

The Last Harvest: A Tribute to the Life and Work of Farmworkers,
FINAL REPORT, Grant 2000-1036
GEORGIA HUMANITIES COUNCIL
Valdosta State University

Project Director Laurie Kay Sommers
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5. Approved Budget	6. Actual Expenditures
GHC Grant: \$2,000	\$2,000
Cost Share: \$5,038	\$3,238
Total: \$7,038	\$5,238

6. EVALUATIVE NARRATIVE

Please attach a report or narrative evaluating your program and its successes and/or failures.

The project funded five public programs on the Hispanic farmworker experience during Hispanic Heritage Month at Valdosta State University organized around a traveling exhibit on workers culture of central Florida farmworkers. The Last Harvest: A History and Tribute to the Life and Work of the Farmworkers of Lake Apopka is a Florida Humanities Council traveling exhibit which had its genesis in a 1998 oral history project on the history and workers culture of Latino, Haitian, and African American farmworkers in the vegetable muck farms and packing plants surrounding Lake Apopka (Orange County) in central Florida. On July 1, 1998 the farms closed and the lake was subsequently drained as part of an environmental cleanup effort leaving 2,500 farmworkers out of a job. The exhibit's sixteen panels feature photographs taken by professional photographers and Americorp workers (many of whom are the children of farmworkers) and text taken from oral history interviews. The purpose of the exhibit is to commemorate and document the contributions of farmworkers to the community, focusing on daily life and

work. Images include work in the fields, work in the vegetable packing houses, and scenes at home, with identifying captions and interview excerpts from the farmworkers themselves. The exhibit addresses the humanities topics of oral history and occupational folklife, or work-related skills made up of the knowledge, customs, traditions, stories, jokes, music, and lore of different jobs or occupations.

The purpose of this GHC-funded project was to provide a series of interpretive public programs which, like the exhibit itself, attempted to correct misconceptions, facilitate community dialogue through cross-cultural education of the citizenry, and provide greater insight into the issues and culture of farmworker communities in the region. In addition to a month-long series of public programs, the project included four new exhibit panels (see enclosed CD) with overview information and photos about the work and culture of farmworkers in South Georgia. The project was very successful in meeting these goals through the content of programs and educating those in attendance. It was less successful in attracting a large cross-section of the community to the programs, as mentioned above. As a first attempt of such a topic in the local community, however, these programs provide a solid foundation on which to build. In the future, project director Sommers also hopes to re-shape some of the project materials into a learning kit for teachers, perhaps disseminated on the web, on farmworker culture in South Georgia. In this way, it is hoped that the project eventually will meet its goal of reaching educators and a larger cross-section of the community. **TIMES, DATES, AND LOCATIONS OF ALL YOUR PROGRAM EVENTS AND SESSIONS** (all dates, 2002, all locations on VSU campus in buildings indicated)

The Last Harvest: A Tribute to the Life and Work of Farmworkers exhibition, Biology/Chemistry Building first floor foyer, **September 23 to October 4, 2000;** University Center foyer, **October 5-31,** a Florida Humanities Council traveling exhibit with four new panels on South Georgia Hispanic farmworkers, designed by Jim Hornsby (graphic designer, VSU Art Dept.) and curated by Dr. Laurie Sommers.

Thursday Sept. 26, 2000, Performance by Los Bandits: 5-piece, bilingual Tex-Mex band from Kalamazoo, Michigan, headed by former farmworkers René Meave and Guillermo Martinez, used original and traditional compositions and humor to address issues such as ethnic labels, cultural values, and the farmworker struggle.
New Biology/Chemistry Building Large Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday Oct. 1, 2000, The Last Harvest: A Tribute to the Life and Work of Farmworkers, exhibition opening reception with a slide talk by Dr. Laurie Sommers and dramatic presentation of Sommers' farmworker interviews from the

original Last Harvest documentation project by students in Prof. Deborah Morgan's Oral Interpretation class (COMM 3010). New Biology/Chemistry Building Large Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.

