John.

John Doershuk: Hi to you all.

Joan Kjaer: Next to him is Jacki Rand, an associate professor in the University of Iowa Department of History. Thanks for being here, Jacki.

Jacki Rand: Thank you.

Joan Kjaer: At the far end, we have Trina Roberts who's the director of the University of Iowa Pentacrest Museums. Thanks, Trina. I'm looking forward to this discussion very much, the notion of ethical challenges, what we keep, what we don't keep, how we show it, who tells us the story? John, I'd like to start with you. As the state archeologist of Iowa, we might assume that your office would house lots of documents, maybe some physical reminders of people who were here long before ourselves, but your office is responsible for other things as well, including archiving human remains.

John Doershuk: That's correct.

Joan Kjaer: Tell us what the Office of State Archeologist does?

John Doershuk: Yeah. The Office of the State Archeologist at the University of Iowa, or OSA as we refer to it, has been operating as a research center on campus since 1959, and it was established in a state code, which is why it's the Office of State Archeologist, but it was intentionally positioned at the university so it could function as a public-facing aspect of the state. We're sort of a hybrid, the State Hygienic Lab is on a similar model where there's lots of things that are done statewide that are research oriented and appropriately at the university rather than housed within a governmental unit over at Des Moines.

The OSA has a variety of responsibilities, one of which is the protection of ancient human remains, which in some cases includes actually housing them in our facility for a period of time, but we do a lot of research around the state conducting actual archeological fieldwork and that feeds into the infrastructure development and compliance process that's driven by various federal laws. But a major thing that we do for the state is serve as the state archeological repository and that is an archive, focused on artifacts. Artifacts and archeology includes tools and bits of pottery and animal bone and all the things that people in the past utilized as material technology that is preserved to the present day. Associated records with those artifacts are myriad, and include many of the things that you mentioned. Photographs, either of artifacts or places that they came from, correspondence about archeological discoveries and archeological research, maps, of course, are critically important. Location is everything in archeology as in real estate-- and then also, of course, reports of all sizes, shapes and facts.

Joan Kjaer: How long have you been there at the office?

John Doershuk: I've been the state archeologist now for almost 11 years with the office since 1995 and various other functions, and I should point out, the scale of the collections I guess would be something that people probably aren't aware of. We have collections from approximately 10,000 archeological sites across the state. About half of those are no longer extant. That is they've been destroyed by some kind of development action, so the records that we have are the only physical evidence of those things that remain. Those artifacts total about four million in quantity, so it's a lot of material and then we have about 300,000 records in the digital archive. About 90% of those are electronic. The other 10% are still paper photographs, but I would like to loop back to something that we talked about in the first segment. We keep a preservation copy of everything. We're pack rats in that sense and don't let that original go.

A good example of that are the site record forms that we keep. Those used to be done all by hand and we still have those handwritten copies. Even though they've been transcribed and digitized in various forms, sometimes you have to go back to those original records. To get just the new ones, even though something is written, sometimes it gives you a little hint about something.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah. Who accesses these archives?

John Doershuk: Yeah. Many of the people that come in don't come in anymore because of the digital access that's possible, but the primary users are professional archeological consultants around the state who have businesses that support the compliance process that's involved with doing the research necessary to make good decisions about where sustainable development should happen or not happen, but we also have researchers of all stripes, public and academic, that come and use our materials as well for specific projects. We have one individual from Northeast Iowa that's been researching rock art, so he's been

using our resources very heavily as well as contributing to them. Over at Iowa State, there's an archeologist that frequently borrows animal bone collections from our repository for his comparative research and on and on. Just all sorts of users in it.

Joan Kjaer: We had a conversation before the program where you talked about some of the ethical challenges related to collections like yours. Let's run through some of those.

John Doershuk: Sure. Yeah. Yeah. I think when we were discussing what could be an ethical challenge, what comes to mind is who controls the past? Who decides what kind of information is kept in an archive? On a day to day basis, that can be challenging. Is this scrap of paper that has a written note on it worth keeping? Do you keep everything? It's not possible we keep everything. There's always a winnowing process, a process of deciding what goes in and what doesn't go in, and history can judge us for that, but archives are shaped by the decision makers who say, "Yes, this is part of this archive now." That gives any particular archive a flavor, if you will, and shapes then how it can be used. That initial decision about what to research and what to keep about that research is important, but then there's an access issue as well. Who gets to use what's in the archive?

