

Voices of the 250th Interview with Stephanie Schwartz,

06-18-2026

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Stephanie Schwartz and Cliff Robinson conducted on June 18, 2026. The interview took place at Dohm Alley in Princeton, NJ as part of the Voices of Princeton Project.

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Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

TRANSCRIPT

Cliff Robinson: [00:00:00] My name is Cliff Robinson. Could you please state your name?

Stephanie Schwartz: [00:00:03] Hi, my name is Stephanie Schwartz.

Cliff Robinson: [00:00:06] How did you come to Princeton, and how long have you been here, Stephanie?

Stephanie Schwartz: [00:00:09] So I've been working in Princeton since 2012. I am the curator of collections and research at the Historical Society of Princeton, and I grew up in Mercer County, and I now live in West Windsor.

Cliff Robinson: [00:00:20] Excellent. Okay, so as you look around at how the 250th is being marked, whether it's here in Princeton, throughout the state, or nationally, what has caught your attention? Does any particular part of the 250th observance stand out to you? How do you feel it should be observed?

Stephanie Schwartz: [00:00:35] I think the 250th came at a really interesting time for the United States, where a lot of people are grappling with their patriotism and what it means to be American. So it sort of is not the celebration that people were picturing when we started planning for this. I know the history community has been gearing up for the 250th, basically for the past five years, if not longer, and a lot has changed and gone back and forth over that time. So we've had to rethink how to mark the 250th, how to engage our audiences and what people

feel like reflecting on and celebrating or not celebrating during this anniversary. So it's presented a lot of interesting challenges and led to a lot of reflection both by the public and by the public history field, in terms of what stories we are telling and sort of how we want our history to be presented and what exactly we're reflecting on.

Cliff Robinson: [00:01:57] Okay, thinking about 1776, 1976, and today, how do you see the political trajectory of the United States? What feels like progress to you, and what feels unfinished?

Stephanie Schwartz: [00:02:08] I always see American history as being a bit of a pendulum swing, where it all, everything, like the saying that history repeats itself is true, has always been true, and while maybe the swing gets a little smaller and improves. Everything that we're living through is things that people before us have also lived through. So progress comes and goes, and we just hope that we get a little bit further the next time we swing forward.

Cliff Robinson: [00:02:45] Excellent. Is there anything else that we haven't talked about but you wish to include? For example, are there stories about Princeton's past which you feel aren't well known enough?

Stephanie Schwartz: [00:02:53] We do not have time for me to answer this question, but I encourage people to come interact with the Historical Society of Princeton and to learn more!

Cliff Robinson: [00:03:01] Perfect. Thank you so much, Stephanie.

[END OF INTERVIEW]