Thursday Oct. 10, 2000, Traditional Arts and the Politics of Culture in Georgia's Newly Settled Hispanic Community, an illustrated slide-talk on applied folklore in Dalton and Whitfield County in northwest Georgia, by Martha J. Nelson, former director of Traditional Arts Program, Creative Arts Guild, Dalton, GA, University Center Theater, 7:30 p.m.

Friday October 11, 2000, Field trip to Coggins Farm, Echols County, one of the largest employers of Hispanic farmworkers in the area. Led by Dr. Susan Wehling, Department of Modern and Classical Languages, VSU.

Tuesday Oct. 22, 2000, Forum on local and state Hispanic community work, University Center Theater, 7:30 p.m., Julissa Clapp, Farmworker Health Clinic; Dawson Morton, Farmworker Division of Georgia Legal Affairs; Doug Grove, Department of Labor; Pedro Arroyo, S. GA Outreach Office, UGA RDC and member Valdosta Project Change Amigos group.

Tuesday Oct. 29, 2000, Music in Florida Farmworker Communities, a talk using images and field recordings from the 1995 Mexican Music Survey with Bob Stone, Outreach Coordinator for the Florida Folklife Program, 7:30 p.m., University Center Theater.

AUDIENCE INFORMATION

1. Total number in attendance at all sessions _____ 285

If the figure above represents a cumulative total in which one person may be counted several times, please estimate as accurately as possible the actual number of individuals who attended the program, and rewrite here. **This figure does not reflect those persons who viewed the exhibit while it was up at two locations at VSU: estimated total viewership plus program attendance= 500

September 26, 2002, Los Bandits (100 attendance)
October 1, 2002, Last Harvest exhibit opening program. (20 attendance)

October 10, 2002 Traditional Arts and the Politics of Culture. (45 attendance)
 October 11, 2002, Field Trip to Coggins Farms (35 in attendance)
 October 22, 2002, Forum on Hispanic Issues and Community Work (35 attendance)
 October 20, 2002, Music in Florida Farmworker Communities (40 attendance)

1. Estimate the audience profile with reference to sex, age, ethnic representation and educational level.

SEX

Male 40%

Female 60%
 students)

AGE

Under 12 1%
 12 – 18 1%
 18 – 25 80%
 25 – 35 3%
 35 –55 5%
 55 & up 10%

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Elementary 1%

High School 80%
 (majority current college

College 4% _____

Graduate Work 14%

Professional/Tech
 Training 1 %

ETHNIC REPRESENTATION

Caucasian 70%

African/Amer. 20%

Latino 9%

Asian 1%

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1. Was the audience primarily made up of representatives of any specialized type of group, such as clubs, civic organizations, professional associations?

The majority of audience members had some association to VSU, either students or faculty. The exception to this was the Los Bandits performance, which attracted 40 students from the ABAC High School and College Assistance Migrant Programs.

4. Briefly evaluate the project's success in reaching its target audience. Include your observations concerning reasons for the success or failure.

The exhibit failed to reach much of an audience outside VSU; it was originally intended also to reach educators who have increasing numbers of Hispanic students in the classroom, and others who may be working with increased Hispanic constituencies in the community. It is my experience throughout some 15 years of doing public humanities programs that events located on a university campus consistently fail to reach a large segment of the community at large. The failure to reach educators is probably due to lack of *personal* contact and encouragement of local teachers to attend: letters were sent to Spanish teachers in area schools, but this is not really an effective strategy without personal contact. This should have been followed up with phone calls, etc. In general, personal contacts and invitations seem to work best with audiences in general, and this is very labor intensive. An exhibit on Mexican fiestas at my former place of employment, Michigan State University Museum, for example, required arranged transportation on campus in order to facilitate attendance by the local largely working class (but unlike Valdosta, settled as opposed to migrant) Mexican community. Not surprisingly, the best attended event was the opening Los Bandits performance. The attendance of students from ABAC's HAMP and CAMP programs, mentioned in (3) above, was due to contacts with a former student of the co-director's who is now working with these programs.

PUBLICITY

How were the media (newspapers, TV and radio) involved in the promotion of the program? If so, how? Which stations/networks and/or publications were used?