In the archeological world, there's a major constraint that we place on access, which has to do with professional qualification and we use that idea of someone who's a professional, someone who was committed to the ethics of the discipline in terms of preservation, stewardship of the past, learning from the past as opposed to say, monetizing it to sell artifacts on the art market or something like that. That distinction is very critical. We don't let just anybody come in and see the maps of where the archeological sites are, for example, because they are non-renewable resources. If someone goes out and destroys an archeological deposit looking for artifacts that have sale quality, then they're gone. There's no one making those things anymore. Access control is something that is a critical aspect as well.

Joan Kjaer: Periodically, we'll hear about something that's discovered on farmland or there's a site somewhere where a particular bone turns up or something. What, during the time you've been there, are some of the more interesting items that have come into your office?

John Doershuk: Yeah. Well, there's lots of examples of that. Amongst some of the most ancient remains in Iowa are particular kind of projectile point, a spear point that's called the Clovis or Folsom, they're [inaudible 00:08:19] in a particular way, manufactured in a particular way. These are relatively rare around the state, so anytime that we become aware of one of these kinds of discoveries, it causes a stir archeologically as well as among the collectors who admire these kinds of objects. We've had a couple of instances where someone has called up literally and said, "I found this rock. Can you tell me about it?" I get those probably once

a week and most of them are just rocks and I refer them to the [inaudible 00:08:46].

Once in a while, I open a digital photograph and I go, "Wow. That is really spectacular." In one particular case, there was one of these very early projectile points found at north Sioux City and it was on public property, and unfortunately, the individual who picked it up should not have done so. He did not have permission and then it got sold and then it got sold again, and it ended up in the hands of a collector in Kentucky who was about to sell it overseas, and the federal agencies caught up with him and there are laws to prohibit this kind of trade. Here was this international case that came back to my desk that was very interesting to get involved with and sort out all the way back to this guy in Sioux City who had no idea what he had started.

Joan Kjaer: Sure. You had no idea that something had been picked up in Sioux City until it was almost going overseas?

John Doershuk: No. Not until ... Yeah. Yeah. [crosstalk 00:09:38].

Joan Kjaer: Oh, wow. Very interesting. Oh, yeah. Thank you. Well, let's just go down, John, to Jacki Rand here. Jacki, you have an appointment in the history department and you teach courses on American Indian and Native studies. You utilize lots of different archives and I imagine there are some things you're looking for that you simply can't find. Tell us a little bit about how you use archives and what are the most vexing problems you run into?

Jacki Rand: Yeah. Well right now, I'll talk about my book project, which started out as a book on violence against Native women and, for reasons I don't need to get into, I decided to focus on the Choctaw in Mississippi, and I spent a number of summers down there doing research. I wasn't entirely sure what I was doing except I just wanted to get to the local level to try to write about this thing that people are writing about at a very high level from pretty poor statistics at the Department of Justice. I got down there the first summer and I'm in Neshoba County, which is where their primary reservation is and I just happen to hear that the editor of a 150-year-old newspaper, well he wasn't the editor the whole time, but one of the editors of the newspaper was still alive.

I thought, "Well, he should be good for some stories." I went to his house. He and his wife, they gave me iced tea and we're just talking in the way that you do when you're down there, which I'm familiar with. He says, "What are you working on?" I told him, and he said, "Oh." He said, "I don't know anything about that here." I said, "Okay." We just kept talking and drinking iced tea and then he said, "But there was that one case." He sent me on a search and on the last day of my research summer, after looking for this trial transcript that involved the ... I'm sorry. I'm choking here. That involved the rape of a young girl and her death, a young Choctaw girl, and her death. The perpetrator was a local merchant guy, was amazingly tried and convicted. All of his Neshoba County

and Philadelphia County friends got together and got him a really good lawyer and they appealed to the state.

It's frequently the practice in the south. You appeal if there's ever a conviction of a person of color. It goes to the state and then it's overturned. I have learned from talking to a judge that there had to be a trial transcript and I spent the summer nagging the people at the State Historical Society and I'm just sort of beside myself, I said, "Really, it's got to be here." This goes back and forth and I ended up at the Supreme Court, a law library and this woman is telling me, "There is no such case," and I said "I know there is a case. I know it's here." Just in frustration, and this is what research is like sometimes, you're just following your nose and so I went into the library and I said, "What is that thing called The Southern Digest that that judge mentioned?" "I have no idea."

I go in, and I said, "Do you have something called The Southern Digest?" She points to this wall, this whole wall. I just go to the year after she died, and I pulled the book off the shelf and it's just the summaries of cases, not all cases. It's not exhaustive. Just some interesting cases and I took it to this table and I opened it up and it fell open to the case. I took it over to the library and I said, "Can I copy this?" She said, "Okay." Then, I ran back down to the Supreme Court clerk and I just held it up to the glass. She said, "Okay." She goes and she comes back and she says, "Meet me down the hallway." I go down this really long hall, there's one door at the end of it. I'm just thinking, "This is so strange." I go in. It's this big empty space with one elderly woman back there and she said, "Tell your tale to Mrs. So and So, and see if she can help you."

