

Focus on Folklife Traditions of Farmworkers

Rancheras & Románticas of Humberto Zapata Alvizo

Documentary Project by Joe Bagby

Humberto Zapata Alvizo has been a faithful carrier of Mexican folklife tradition for as long as he can remember. He has been singing *rancheras* and *románticas* since childhood. The 22-year-old Potosino (native of the eastern Mexican state of San Luis Potosí) was more than willing to share the lolling love ballads and longing recollections of home.

Originally from the tiny town of Norias del Refugio, Zapata is a farmworker in Nash County, North Carolina. Far from home, the dynamic young man is accustomed to singing for his friends and comrades at the camp where he lives. He eases their longing for the familiar--for home, family, and loved ones.

The six songs Zapata sang were all soothing and simple, consisting of his lyrics and guitar. The round, steady strumming of his guitar and peaking voice combined for a nostalgic effect, and he carefully explained the songs one by one.

Zapata explained that these are not modern or popular songs, but traditional, obscure *ranchera* and *romántica* ballads. Zapata, and others like him, serve the dual purpose of providing soothing entertainment and relaying words of earlier Mexican musicians.

"*Rifaré mi Suerte*" is a telling and introspective song about the difficulty of migrant life. It illuminates three important aspects of Mexican and migrant culture: the promise of leaving one's life in order to earn money for family, the value placed on familial well-being, and strong faith.

Zapata said, "One knows that God guides us on earth and blesses our parents, our

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Introduction to Folklife

During the summer of 1999, SAF Into the Fields interns surveyed the folklife traditions of migrant farmworkers throughout North and South Carolina. The interns received training from Folklore and Documentary Consultants Jill Hemming, Paul Ortiz, Abigail Blosser, and Julie Stovall. By using oral histories, drawings, recipes, poetry, and photography, the interns learned about verbal, material, and social traditions of farmworkers.

The interns observed farmworkers' lifestyles, cultural heritage, art, music, food, and religious traditions. Some folklore traditions that interns documented were *quinceañera* celebrations, baptisms, cooking traditions, rituals, faith, songs, and personal narratives. By immersing themselves in farmworkers' everyday lives, interns were able to observe how culture changes and adapts as it crosses borders and how farmworkers are creating new communities in North and South Carolina.

The Latino farmworker population is a significant community in the Carolinas whose culture is being intertwined with that of native North and South Carolinians. Recognizing the importance of migrant farmworkers' cultural traditions, witnessing how they are preserved over time and distance, and sharing their heritage with others are integral parts of this project.

Support for this project was provided by the North Carolina Arts Council. Interns' work will be archived in the Southern Folklife Collection of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



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For more information or to submit articles, contact:

Student Action with Farmworkers
 1317 W. Pettigrew St., Durham, NC 27705
 919-660-3652; 919-681-7600 (fax)
<http://cds.aas.duke.edu/saf/>
mwiggins@duke.edu

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Rancheras and Románticas *continued from page 1*

brothers and sisters, and blesses us. One is never alone, you know? And this song shows a lot...about our feelings, about our families more than anything...about our struggles to come out okay."

*Ahora que me encuentro lejos
 De la tierra en que nací
 Ay, de mis padres queridos
 Cuanto han sufrido por mí*

*Now that I'm so far
 From the land where I was born
 Oh, my beloved parents
 How much they have suffered for me*

*Pobrecita de mi madre
 Cuantos consejos me dió
 Con lagrimas en sus ojos
 Sus bendiciones me dió*

*My poor mother
 Who gave me so much advice
 With tears in her eyes
 She gave me her blessing*

*Ya no llores madrecita,
 Esté bien, que ya no sufriré
 Déjame rifar me suerte
 Por buscando el porvenir*

*Don't cry anymore, mother
 be well, don't suffer
 Let me raffle my luck
 By seeking my fortune*

*También dejé mi amorcito
 Que le prometí volver
 Yo sé bien que ella me espera
 Díos me lo ha de conceder*

*I also left my love
 Whom I promised I'd return
 I know well she waits for me
 Surely God has to grant me this*

*Quisiera ser cuales aves
 Y volar donde tú estás
 Cruzar valles y montañas
 Y a míos querencias llegar*

*I would like to be those birds
 And fly to where you are
 Crossing valleys and mountains
 And get to my loved ones*

*Virgencita Milagrosa
 Sabes bien mi padecer
 De rodillas iré a verte
 Si me concedes volver*

*Miraculous Virgin Mary
 You know my suffering well
 On my knees I'll go to see you
 If you let me return home*

Piñata Summer

Documentary Project by Ellen Szedon

Through her work with Project Avery Literacy, SAF intern Ellen Szedon coordinated a summer enrichment program for Spanish-speaking children in Avery County. Ellen helped the children construct their own piñatas, as a way to teach them about art and color.

Piñatas originated in Italy, spread to Spain as part of Lenten celebrations, and then to Mexico where they already had a similar tradition. Piñatas continue to add excitement to parties in Mexico and the United States.

The tradition of making piñatas begins with pasting newspaper strips onto inflated balloons and then hanging them to dry. After the piñatas have dried, they are decorated, painted, and filled with candy. At parties, children take turns trying to break piñatas to get the candy.