Both the Valdosta Daily Times and the VSU Spectator covered the event. In addition, La Voz Latina radio program by Dr. Manuel Cachán, (based at VSU WVVS FM student radio station) which has a large audience in the local Hispanic community, announced the events and did a special promo for Los Bandits.

A flyer for all VSU Hispanic Heritage Month events (including those sponsored by GHC) was sent to all VSU faculty and staff and posted around campus and the community.

How did you inform your local elected representatives (federal and state) of your program? Please attach copies of letters sent.

Local elected representatives were notified by letter (see attachments).

AUDIENCES' EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS

There was no formal evaluation form or evaluator team used for this project. It took all the resources of the project co-directors to carry out this ambitious program (and Valdosta's only major event to recognize Hispanic heritage month) by doing local arrangements, publicity, program development, and program presentation. One audience member, a visiting VSU scholar in the Modern and Classical Languages Dept. who attended most of the programs, commented that they were very well done and that it was a shame that more members of the community did not take advantage of it.

FACILITATOR'S EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS

In general Project Director Sommers was very pleased with the quality and content of all of the programs. This was the first time that there had been a program on farmworker culture in the Valdosta community. The fact that this is still such a misunderstood and marginalized group may have accounted in part for the lack of community-wide attendance and interest. The Los Bandits performance was particularly successful in terms of attendance and the use of music and personal testimony by the performers, both former farmworkers, to convey information in an entertaining and effective manner. The exhibit opening reception program included photographs from the South Georgia Folklife Project research to date on Hispanics traditions in South Georgia and focused on the theme "misconceptions." A particularly felicitous collaboration was that between Deborah Morgan of the Theater Department and project director Laurie Sommers on the development of a dramatic script based on actual interviews with Florida farmworkers whose experience was featured in the exhibit. Four students in Morgan's COMM 3010 presented the script in a dramatic reading which proved a most effective method for enriching the audience's understanding of the farmworker experience in their own words. The two slide-talks by Martha Nelson and Bob Stone respectively enriched the perspective to include a variety of customs and traditional arts of migrant and settled farmworker communities in the region. Susan Wehling reported that the issues forum had a very lively discussion about the legality of farmworkers. She felt that four speakers, however, was too many for the time limit: two or three would better. In general,

there was strong and well presented humanities content in these programs which were deserving of a larger audience than they received.

HUMANITIES PROFESSIONALS

Dr. Laurie Sommers, Project director, used her involvement in the original Last Harvest project in central Florida as the basis for this project, bringing the Florida Humanities Council traveling exhibit and developing a series of programs around the exhibit. These programs, with the exception of the Issues Forum and field trip to Coggins farms, drew on Sommers' 20 years of experience working with Latino traditions in the U.S, her fieldwork with the South Georgia Folklife Project since 1997, and her familiarity with the work of colleagues doing work on Hispanic culture in the region. The Los Bandits performance was due to her extensive work in Michigan and her personal contacts with this group, based on past collaborations at the Festival of Michigan Folklife in the 1990s. Sommers' general expertise with Mexican farmworker culture also helped shape the four new exhibit panels on South Georgia which she developed with the assistance of designer Jim Hornsby of the VSU Art Dept. Sommers also used her humanities knowledge on farmworker issues in her exhibit opening slide program and as the basis for the student dramatic readings of oral interviews conducted with farmworkers. **Folklorist and documentary photographer Martha Nelson** drew on her fieldwork in North Carolina and especially Dalton, Georgia to present a richly contextualized view of the culture of newly arrived Hispanic immigrants in those regions in the Oct. 10 program. On Oct. 29, **Folklorist Bob Stone** shared his fieldwork with the Mexican Music Survey of the Florida Folklife Program in the mid-1990s, providing field recordings and slides of significant events within Florida farmworker communities, such as Mother's Day serenades, quinceañeras, Cinco de Mayo, and paid admission dances. The humanities discipline of folklore informed all of these presentations with their emphasis on traditional culture and customs as a means to deepened audience understanding. **Dr. Susan Wehling**, project co-director and associate professor of Spanish in the VSU Department of Modern and Classical Languages, used her pioneering work in service learning with local farmworker issues and her resultant network of community contacts to put together an informative panel discussion on Oct. 22 with local professionals working in South Georgia.