Well, it turns out she's the person who boxed things up and sent it over to the State Historical Society. She gets on the phone and she's like, "Could you wait just five minutes?" I said, "Sure." The phone rings and she starts scribbling and she hands me a piece of paper and she said, "Take this over to the reference desk at the Historical Society. This is your ..." I went over there at this point like they rolled their eyes when they see me, and I went up and I said, "It's here, and it's all this code from the back." She said, "Are you sure?" She said, "How did you get this?" I said, "It's a long story and it's 4:45 and I have to go back to Iowa." She went back there and she came out with this trial transcript.

Joan Kjaer: No kidding.

Jacki Rand: The whole trial transcript of this case of a 13-year-old girl. Now, if you can imagine, we've been talking a lot about populations of Iowa, not one mentioned up until this point is American Indians. They're so invisible even here even though they've been here all this time, and so you imagine a 13-year-old girl whose raped and died. It's amazing what we know about her life from this trial transcript, and all the various ways, then add some story and I kind of pull out all my toolkit and I start working on this. I said, "Well, I have to go back to Iowa. Can you copy this for me?" It was one of those weird-shaped sized paper, and she said, "Oh, it's going to cost you a little bit." I said, "Total it up." I wrote my

$300 check to her and I gave her my address at the history department. This whole project has been like that because that's what it's like to try to find invisible people.

If I may say so, I know it sounds kind of cheeky, but it's really not that hard to write histories of famous white men. This kind of work is very challenging and you have to be willing to work with as little as [Miriam 00:17:15] suggested. Miriam's not finding a lot of material about these women, but she's going to be able to write a book because she's a very skilled person and she's going to come up with something. Then, these people would be less visible or be more visible to us. I think I've had these other kinds of experiences in the archive, but sometimes I don't even really know what I'm looking for.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah.

Jacki Rand: I just don't really know. Then, I just keep looking and keep talking to people and keep bugging the librarians and archivists.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah. I understand you're also involved in the Native Spaces project?

Jacki Rand: Yes. Well again, it's about trying to get some visibility for indigenous people here in State of Iowa and really in the Midwest, and it's about pushing back against institutions that ignore them, but it's also about pushing back against our understanding of Indian removal. I'm Choctaw. I was born with Indian removal in my DNA. I knew the story when I came in this world, but living here for 20 years made me go, "Well, this story is really actually a lot more complicated." The people as much as we try to erase them here, they're not really gone. I've met a lot of people that your office works with, and so this is about working with the Meskwaki right now, the Meskwaki and the Ioway and I'm getting ready to go meet with the [Hochank 00:18:56] people.

Then, we have someone coming from Oklahoma who's Shawnee. We have people who were removed from Iowa and returned. We have people who've been removed, but they still managed to stay in the area of their homeland, so that would be the [Hochank 00:19:14]. We have people who were totally removed, the Shawnee and have never made their way back, but they still have a lot of interest in the homeland culturally speaking. The more I do this, the more I understand all of this different stories about Indian removal, which is a ... Even today, even like a very respected scholar will write about Indian removal as if it only happened to the five tribes of the Southeast.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah. Yeah.

Jacki Rand: I'm really dug in to this Indian removal thing, but also to try to push back against the erasure of Native people in the state and in this region.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah. Great. Great. Trina, we'll come to you to hear about the University of Iowa Pentacrest Museums, which have an amazingly wide variety of really interesting stuff. Tell us a little bit about those museums.

Trina Roberts: Well, the Pentacrest Museums are the Museum of Natural History and also the Old Capitol Museum. Museum of Natural History is going to sound to many people like it has zoology collections and maybe botany collections. In our case, we do have zoology collections. We also have a really interesting cultural collection. The fact that we're called the Museum of Natural History doesn't mean that we only do things that are traditionally thought of as natural history. On our campus, the archeological collections are mostly held by John's group and the Office of the State Archeologist and the paleontology collections are mostly in yet another department in the paleontology repository. We have basically the zoology and the anthropology. Then, the Old Capitol Museum is a museum of Iowa history and has some really interesting archives of the building of the Old Capitol itself and some early history of Iowa City. Again, just a really interesting combination.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah. Of course, these museums go back a long way?

Trina Roberts: Right. The Museum of Natural History goes all the way back to 1858.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah.

