



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Behring Center

Program in Latino History and Culture
Accomplishments Report
2004—2005

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Mission and Goals

The Program in Latino History and Culture (PLHC) at the National Museum of American History enlivens the collections and exhibitions at the Museum through programs and projects that reflect the distinctive and rich history of Latino communities and cultures in the United States.

PLHC major goals are: to increase Latino visitation; to create a sustainable series of public programs; to maintain a lively presence on the NMAH Web site; and to support and enhance scholarship and collections acquisition on Latino aspects of American history and culture.

Reflections

PLHC was created in the fall of 2004 and its director hired in January 2005.

During this first year PLHC produced nine public programs; created a Web page featuring current and past events on the Museum's Web site; facilitated the acquisition of original vintage posters from El Teatro Campesino for the permanent collection; collaborated in research projects; and contributed to the creation of a small exhibition commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Delano grape strike to complement the Museum's keynote Hispanic Heritage Month public program.

The audience attendance in every public program was enthusiastic, and surveys revealed that visitors were eager to participate in more programming related to Latino history and culture. Special attention was paid to advertising for programs in Spanish language media, distribution of flyers at groceries stores and churches, and production and distribution of PSAs for Spanish-language radio.

During this first year we have developed partnerships with nonprofit local organizations such as the Latin American Folk Institute, the Council of Latino Agencies, the Latin American Youth Center, and the Hispanic Radio Network. These partnerships are an essential component of PLHC as we strive to promote the Museum in the Latino community.

PLHC worked in collaboration with divisions across the Museum to produce our programs. Some of our partners were the Office of Curatorial Affairs—Division of Music Sports, and Entertainment, the Archives Center, the Department of Education and Public Programs, and the Program in African American Culture.

It has been a very rewarding year for PLHC as we have received great praise and recognition from both program participants and from our professional colleagues. We look forward to an equally rewarding 2006!

Public Programs

Fall 2004

Day of the Dead Family Festival

Saturday, October 30

12–4 p.m., throughout the Museum



Horacio Quintanilla built a traditional Day of the Dead *ofrenda* (altar) and spoke to guests informally about the symbolism of different components of an *ofrenda*. Quique Aviles of Sol y Soul told stories of his grandmother, performed dramatic readings of his poetry addressing the dead and how they live in our lives, and invited the audiences to share their stories. The two readings were attended by approximately 100 people, mixed in both race and age. Los Quetzales, a Mexican folkloric dance troupe, performed in the Carmichael Auditorium to an audience of about 150 for each of their two performances. Mariachi Los Amigos performed throughout the Museum. Hands-on activities included the making of an *ofrenda* (altar), marigold flowers, skull masks, and *recuerdos* (memory boxes). All were very popular with families with young children. Adults participated in making crafts as well.

A large number of families and community groups comprised the visitors to the Museum during the celebration. An estimated 35 percent of the visitors were Latino. The program was advertised in three local papers, including one Spanish-language paper, as well as the Mexican Cultural Institute's Web site and calendar. The flyer was also posted on the NMAH Website; the performers posted the event on their Web sites and distributed flyers. Smithsonian Business Ventures created a special display of Day of the Dead-related items available for purchase in the gift shops.

Estimated attendance: 9,532



Holiday Celebration

Saturday, December 4

12–4 pm, second floor

The Museum presented the first of three Saturday Holiday Celebrations that featured music, crafts, author conversations, and book signings. PLHC worked in partnership with the Department of Education and Public Programs and Smithsonian Business Ventures to present a variety of holiday-themed offerings for visitors in an atmosphere made festive

with decorated trees and poinsettias. Latino Pool funding was used to add a Latino flavor to the first of the three Holiday Celebration events that the Museum produced.

The five person group, Ollantay, originally from Bolivia, performed traditional holiday music from South America in Flag Hall. Inspired by the Three Kings (Epiphany) holiday, visitors had the chance to make and take home Three Kings' crowns.

