



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Behring Center

Program in Latino History and Culture
Annual Report, 2006

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 enjoyed a very productive and successful year in 2006. In spite of the Museum closing on September 5, we were able to present a number of important public programs and develop a number of projects.

One of the major accomplishments is the completion of a study of the local Latino community conducted by the Garibay Group. This report will inform a new outreach strategy for the Program and the Museum at large and will be implemented upon Museum reopening.

Another highlight was the first-ever Central American Traditions Festival, which brought many members of the local community to the Museum for the first time. This was a lively family festival that allowed the program to create long-lasting partnerships and create trust in the community.

From the program commemorating the 300th anniversary of Albuquerque to our exploration of contemporary cultural traditions of the local Latino community, PLHC succeeded in promoting at the Museum the diversity and richness of the historical and cultural contributions of the Latino community.

Public Programs

Jazz Appreciation Month

Two events were presented as part of the Museum-wide celebration of Jazz Appreciation Month. On Wednesday, April 13, two performances took place in Flag Hall: JazzSabroson Latin Jazz Quartet at 1:00 p.m., and Hopus Akoben Hip Hop Ensemble at 2:00 p.m. These performances were cosponsored by the State Department as part of its Rhythms Road program. Ms. Alina Romanowski, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, provided welcoming remarks.

Audience: 150.

The second program took place on Thursday April 13. Felix Contreras presented "Latin Jazz percussionists," in which he discussed and performed music by four renowned Latin Jazz musicians.

Audience: 80.



Central American Traditions Festival

On Sunday, May 21st, from noon till 4 p.m., the Central American Traditions Festival took place in the Museum's first floor. The goals of this program were to relate the history of the Central American community in the Washington D.C., metro area and to attract a local Latino audience.

Festival components included music performances by Marimba Linda Xelaju, a Guatemalan music group residing in Montgomery County, Maryland; Lilo Gonzalez y los de la Mount Pleasant; interactive mural making with local Salvadoran artist Karlisima; food demonstrations with Restaurant Associates staff; and a conversation and book signing with noted Salvadoran novelist Mario Bencastro and Dr. Ana Patricia Rodriguez from the University of Maryland.

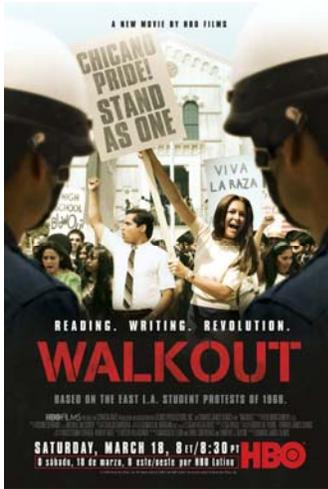


Six teen volunteers from Latinos en Acción at Wakefield High School in Arlington helped facilitate the art activity. Arlington County Board member Mr. Walter Tejada,

also an NMAH Latino Advisory Council member, attended the event and introduced Mr. Bencastro and Dr. Rodriguez. Main Street Cafe prepared a special Mesoamerican menu for the event and sold out of food. SBV held a successful book signing.

Audience at all venues: 560

A Case for Equal Education: Los Angeles High School Walkouts in 1968



On Thursday, June 15, from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m., we presented award-winning producer Moctesuma Esparza and his recent film *Walkout*, based on the true story of the East Los Angeles high school walkouts in 1968. Esparza was one of the students who staged a walkout to protest the injustices of the public high school system in East Los Angeles. Following the two-hour film, Esparza discussed how he was inspired to produce it. A special guided tour of *Separate is Not Equal: Brown v. Board of Education*, was led by exhibition curator Harry Rubenstein before the film and discussion.

Audience: 80

Visitors and the Museum Experience—Latino Audiences

On Thursday, July 27, we presented a lecture on Latino Demographics by Roberto Suro, Director of the Pew Hispanic Center and a member of the Museum's Latino Advisory Council. The program was cosponsored with the Smithsonian Latino Center.

Audience: 80 people.

On Thursday, June 8, Cecilia Garibay, president of Chicago's Garibay Group, discussed the findings of her research on the Washington Metropolitan Area Latino Community and its barriers and opportunities for visiting the Museum. This research was commissioned by PLHC and was presented to a Smithsonian-wide audience.

Audience: 120 people.