Trina Roberts: We are not a super-giant museum by natural history museum standards. We've got about 140,000 specimens and objects in our collections, but we have some really, really interesting archives of biodiversity in the Midwest in Iowa, not only in this region, but you may know that Iowa is the most changed state in the country in terms of land use. And if you're a scientist who's interested in doing something like looking at the birds of Iowa or the birds of the Midwest before modern agriculture, you're going to have to go to a natural history museum and do that. We've got that kind of archive.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah. We've been talking a little bit about ethical considerations and collections. Do you think that ethical standards have changed during those 100 or more years in terms of the way things were collected, the way they were presented, the stories that were told within the museum to the people who came to visit?

Trina Roberts: Absolutely. Yes. Yeah.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah.

Trina Roberts: The standards have changed a lot. There are ways that collections were acquired in the early years that we would not do now. There are kinds of objects that were acquired that we would not acquire now, and there are objects that we have sent back to their original owners, a process called repatriation because we've come to a new understanding of what kinds of objects should be

in museums and shouldn't be in museums, should be on display and shouldn't be on display, and who gets to make those determinations.

Joan Kjaer: May I ask you for an example of something that has been sent back to the original source?

Trina Roberts: Yeah. One recent example of that is the bear claw necklace that used to be on display in Iowa Hall in the Museum of Natural History and it's an amazing object from the Meskwaki here in Eastern Iowa. It was a centerpiece of our case that was about the Meskwaki that was put together in collaboration with them in the 1980s, but as they have grown to have a museum of their own, they realized that they wanted this really important cultural object to come back to them. It has meaning beyond just being an example of a bear claw necklace. It needs to be back with the other bear claw necklaces that it goes with. There's a long formal process about repatriation, but the end result of that is they now have the bear claw necklace.

Joan Kjaer: Sure. I imagine a request may come in from a group like ... We'll just use this example, from the Meskwaki requesting the piece. As you and your staff in the museum look at what you have, do you sometimes say, "Wow. We have got this. We need to take the step to reach out to the original or to another appropriate source for this object to be shown," or if it's owned by a certain something, just the repatriation. Do you sometimes initiate that on your own?

Trina Roberts: Yeah. The legal repatriation process is, in some ways, limited to United States artifacts, but we have repatriated some other artifacts to other places in the world because we came to that realization that it was not right for us to have them and display them. Most of that, we think, is now done although as we learn more about some of the objects particularly objects associated with funerals, ritual objects, that may happen again. We've worked with John's office frequently on making some of those determinations.

Joan Kjaer: Well, quick question. One of the things museum goers rely on is the descriptive card, the story of the object or the representation you're looking at. I've noticed in my lifetime how, when revisiting museums, those change overtime, there's a new understanding of how we think about a certain something. Do you constantly look at the way you're describing something for the member of the public coming in to rethink whether you're actually saying it in the most appropriate way?

Trina Roberts: We do, although we probably could do that more frequently and do a better job of it. One of the great things about being at the university museum is that we can draw on the expertise of the history department, the archeologist, and hopefully that helps us tell those stories in the right way, but it is a constant process trying to do this and do it well.

Joan Kjaer: Wow. I'm so grateful to have you guys all here. John Doershuk, Jacki Rand and Trina Roberts. Really, really interesting. Thank you very much. I hope you can all stay with us for the third part of this program in just a moment. WorldCanvass, as you know, is from International Programs, and you can catch this podcast on iTunes, the Public Radio Exchange and the International Programs website, which is international.uiowa.edu. Thank you very much and stay with us for the third segment.

Joan Kjaer: Hello. I'm Joan Kjaer. We welcome you to WorldCanvass, from International Programs at the University of Iowa. Thanks for joining us for part three of our program Against Amnesia: Archives, Evidence, and Social Justice. This segment is called Animating the Archive. We're going to discuss ways in which archives are created from the experiences of living people, how what's held in archives can be brought out into the world in other ways than through scholarly books, and we'll also talk about the question of who has the right to tell someone else's story.

We have three terrific people joining us for the discussion. They are John McKerley just next to me here, the oral and public historian with the UI Labor Center at the College of Law. Thanks for being here, John.

John McKerley: Thank you.

Joan Kjaer: Next to him is Rachel Williams, an associate professor in the University of Iowa School of Art and Art History, also a professor in the University of Iowa Department of Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies. Thanks, Rachel.

Rachel Williams: Thanks for having me, Joan.

Joan Kjaer: You bet. And Leslie Schwalm is at far end. She's a professor in the University of Iowa Department of History, also the UI Department of Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies. Thanks for being here. John, may I start with you? Among other things, you're an oral historian here at our Labor Center. You capture stories of Iowa workers as did people before you. Give us a history of the oral history work you've been doing.

