



Smithsonian  
*National Museum of American History*  
*Behring Center*

## **Program in Latino History and Culture Annual Report, 2007**

### **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**

Despite being closed to the public, NMAH was able to offer a number of high-quality public programs in 2007 and to establish new partnerships with local organizations and programs around the Institution.

A benefit of the closing and renovation was the time and opportunity to do some creative thinking and develop strategies that will enhance our public offerings after reopening. Throughout 2007, PLHC worked with different project teams in the Museum to plan an ambitious, engaging, and inspiring set of daily programs to be implemented upon reopening.

## Public Programs

### **Jazz Appreciation Month**

On April 24 we celebrated Jazz Appreciation Month by bringing to Washington, D.C. stellar Afro-Cuban jazz pianist and musician Omar Sosa and his Afreecanos Quartet. Omar led a morning workshop for D.C. public school students and presented a free public concert at the Lincoln Theatre. Both events were produced by PLHC in



partnership with the Lincoln Theatre, The Smithsonian Latino Center, and the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Attendance at the workshop: 100 students

Attendance at the concert: 760 people

### **Peña Cultural: Sharing Stories of Immigration**



To commemorate Hispanic Heritage Month, NMAH produced a family event on October 12 at the Carlos Rosario International School in collaboration with a local poetry collective, *ParaEsoLaPalabra*, and the emerging *Museo de la Cultura*. The Peña (a *Peña Cultural* is a style of community gathering for the performance of music, poetry,

storytelling, and social commentary) featured poets Otoniel Guevara, Salvadorian; Consuelo Hernandez, Colombian; and Gladys Ilarregui, Argentinian. Each read from their recent publications, all related to immigration. Music and dance performances by New York-based *marimbero* Diego Obregón were followed by the local musical group Tangaré. Artist Carlos Albuquerque conducted cartooning demonstrations. The program closed with an open mic, with encouragement for all to present their stories.

Attendance: 230 people

## ***Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead Celebration***



The Museum's annual *Día de los Muertos*-Day of the Dead celebration took place on October 26, 27, and 28. This year's program was again produced in partnership with the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). The three-day celebration started on Friday with three workshops for Washington, D.C., elementary school children. The workshops introduced students to the meaning of Day of the Dead and its rich cultural elements. On Saturday and Sunday the event featured an altar built at NMAI by San Francisco Bay Area artist Yolanda Garfias Woo.

Other activities included:

- \* Traditional *papel picado* (cut paper work) demonstration by Tlisza Jaurique (Mexica/Yaqui/Basque/Xicana)
- \* Sugar Skull demonstrations with Emily Key and Christina Zárate
- \* *Kokoi Tas* paper flower wreaths by Jenny Narcho and her daughter Crystal Narcho (Tohono O'odham)
- \* Chef Jose Diaz from NMAI's celebrated Mitsitam Native Foods Cafe demonstrated some of the special foods created for the celebration including mole and candied pumpkin.
- \* Performance by *Los Quetzales* Mexican Dance Ensemble
- \* Hands-on activities including paper tissue flower making, plaster skull decorating, and traditional *papel picado*. Lessons preceding the activities interpreted the cultural significance of these activities for visitors.

Attendance for both days: 11,441 people

### **Behind-the-Scenes Activities**

#### **Web Site**

In 2007 we continued to add to the Museum's collections Web site by producing a new Object Group. This new feature, called *Mexican America*, presents images and an interpretive narrative of 35 historical items in the Museum's collections. The bilingual object group was launched live on September 5th to coincide with the Smithsonian Latino Center's year-long celebration of Mexico, and



its exhibition *Mexican Treasures of the Smithsonian on view* at the International Gallery. In addition to the interpretive text, the object group features a bibliography, a glossary, and links to educational resources.

## Teaching Collection



In 2007 we launched the development of a new teaching collection with the theme of Latino immigration. Several interns and fellows conducted research on the topic, identified museum collections, and suggested stories and objects to be included on the teaching collection. Teaching materials were developed by PLHC intern and teacher Molly Raines.

PLHC already has teaching collections related to the themes of Carnival, Day of the Dead, and Afro-Latino music. The objects in the teaching collections will be used as part of an updated and expanded cart program. The collection is also intended to be taken to community venues, for use in workshops, and for future loans by educators.

## Bracero History Project

Partnering with the Smithsonian Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), the Museum will produce and travel *Bittersweet Harvest: The Bracero Program 1942-1964*. The traveling exhibition is slated to open at the Museum in fall 2009 and will go on tour across the United States and Mexico in 2010.



During 2007 the team conducted oral histories and transcribed and translated them. Several interns assisted with research and organizing the photographic archives. The project, in partnership with George Mason University's Center for History and New Media, received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to produce a state-of-the-art Web site featuring all 500 oral histories, the Nadel photographic collection, educational materials, bibliographies, and original essays. The Web site is under development and will be launched online in summer 2009.



## **Community Outreach: *Museo de la Cultura***



In February of 2007 we began to assist the Carlos Rosario International School with a new initiative, the *Museo de la Cultura*, a grass-roots community museum project. We first organized a training program at the school for a group of 20 adult students. We provided workshops and lectures on all matters related to the creation and implementation of a community museum. A small art exhibition was organized at the end of the training session. Current plans are to resume the training and to create working teams to pursue plans for collections and programs.

### **Latino Advisory Council**

The Museum's Latino Advisory Council (LAC) provides advice to the Director of the Museum on upcoming programs and projects. Discussion topics include audiences, partnerships, outreach, collections, and research. Based on last year's recommendation to create a comprehensive plan for Latino-based exhibitions, collections, and programs, the Museum hired a consultant in 2007 to assist with the development of the plan.

### **Acknowledgements**

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Maria Jose Orantez, Montgomery College  
Molly Raines, Michigan Public Schools  
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Ranald Woodaman, Program Assistant (through August 2007)