There were a great number of visitors, especially in places like Flag Hall where the music took place. Visitor comments were all favorable. Some of the comments about the music performances were, "Let's continue to hear about other cultures' holiday traditions" and "It was the best I heard in years" and "They exceeded them—I was glad the music was close to the entrance." Comments about the crown craft activities include, "The program was well run and enjoyable," and "He loved it—it kept his attention for a LONG time and he was very proud of his results."

Spring 2005

Family JAM Festival

Saturday, April 23

12–4 p.m., throughout the Museum



The Program in Latino History and Culture produced Family JAM as part of the Museum's Jazz Appreciation Month festivities. The festival focused on Latin Jazz, with a special hands-on percussion workshop led by the Latin Jazz septet Afro Bop Alliance and Marvette Pérez, Curator of Latino History and Culture at the Museum, as well as a Latin Jazz concert at the end of the afternoon.

Visitors also had the opportunity to learn about the Museum's jazz history collections. The Archives Center staff was on hand to show record covers, music scores, photographs, and other jazz-related documents for their holdings. Curator of American Music John Edward Hasse brought out historic jazz instruments and presented an informal talk about the Museum's jazz collections. A quintet from the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra led an interactive workshop called the "Elements of Jazz" in which audience members learned about harmony, rhythm, melody, improvisation, and form while playing along on kazoos.

Estimated attendance: 12,000

¡Azúcar! The Life and Music of Celia Cruz Opening Festival

Sunday, May 22

12–4 p.m., throughout the Museum

The Museum celebrated the opening of the new exhibition, *Azúcar! The Life and Music of Celia Cruz* with a family festival featuring an afternoon of salsa music and dance performances and lessons. Thousands of visitors grooved and moved to Edwin Ortiz y Su Orquesta La Romana performing on the main stage in Flag Hall, along with DJ Bruno. Eileen Torres led a variety of salsa and merengue lessons for all ages and the dance troupe Trabuco demonstrated club-style salsa dancing. Cantaré's Evaluna, an ensemble composed of four women musicians, performed an interactive concert about folk music traditions from Latin America in the Carmichael Auditorium. Families also enjoyed a craft activity where they created their own elements of performance.



Smithsonian Business Ventures contributed to the festivities in a number of ways. The shops were stocked with music CDs by Celia Cruz and books for both children and adults on the topic. They also held a successful book signing with Alexis Rodriguez-Duarte, author of *Presenting Celia Cruz*. Restaurant Associates prepared a special menu of traditional Cuban dishes. This element was so successful that the food was sold out by 3:00 p.m.

Festival evaluations overwhelmingly indicated that visitors had a great experience and would like to see other similar programs. Comments made by visitors were, “I like seeing my culture represented at the Smithsonian,” “I like how I could see the past through the present,” and “I enjoyed that people were encouraged to participate at a venue that is not Latino. It celebrated another part of American History.”

Estimated attendance: 14,000

Summer 2005

The Program in Latino History and Culture produced a four-part performance series in July on the musical traditions related to salsa in conjunction with the exhibition, *¡Azúcar! The Life and Music of Celia Cruz* and as part of the Museum's "American Music at American History" series. Three performances were in collaboration with a local nonprofit arts organization, the Latin American Folk Institute, and held on Sundays at 3 p.m., a time when Latino families would most likely be able to attend. Evaluative information gathered in the beginning of each program indicated that the majority of attendees came to the Museum especially for the program. Surveys taken at the end of the programs told us that the audience enjoyed the programs and learned new information about the different music genres presented.

Omi Tuto

Sunday, July 10

3 p.m., first floor rotunda

Omi Tuto means "cool water" in Yoruba, a West African language. Ashé Moyubba, the Latin American Folk Institute's Afro-Cuban folklore ensemble, presented folkloric Afro-Cuban rhythms and dance. The performance was complemented by two Afro-Puerto Rican groups from New York City, Yaya Ensemble (made up of three women drummers and dancers) and Alma Moyo. Rhythms and dances from the Yoruba and Congo traditions in Cuba, Cuban *rumba*, and the *Bomba* traditions of the Loiza Aldea region of Puerto Rico were presented. Visitors experienced the unique call and response aspect of these musical traditions in the finale of the program as the audience was invited to participate. Estimated attendance: 400



¡Sofrito!