John McKerley: Okay. Yes. I stand on the shoulders of giants. I work as the latest historian, oral historian, for something called the Iowa Labor History Oral Project. What this is is a ... it's an oral history project that was started approximately 40 years ago, not by academics, but by the labor movement. In particular, it was the brainchild of the then president of the Iowa Federation of Labor, Jim [Wingard 00:55:18]. He and many other people who he worked with realized that in the 1970s many of the founders, especially of Iowa's industrial unions, were starting to die. Again, workers weren't writing their memoirs. So if their stories were going to be recorded and told, someone was going to have to do it.

So what the labor movement did was that they taxed themselves, and they ... pardon me ... they partnered with the State Historical Society, and with the University of Iowa Labor Center, and sent historians like myself around the state to do those interviews.

Joan Kjaer: They were recorded ... audio recordings as well as notes taken ...

John McKerley: Correct. There were audio recordings as well as notes. So we're an audio archive, not a video archive.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah. What kind of history is told in these many years?

John McKerley: Well, so one of the things that makes us unique is by starting in the 1970s, they were able to capture the memories of Iowans going back of who had been children in the 1890s.

Joan Kjaer: Wow.

John McKerley: So it was all the way back to end of that point. So we're talking about for example when Iowa had a coal mining industry that stretched from Fort Dodge all the way to Keokuk. So these coal miners, they created these communities and unions in the early 20th century that, as the mines closed down by the '20s and the '30s, they took those traditions with them into towns and cities across the state and became the central driving force in creating the origins of the industrial unions in Iowa.

Joan Kjaer: Wow. Wow. Then as we moved through various stages in our history of labor here in Iowa, you've done some recent work with people in meatpacking industry and ...

John McKerley: Right. Well, and one thing I want to point that I missed that I want to bring home which is that ... so [ILHAP 00:57:31] was an act of refusal to forget, right? They wanted to make sure the ... both the workers who founded it and then the staff who have followed them wanted to make sure these stores were recorded. This last project, I think, speaks to that because it's ...

One of the things that was in many ways missing from some of the earlier recordings ... well I should say missing in the sense that, as I said, the project started in the '70s. They were very interested in the '30s. So the immigrants who they first recorded were people from Europe, right? But by the 1980s, 1990s, the last several decades, we've seen this new wave of immigrants and refugees come to Iowa, and that story hadn't been reported.

So what we did was that we got a grant fellowship called the Archie Green Fellowship from the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, and they helped to fund a series of 20 interviews that we conducted with immigrant-refugee meatpacking workers. So that was a way of connecting those two stories.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah. It's the history of labor and of workers, but also tells a much larger story about where people came from, when they came here, why Iowa was a place they could look to…..

John McKerley: Right. Then, that's critically important. It's a very good point is that this ... it is a labor collection, but it really is one of the most powerful sources for social history in the state, right? We talk to people about their biographical interviews. So we talk about where they grew up, about their families, about their

communities, about their education, about their lives. So it really is one of the most powerful resources for social history of Iowa and the Midwest that exists.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah. I understand you have now been able to digitize some of this so that it's available online?

John McKerley: Right. It's an ongoing process. Then, another grant from the National Historical Records and Publications Commission that was from the State Historical Society of Iowa, and now from the UI Libraries where we also have a new partnership. This new grant is to digitize the 1,100 analog interviews and to marry them to the digital interviews, a couple hundred that I have done, to create a digital archive that would live at the University of Iowa Libraries.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah. Pretty fantastic. Who would you say uses these materials?

John McKerley: Well, so they're out in the world. So one of the primary users of them is the University of Iowa Labor Center. Again, it's not a mistake that I'm a historian but I work in the Labor Center. The Labor Center, which is an extension service in many ways for the labor movement for workers all around the state, they reach hundreds of workers every year using in many cases the historical memories of earlier Iowa workers in order to talk about a whole variety of things, from safety to leadership trainings, stewardship training, and to bring those stories back to the communities they came from.

Joan Kjaer: Before we move on, can you give us one very interesting story that you've come across or that you yourself may have documented?

John McKerley: Since you put me on the spot, I'll tell the one that I always tell. One of the things that I was tasked with doing again was to get this story into the recent present. In one of the first stories that I began recording was that of public sector workers in the state of Iowa who were shut out by federal labor law, and so demanded a law of their own here in Iowa in the late '60s, early '70s.

