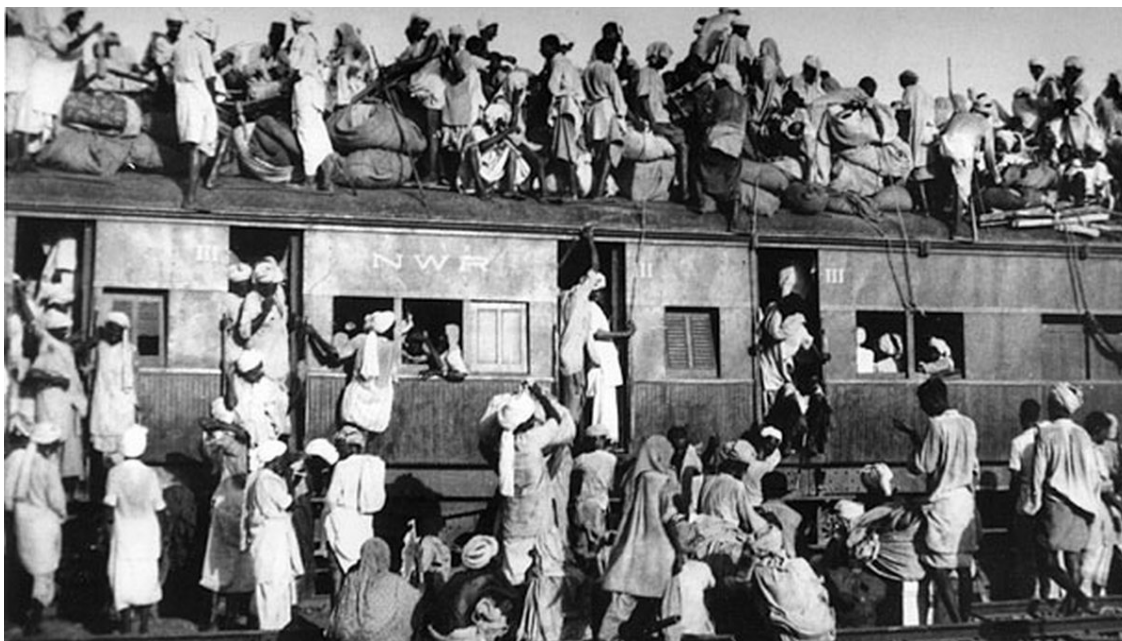


Oral history work goes remote as 1947 Partition Archive opts to 'work-from-home'

The Archive's work typically involves conducting in-person interviews with individuals who are 75+, an age group particularly vulnerable to coronavirus.

ANGANA CHAKRABARTI

27 March, 2020 2:20 pm IST



Refugees on a train during Partition of India, 1947 | Wikimedia Commons

Text Size: **A-** **A+**

New Delhi: As the **coronavirus outbreak** keeps everyone locked up at home, operations of several companies and organisations have also moved indoors. **The 1947 Partition Archive**, a nonprofit oral history organisation that documents and shares eyewitness accounts of the Partition, is now one among these.

In an email communication Thursday, the Archive announced that it would continue its oral history work from homes. "Yes, we will continue our oral history work, not from the field, but from our homes and anywhere we are sheltering-in-place," the email read.

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The Archive's work typically involves conducting in-person interviews with people who have lived through the Partition i.e. with individuals of the 75+ age group who are particularly

vulnerable to coronavirus.

“Since more than 1,000 individuals are still signed up with us to have their stories recorded, we have developed new protocols and trainings for remote documentation so that we can reach each person,” the email said.

The announcement came over a week after the Archive **had announced** via a previous email that it would be suspending its oral history programme “out of an abundance of caution”.

“Beginning March 17, 2020 the Archive’s global office in Berkeley, California will be closed through at least April 7, 2020 as mandated by the local government... Community oral history field work stands suspended through at least April 15, 2020 and possibly later,” its email had said, while mentioning that regional offices in Delhi and Kolkata would operate from home.

‘Citizen historians’ work-from-home

Started as a charitable trust by Dr Guneeta Bhalla in San Francisco, the Partition Archive has managed to preserve as many as **9,140 stories** as of 2019 from over 450 cities across 14 countries, including India and Pakistan.

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The team consists of 1,000 volunteers, which includes a team of archivists and ‘Citizen Historians’. These volunteers are also tasked with archiving interviews that are 1 to 9 hours in length.

As a part of their effort to “remotely document” the partition stories, the “certified citizen historians” have to undertake training in remote oral documentation work.

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