Sunday, July 17,

3 p.m., first floor rotunda



¡Sofrito! was an interactive dance class and performance. Los del Barrio performed together with leading musicians from the Washington, D.C. area. This second program was a tribute to classic salsa produced in urban centers. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the growing Latino and immigrant Latin American population in

cities such as New York City started to mix and fuse various traditions from their home countries with jazz and pop music.
Estimated attendance: 475

Cumbia, Vallenato, and Merengue

Sunday, July 24

3 p.m., first floor rotunda

Cumbia, Vallenato and Merengue demonstrated how musical elements from Colombia and the Dominican Republic are common to salsa music. The program started with the Washington, D.C.-based ensemble, Canelazo, whose members performed folkloric music traditions from Colombia. Led by the Conjunto Folklórico Alianza Dominicana from New York City, the second half of the program was devoted to Dominican musical traditions. Towards the end of the two-hour program the dance floor was packed with *merengue* dancers of all ages.

Estimated attendance: 400



Bio Ritmo Concert.

Wednesday, July 27

6 p.m., second floor, Flag Hall



Bio Ritmo, a Richmond, Va.-based group, wrapped up the music and performance series with a Wednesday evening concert. Participants enjoyed the music and danced to the great 1970s style salsa performed by Bio Ritmo.

Estimated attendance: 250

Fall 2005

**La Causa: the Delano Grape Strike of 1965–1970
Roundtable Conversation**

Wednesday, September 27, 6 p.m.
Carmichael Auditorium

PLHC's featured Hispanic Heritage Month event was a roundtable conversation called "La Causa: The Delano Grape Strike, 1965-1970" presented by a panel of notable figures in this historic strike. Moderated by PBS journalist Maria Hinojosa, the panel included Dolores Huerta, president of the Dolores Huerta Foundation and cofounder of the United Farm Workers, Andrew Imutan, past vice president, United Farm Workers Organizing



Committee, Luis Valdez, founder El Teatro Campesino, and Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.). The panel responded to questions presented by members of the audience. At the end of the program, Dolores Huerta led the inspired program attendees in a collective "Sí Se Puede!" (Yes, it can be done!) chant, the rallying cry for the United Farm Workers. Estimated attendance: 160

Accompanying the program as part of the Museum's commemoration of the event, "La Causa: The Delano Grape Strike of 1965" on view from September 16, 2005 to January 3, 2006, second floor west. The case featured a UFW flag, posters and buttons, and a short-handled hoe used by a California farm laborer.

Latino Advisory Council

PLHC worked with the Director's Office, the Associate Director for Public Programs and the Office of Curatorial Affairs to assemble a list of potential members for the Latino Advisory Council. Thirteen people with representation in the fields of communications, history scholarship, arts, and museum education and management were selected and invited to be part of this newly formed council. The Latino Advisory Council is to convene once yearly and also meet by teleconference once per year. Informal in nature, the LAC is to advise the Director on upcoming programs and projects. The first meeting was held September 16, 2005. Discussion topics included audiences, partnerships, outreach, and research and collections.

The Latino Advisory Council members are:

Carlos Alcazar, President, Hispanic Communications Network,
Washington, D.C.

Mari Carmen Aponte, Consultant and lawyer, Washington, D.C.

Daisy Expósito-Ulla, President, D Expósito Communications, New York

Ramón Gutiérrez, Professor of ethnic studies and history, UC San Diego

Maria Hinojosa, Journalist and senior correspondent, PBS NOW, New York

Abel López, Associate producing director, GALA Hispanic Theatre,
Washington D.C.