One of my first interviews was with a woman named [Jennifa Friends 01:01:50] who was a teacher in Keokuk, although Keokuk, I mispronounce it, they will say. She talked about her experience with gender discrimination as well as the economic conditions that she faced as a worker. Again, the most powerful example was going, she said, with her husband to ... on the weekend to a convenience store. They were right there on the river in Keokuk, and having the mother of one of her students see her in this two-piece bathing suit on a weekend and then turning around and calling her principal and having her reported. This is 1970, again.

Again, it brought home to me who I was not originally trained as a 20th century historian, just how long the struggle to ... for gender equality in the workplace was and how important it was that I document that in my work.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah. Wow. Wow. Thank you, John McKerley. I want to move now to Rachel and ask you about an interesting project you're working on, Detroit 1943.

Rachel Williams: So it is interesting. Really, I feel so honored to be up here. I'm like a history professor fan girl. So I'm an artist. I'm not a historian, so I really admire what historians do. Actually I'm really tickled that you had Karen up here, because the way I discovered archives was through the Iowa Women's Archive as a teacher. I had not been trained to use archives or really know about them, and I took my students there and I thought, "This is like everything I love. It's a treasure chest," and really the Iowa Women's Archive truly is a treasure chest. They have all kinds of interesting things, so go visit it, and give money to it, and donate your things to it.

The other thing that ... So the Detroit project is a really interesting project for me. I've been working on it for almost 10 years. It's taken me a really long time, and I'm still working on it, and I've probably got another year maybe two until I get it finished. Part of that is just the steep learning curve of how to use archives, where they are, what to do in them. So the ones that I've visited the most in Detroit have been the Detroit Public Library, which is unbelievable. I spent days reading correspondence to the mayor, Mayor Jeffries, around the riot and around other things. People wrote all kinds of postcards to him and letters, and so that was fascinating.

Wayne State has an amazing labor archive, Walter Reuther. That archive, I've been there many, many times. And the archivists there are amazing. Because I know very small slivers of history. I know them deeply, but they're very small, and it's hard as a non-historian to connect those to bigger things. So I'll go talk to the archivist and say, "Well, I'm trying to find something about this," and they'll say, "Oh, well you should see this, this and this."

So for example, I was looking for posters where the union worked with Black churches to organize meetings. That was interesting to see those posters. I found the NAACP's records of ... they came after the right to sort of create a counter narrative of people who would not otherwise have been represented. Within those records, there are all of these accounts from women. When you think about race riots, you never think about women. Women are just ... even though they're in the pictures, when you read accounts, you don't often hear about the role that women played. The women in Detroit played very, very interesting roles in that particular experience, and white women as well as Black women.

So finding the accounts of African-American women who-- their sons were arrested, their brothers were arrested, they were in the car with someone else who was arrested, or they were in an apartment building that had been basically invaded by the police, or a movie theater, or a bus, those were fascinating accounts, and they're not represented in the literature. So really trying to sort of unearth those things has been something I'm interested in.

The other thing about archives as an artist that I really like is ... so I do comic books. In trying to figure out, "Okay, this is ... I'm going to draw a picture of an apartment in Detroit in 1943." So I'm looking for what kind of appliances would they have had. My favorite thing is what kind of dresses would people have worn? What sort of jewelry would they have worn? What kind of food would have been on the counter? What would the dishes have looked liked? What would the patterns have been? What would the wallpaper look like?

So this is in terms of historic research, it's not just the story, but I've spent months looking at hairstyles. How did people do their hair? What kind of pins would they have put in their hair? What sort of shoes would they have worn? So to try to be as accurate as possible. So trying to tell this story and then also have visual references.

One of the other places that I went to that was just one of my favorite days I've ever had was I went to the Detroit Free Press. It's a newspaper. As newspapers go these days, it's sort of imploding. I went to the photography department and there's one woman there. There used to be a whole staff. There she is at her desk. Everything's digital now, so there's no reason to have these file [inaudible 01:07:24]. I said, "Well, I'm here to look at these things," and she was so awesome. She like said, "Well, here's this. Here's this."

So newspaper photographers used to take rolls of film and then they would develop multiple pictures, and they'd go back put on things like white out, and crop them or add highlights, which was fascinating. So she just gave me full access to all of these things and I made copies. As an artist, I was like, "I'm so thankful to have these images with the cars and the buildings, because a lot of the places I went ..." The first time I went to Detroit, I tried to find all of the places that are mentioned in all the literature. I actually found the NAACP papers here in our law library, which is one of the best in the country. It's like number two in the country, just for that.

So I went back to try to find the locations, and a lot of those locations don't exist anymore, or the things that were there are no longer there. So that was really sort of devastating for me personally as just wanting to see visual things, but those photographs from the Detroit Free Press were just gold, gold. So the other thing they did is now there's ... everyone takes a million selfies, so you can find a picture of anyone on Google. Well back then, if I'm trying to track down the preacher at this church from 1941 to 1944, it's really hard to find those photographs. Thank goodness for archives and thank goodness for the Detroit Free Press, I've been able to actually find images of people.

