

BACKGROUND OF ORAL HISTORY

WHAT IS ORAL HISTORY?

It is a way of recording historical events from a more personal perspective. The process includes identifying and personally interviewing someone who witnessed or was part of a significant historical event. It may also be about a person who is still actively involved in processes that shape the history of his/her community and the country at large.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ORAL HISTORY

This is a very effective way of conveying and reliving an event through a primary source. Getting information from someone who was directly involved brings life to the history and arouses the interest amongst those it is intended for.

It is however important that one takes into consideration the fact that different people will experience varying angles of the same event. Take for example the massacre of Uitenhage in 1984, the policeman would give a view that they felt threatened and compelled to open fire on the marchers, and so would it be with Soweto 1976, Sharpville 1960. The marchers would however tell a view that they were on a peaceful march.

ORAL HISTORY AS A LEARNING TOOL

History is predominantly perceived as a boring subject that focuses on useless dates and outdated facts. Oral history would be a very effective tool to ensure that the subject become interactive and allows learners to be more critical thinkers through research and recording of events. In this process learners get to practically identify and differentiate between fact and opinion.