Albuquerque: New Mexico's City of Enchantment

On Wednesday, October 11, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., the Museum celebrated Albuquerque's 300th anniversary with an illustrated lecture by Dr. Ramón Gutierrez, a renowned authority on New Mexico's history and author of *When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away*. His lecture explored Albuquerque's history, and revealed how its history is part of its continuing allure, leaving travelers awed and inspired.

Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead Festival

On Saturday, October 28 and Sunday, October 29, the National Museum of American History and the National Museum of the American Indian celebrated Day of the Dead. Day of the Dead is an opportunity for families to celebrate and commemorate their loved ones who have died, and although its roots are pre-Colombian, it continues to be celebrated as one of the most important holidays in Mexico today. The two-day festival included hands-on activities and art projects, music, dance performances, poetry reading, and films. A special feature was an *ofrenda*, an offering of gratitude to ancestors, created by Mexica artist Tlisza Jaurique. Another *ofrenda* was created by the staff of both Museums.

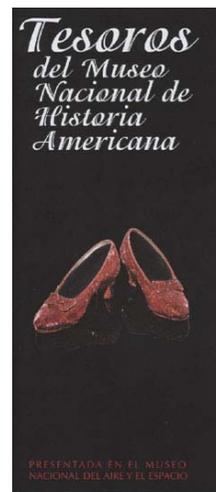


Behind the Scenes Activities

Translations

In preparation for reopening and responding to recommendations from the Garibay study, we allocated resources and to begin translating a number of Museum materials. The first was the translation of the Museum brochure, *American Originals*, distributed to the public during the summer and announcing the renovation. This brochure was produced in collaboration with the Washington, D.C., Office of Cultural Tourism.

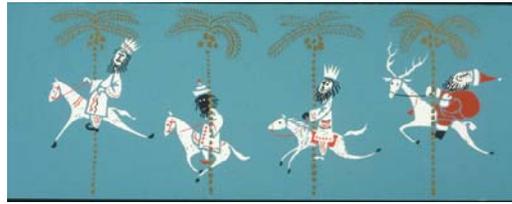
Another important project was the translation and production of a Spanish-language brochure for the *Treasures of American History* exhibition, which opened in November at the National Air and Space Museum. In addition to the brochure, the entire script of the exhibition was translated and made available through the Museum's Web site. The Day of the Dead two-day celebration included the production of an educational booklet with short essays on the different elements of the tradition. This small publication was also translated and made available to schools and visitors.



Web Site

During the past year we worked in collaboration with the New Media and Curatorial Offices to produce all the content material for *A Vision of Puerto Rico: the Teodoro Vidal Collection*. The bilingual Web site features about 80

objects from the collection and images from the Archives Center; a comprehensive bibliography; a glossary; a list of learning resources; an interactive map; and an extensive timeline.



Teaching Collection



We continued the work begun in 2005 with the development of the teaching collection. These items will be used to develop cart activities for the Museum floors upon reopening, and also to present at community festivals, libraries, and schools. Great progress was made on the Day of the Dead and Carnival collections. These collections, along with the History through Music are now part of the Museum-wide teaching collection database.

Bracero History Project

The Bracero History Project team made great progress this year, concluding it with marching orders for the creation of the traveling exhibition. During 2006 the team continued to conduct oral histories, mainly in California, and to transcribe and translate them. Several interns assisted with the task of organizing the photographic archives and assisted with research at the National Archives. At this point the team has gathered enough materials for the development of the exhibition.

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.

Latino Advisory Council

The Latino Advisory Council (LAC) met two times in 2006, once in an April conference call, and again in September in an actual meeting at the Museum. LAC provided advice to the Director on upcoming programs and projects. Discussion topics included audiences, partnerships, outreach, collections, and research. The main recommendation for the future of the Museum was to create a comprehensive plan for Latino-based exhibitions, collections, and programs.

Acknowledgements

We extend our most sincere gratitude to the Smithsonian Latino Center for their financial support to the second year of the program.

We offer our thanks to NMAH staff, especially the Department of Education for Public Programs and Outreach; the Department of Education for Interpretation and Visitor Experience; the New Media Office; and the Office of Museum Services. Many thanks go as well to our colleagues in Curatorial Affairs, Marvette Perez, Steve Velasquez, Peter Liebhold, Bonnie Lilienfield, Gary Sturn and Stacey Cluck.

Our warmest and most sincere gratitude goes to our PLHC 2006 Interns:

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Tina Zarate, University of Texas at Austin
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National Museum of American History
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Magdalena Mieri, Director, Program in Latino History and Culture
Tina Zarpour (through Jun 2006) and Ranlad Woodaman, Program Assistant