So I try to be really faithful to how people looked. If I can't find an image of them, then I try to depict them through just hands or feet or some other way as best I can. So it's been a really wonderful project. I really love finding excuses to do these projects where I actually have to tap into archives. So it's been really great.

Joan Kjaer: So, the finished products will be comic books…a sort of graphic narrative…..

Rachel Williams: It'll be a graphic narrative. One of the things I'm hoping to do as a non-historian is, like I said, it ... a steep learning curve, but using actual artifacts in the text and the images. As images, there's a whole process where you have to get permission to do that, and it's pretty expensive. So I want to have real things, like these union posters, and I also want to have drawn images, and then their photographs. So for example, the battle of the overpass is a really famous moment in Detroit history. The reason that it turned the tide is because this really brave photographer took pictures of everything and then when Bennett's force came out, they beat people up, and they took the film out of people's cameras, and this guy was really smart. He took his camera and hid it under the seat of his car and then-- brave, brave person-- published those photographs the next day.

So there's this whole beautiful sequence of what's going on there. I'm like, "I don't need to draw that. These exist already." So what doesn't exist? That's what I'm trying to draw. I have an image of these two Polish women with their baby carriages walking to the picket line in front of Sojourner Truth. There's no pictures of that, but like that ... you need to know, these were housewives. They took their babies down there and made a scene. That's kind of what I'm trying to do with the stories that I've found.

Joan Kjaer: Wow. Fantastic. Thank you.

Rachel Williams: Thank you.

Joan Kjaer: Leslie, a treat to have you here tonight. Thank you.

Leslie Schwalm: Thank you.

Joan Kjaer: You teach history, and you teach about the Civil War and about slavery, the African-American experience, and so on. One of the things I want to get to right away is the fact that some of your research has fed into a collaborative project here on campus, which (unfortunately bad timing for us) is having its first live staging tonight called Cross-Examined.

Leslie Schwalm: Yes. Yes. Not its first performance.

Joan Kjaer: Oh, it's not the first.

Leslie Schwalm: There's been several, actually, that we've taken around to the state. This came out of the university's program called ArtsShare which has been around for more than a decade to bring arts outside of the campus, to the communities of Iowa. My department chair a couple years ago urged me to contact them and talk with them about some of the research I've done on African-American history in Iowa. Maybe there'd be a story there that I could collaborate with an

artist. As it turned out, I met with a playwright, an MFA playwright in the theater department and we talked about some of the research I'd done, and we settled on these couple of court cases in 1874 in Keokuk where African-American mothers challenged the segregation of grammar and high schools in Keokuk.

So they took this to the local court, and it was appealed, and it went up to the state Supreme Court. I'd found some material on these women and their court case. Now this is another instance where there's no substantial archive of material on African-American history in Iowa. So to do the research that I'd done, I go all over the state. I go to public libraries. I go to county historical societies. I go anyplace that'll have me. And I had gone to tje Keokuk Library. The Keokuk Library had a librarian, Gerri Lawson, an African-American, who had really taken very seriously her responsibility to maintain records about the Black experience in Keokuk.

Gerri Lawson helped me find some material about these women, their families, their community. I had found these materials, and I used them in a book I'd published, but then I met with this playwright, Margot Connolly, and I said, "Well, here's some stuff I have about these two mothers. Do you think you could write a play about this?" And she was very excited and wanted to do this project. She did, she wrote a short play, took from my material, but was able to bring to it a greater focus on experience and feeling than I was able to do within the confines of my disciplinary obligations.

Historians aren't supposed to make things up, but Margot did this, wrote this marvelous play which really makes us think about the experience of two mothers, one of whom was a former slave who went up against white teachers and white principals and the white school board and demanded for their children the dignity of the same education that everyone else in Keokuk was entitled to. She was really able to bring us into their experience. That's what she really highlights in this play.

So she wrote this marvelous play. Then four actors in our theater arts department here took on the roles. So together, we have traveled to a few locations in the state and presented this to audiences who had been very engaged, and on one hand outraged that they haven't heard this history before, and on the other hand thrilled to have this chance to learn, and then to talk about their own experiences with discrimination and racism, and interrogating the actors. What does it feel like to play this role? What does that feel like to you to go back to that time and think about that experience? It's been one of the best experiences I've had as a historian.

Joan Kjaer: Wow. That's great. Is this the first time you've worked in that way with a writer of a new piece?

Leslie Schwalm: Yeah.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah.