Gerald E. Poyo, Professor of history, St. Mary's University, San Antonio

Mimi Quintanilla, Director, Witte Museum, San Antonio

Gloria Rodriguez, President, MAPA Communications, Inc., Washington, D.C.

Vicki L. Ruiz, Professor of history and Chicano/Latino studies, UC Irvine

George J. Sánchez, Professor of history, American studies and ethnicity,
University of Southern California

Roberto Suro, Director, Pew Hispanic Center, Washington D.C.

J. Walter Tejada, Member, Arlington County Board, Arlington, Va.

Visitor Studies

PLHC engaged the services of the Garibay Group, a museum evaluation firm specializing in Latino audiences. Cecilia Garibay, principal of the firm, is working with PLHC staff on an audience research project in order to gather information on community needs and identify potential connections and partnerships. The project has two main components: telephone interviews with the leaders of ten Latino community-based organizations and focus groups with community members. The results of this study will be used to inform future PLHC programs and projects.

In addition to the above research, PLHC partnered with the Smithsonian Office of Policy and Analysis to conduct a survey of Latino visitorship to *¡Azúcar! The Life and Music of Celia Cruz* exhibition. Preliminary analysis indicates that the exhibition, compared to other temporary exhibitions at NMAH, was highly rated; that there are more Latino visitors in the Museum than before the opening of the exhibition; and that half of the Latino visitors surveyed visited the Museum for the first time.

Other Projects

Bracero History Project

Magdalena Mieri, Director of PLHC, serves on the Bracero History Project team. She traveled to Chicago for one of the project's "town hall" meetings and aided in the collection of oral histories. The Bracero History Project is an ambitious attempt coordinated by the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University, and the Institute of Oral History at the University of Texas at El Paso to collect, document, exhibit, and share the history of the Bracero program.

Bilingual Program Materials

One of the goals of PLHC is to make its products accessible to Spanish speakers. Toward this end, PLHC makes every effort to translate publications into Spanish and also assist in the effort of translating other materials for the Museum. An ongoing effort is to translate the Web content for major on-line exhibitions such as *The American Presidency, A Glorious Burden*.

Outreach Efforts and New Marketing Strategies

Efforts on this front include ongoing conversations with local Latino community organizations, participation in major Latino family festivals (Adam's Morgan Day Festival, Fiesta DC, Telemundo family festival), and the establishment of new partnerships.

PLHC relies on numerous and varied marketing strategies to spread the word about its programs to include: free radio advertisements (PSAs in Spanish and English), paid advertisements in Spanish-language newspapers, and wide-ranging email and flyer distribution to key community members.

Working with the New Media program, PLHC archives and frequently updates its program pages on the NMAH Web site with summaries, re-caps, and photos of past public programs. In the future this site will host specialized lesson plans for educators and articles related to specific topics, such as bracero history.

Magdalena Mieri participated in broadcasts of Radio Latina, Hispanic Radio Network and "Linea Directa," a program produced by EVS Communications and Univision.

Acknowledgments

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A thank you to NMAH staff, especially the Department of Education, and particularly to Sue Walther for her continuous mentoring and support. Much appreciation to the New Media Office and to the Exhibits Department. We would also like to recognize the Skull Crew for their facilities management assistance. Many thanks to our colleagues in Curatorial Affairs: Marvette Pérez, Stephen Velásquez, Harry Rubenstein, Peter Liebhold, Fath Davis Ruffins, and Stacey Kluck.

Our warmest and most sincere gratitude goes to PLHC’s 2005 Interns:

Sandra Campos, Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi, Texas
Gerardo Medrano, Central Michigan University, Virginia
Wilmer Mendoza, Next Step Charter School, Washington, D.C.
Sara de Sousa, Montgomery College, Maryland

National Museum of American History staff:

Brent D. Glass, Director
Judith Gradwohl, Associate Director for Public Programs
Magdalena Mieri, Director, Program in Latino History and Culture
Tina Zarpour, Program Assistant, Program in Latino History and Culture