

QUEENS MEMORY

Suggested Topics for Interviews

This outline is intended to help you and your interviewee understand what kinds of information we most like to gather from Queens Memory interview participants.

Family Traditions and Lore

- Migration stories in interviewee's family: either remembered or passed down
- Life before Queens and then how interviewee arrived and decided to settle in Queens
- Traditions for celebrating significant holidays and other events: food, clothing, ceremonies, music
- Family traits or claims to fame; how does interviewee relate to that as an individual

Education

- Educational history of interviewee and family
- Assessment of schools' quality and safety now and in the past
- Educational expectations from peers and family members

Work and Leisure

- Occupational history of interviewee and other family members
- Similarities or differences between the work interviewee does compared with rest of family
- Role and significance of work / career in interviewee's life
- Hobbies and interests, where/how interviewee spends free time

Faith

- Importance of religion to your interviewee: involvement with religious practices and

community

- Describe the community (or lack thereof) for these religious practices

Getting Around

- Mode(s) of transportation interviewee uses now and in the past – why?
- Learn about commutes to work and school; commutes to places of leisure
- What forms of transportation are common in the area now and in the past
- Recall of trains, trolleys, buses, etc that no longer exist and the impact of that change

Home

- Reasons for moving to this home and reasons for staying or planning to leave
- Length of time interviewee lived there and with what family members or others shared interviewee's home
- Description of home including type (house/apartment, rental/owned)
- When built / by whom / cost
- Special features/details about the building or the way interviewee has made it "home"
- Languages spoken in and outside the home; which family members used which languages

Neighbors

- Level of familiarity with neighbors – do other neighbors seem to know each other
- Change in neighbors and neighbor relations over time
- Description of the people who live in the neighborhood
- Neighborhood identity and divisions: geographic, economic, ethnic, religious

- Neighborhood characters / nuisances / leaders
- Does your interviewee identify as a typical resident, or feel like an outsider
- Population density and home ownership changed over time

Change Over Time

- Biggest changes interviewee has experienced in neighborhood
- Impact of rise or lowering of property values
- Population change in noticeable waves or slow and steady
- Differences between development in surrounding areas and the interviewee's neighborhood
- interviewee's level of comfort and feeling of safety now and in the past
- Changes in local shopping and services

Neighborhood

- Define the interviewee's neighborhood – physical boundaries and character
- interviewee's civic, political and/or social connections to their neighborhood
- What interviewee does for fun in the neighborhood; including memories of childhood play
- Unique qualities of neighborhood in comparison with other parts of New York City or the world
- What attracts people to the neighborhood – or drives them away
- Unique characteristics that identify someone as belonging to the neighborhood (accent, dress, music, etc.)
- Relationship to public library – what location(s) does interviewee visit and for what purposes

Neighborhood History

- Local history known or important to interviewee
- Significant events that interviewee remembers or knows about
- Specific personal memories about living in the neighborhood

Landscape

- Ways that parks and other public spaces have changed over time
- Ways interviewee uses public spaces
- interviewee's level of involvement with outdoor maintenance at home – gardening, shoveling snow
- How community uses public spaces: for example; annual festivals and celebrations

The Future

- Predictions for change over the next year, five years, decade
- Opinions and experience concerning zoning, new development, landmarking
- Best and worst things that could happen to the neighborhood/surrounding area in the future

Links to History

- Drawn from interviewer's research of the interviewee's life and neighborhood. Examples might be interviewee's participation in major events such as the 1939 or 1964 World's Fairs, their military service, or their involvement with organizations significant to a particular time in history or a significant feature in a neighborhood like participating in boxing matches in Sunnyside or working in a public school.