Leslie Schwalm: And it has just ... and working with the actors. We always do talk-backs after the performances. That's been really my best experience as a history teacher, in those circumstances.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah. Well, one of the questions that came up as we were planning this program was who has the right to tell someone else's story? And when you do take on someone else's story, what are the obligations in terms of fairness to that original person's memoir or oral history or whatever? I'll ask you to answer that first.

Leslie Schwalm: That's a deep question. I would like to think that every historian feels a very deep obligation to be ... to work very hard, and to go into the archives, having done a lot of work already so that they know what kind of a story they might find, but it's also the obligation of the historian to know what we can't know, and to be very clear about that. But your question is about who has the right to tell a story, but I think there's a second part to that question, and that is our obligation to tell untold stories, and to make them accessible.

I always think of my work as not ending the story, but opening up the story. I'm not in the business of trying to tell people all there is that I think needs to be known about a subject. I feel like my job is to open it up so that more people can tell this story. Here at University of Iowa, I feel like our history department, our obligation is to diversify the profession, to diversify the classroom, to make sure that everyone has an opportunity to tell their history and their story, and to open up stories that haven't been told, to recuperate them.

Joan Kjaer: Do either of you want to say anything in regard to that point?

John McKerley: I can, but I want to defer to my colleague here.

Rachel Williams: It's fine. I mean, I think it's a really interesting question. I think when you as a storyteller cross race lines or class lines and even gender lines, I think then it becomes a really interesting act of the social imagination. I mean, despite the fact that historians are very clear about what they will and won't say, and they obviously need archival evidence that this did happen or was said or was framed this way, but it really is, I think, those gaps are where the social imagination fills in. That, if you can open up that portal for someone and engage that part of their imagination, I think you can also engage empathy. I think empathy is sort of the mother's milk of compassion.

I think the other thing about it is one of the reasons I think history is so interesting and it's so important to open up these stories is because ... and of course, I'm the non-historian saying this, but there are these repeating patterns that you see repeated. I can't give you a time span for how these things loop and turn on each other, but in my own research, I've done stuff from the turn-

of-the-century. I've done stuff from a little bit past that and in the 1940s, and I see the same stuff repeating over and over, and it's just fascinating. I think opening up that social imagination, getting people to empathize and recognize those things is really [crosstalk 01:19:39].

John McKerley: I would also take a slightly different turn on it, which is that ... So for this collection that I work with at the State Historical Society of Iowa, in my role, I'm actually oftentimes a position where I need to protect the person I'm working with. For example, people open up. They tell me painful stories that sometimes don't need to be public right now. In fact, this has been the transition for me learning how to go from thinking like a historian where oftentimes I want to think about things about ... I want to get things out, especially write things and put my name on them, which is the way we work, but instead to think like an archivist, which is not as focused on dissemination necessarily, but balancing access with again empathy for the person who is giving those materials over to be part of the archive.

So I've been in positions at the end of an interview where we have signed releases where those releases convey copyright over those interviews to ILHAP, and I've had to be in a position where I said, "You know, I think really we should close this interview," and be the person to instigate that conversation because I want my interviewees always to feel like this was a positive experience and that they ... when they sign that form, that they are doing so with a full knowledge of what it means.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah. Wow. Well, thank you for these insights and this interesting discussion. I really appreciate it. That's all the time we have for our program tonight, but I'd like to thank John McKerley, Rachel Williams, and Leslie Schwalm for being up here with us in this segment. Please remember, the public is welcome to attend the varied events connected with the Provost's Global Forum, Against Amnesia: Archives, Evidence, and Social Justice, March 1st through the 3rd on the UI campus. There's also an archive crawl this Saturday.

More information can be found at archivesagainstamnesia.com. I invite you to join us as a member of the audience for these live WorldCanvass Programs every time we have one. And we have one coming up very quickly here, more quickly than is usually the case. A week from today, March 1st, here in this room at 5:30, we'll have a really stunning program of live music performed by the Elias String Quartet coming from Great Britain. They'll be performing at Hancher a few days later, but we'll have them here in this room discussing ... the theme is translating music. They'll be talking about nationality in music and also storytelling through music.

Beth Oakes from our own String Quartet Residency Program here at the university will be part of that as well. That's a week from today 5:30 in this room. Just if you happen to be a music lover, you might be interested to know

that they'll be playing Scottish music and also a wonderful piece by Leoš Janáček called Intimate Letters.

Join us for that if you can. All of our programs can be found as podcasts on iTunes and on the Public Radio Exchange and also the International Programs website. So for everybody connected with International Programs and all of our guests tonight, thanks for being here. We'll see you next time.