Luis and Lupe proudly display their finished rainbow piñatas. They worked hard to paint them, while learning the various colors. The piñatas gave the children a feeling of accomplishment and creativity.

The Legacies of Two Women

Sylvia's Famous Tamales of Lee County

Documentary Project by Wendy Sellers Campbell

Tamales are a blend of Aztec and Spanish culture and are an integral part of Mexican meals. Tamales are lumps of masa, containing meat or beans, steamed in wrapped corn-husks. Following is Sylvia's recipe for tamales.

Ingredients:

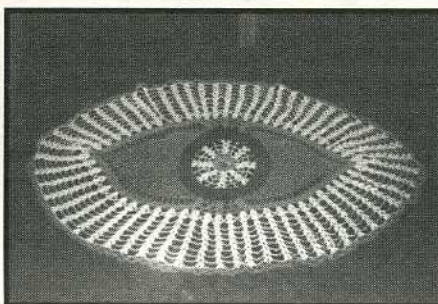
maseca
manteca (pork lard)
meat (pork)
corn husks
red (chile) pepper
tomato
salt
garlic
pepper
oregano
oil

Instructions:

Boil the meat.
De-bone the meat & slice into thin strips.
Heat the oil.
Cook the meat with all the spices.
Mix the masa with the manteca.
Roll out the ball of masa into a circle like a flat tortilla.
Roll up the meat, chile, and spices in the masa.
Wrap the entire tamale in dried-out corn husks.
Stack the tamales in a tall, iron stew pot.
Cook for more or less two hours.



Sylvia Zaragosa is famous in Lee County, South Carolina for her tamales. She is shown here, in her garden, surrounded by the home-grown ingredients she uses in her tamales. Sylvia says cooking tamales is important to her because she "can cook tamales very well," and "learned how to cook them from watching other people in Mexico." She says, "my mother and grandmother also make tamales but I learned how to make mine larger and tastier."



Crocheting: A Family Tradition

Documentary Project by
Juana Salinas

Maria Salinas crochets at her home in Browns Summit, North Carolina. Crocheting is a family tradition in the Salinas family and Mrs. Salinas taught her daughter the delicate craft. Mrs. Salinas crochets servilletas, napkins, tablecloths, lamp shades, doll clothing, and baby dresses.

Resources

America's Migrant Farmworkers: A Photographic Survey by Alan Pogue, Commissioned by the National Center for Farmworker Health.
<http://ncfh.org/resources/photoexh.htm>

Introduction to Folklife Resources in Mexico
<http://lcweb.loc.gov/folklife/source/mexico.html>

Archives of American Minority Cultures
<http://lcweb.loc.gov/folklife/source/archive1.html#calif>

Smithsonian: U.S. Latino History and Culture
<http://www.si.edu/resource/faq/nmah/latino.htm>

Art and Media Basics: Folklife Resources and Support for Teachers in Art
<http://beta.open.k12.or.us/start/music/basics/folk/vbas5jmu.html>

Library of Congress Hispanic Reading Room
<http://lcweb.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/>

La Virgen de Guadalupe

*Documentary Project by Wendy Daniels
Photography by Alejandrina Rincón*



The purpose of this project is to observe *La Virgen de Guadalupe* (the Virgin Mary) in the homes of migrant and resident Latinos in Granville and Vance counties, North Carolina. I documented altars, jewelry, and wall hangings in the homes of families, single men, and local Mexican stores. The images are similar, but the stories that are behind them are important reminders of the value of bringing such a valued tradition to a country far from home.

Caren is from Michoacan, Mexico. In an interview, she discussed the importance of the *Virgen* in her life. "We celebrate the appearance of the *Virgen de Guadalupe* on December 12th. We have fireworks and mass. The celebration starts with the images of the *Virgen* in a procession in the streets, and continues to the church. I believe in the saints because when I have true faith, they give me miracles. The *Virgen* has helped me a lot."

Aluminum Siding Warrior

Documentary Project by Brady Rochford

Siler City, North Carolina, a place where buzzards circle over grazing pasture, waiting to eat animals suffering in the overwhelming heat and humidity. Siler City, a place where Mexican *tiendas* are nuzzled into small streets next to Evangelical bookstores and ACE hardware stores.

Siler City, a place where some workers return to a doublewide trailer occupied by twenty people or so. Living together in shifts, rotating rooms of sleepers, eaters, while others are off at work. Often, families living in these situations have children; these families are labeled "homeless" and warrant a visit from the local social worker. When the visit occurs, any sign of "mistreatment" will cause Sally the social worker to contact the local police, "children ten years of age babysitting their younger siblings? 'Not in America'," they say.

Siler City, North Carolina, a place where women like Dulsá live in Snipes Trailer Park. Grilling a cow's head outside, Dulsá prepares *cabeza* tacos for many people. She makes a living from cooking, mostly tamales. Looks as though there may be twenty people inside her trailer at the moment, mostly men, staring outside to see who is standing at the door with paper and pens asking questions about their children. The children flock around Dulsá's home in curiosity, wondering if it's the 4-H camp back again, offering to take them on field trips.

Dulsá knows all of the children; she is the den mother in a run-down, over-priced den. She is a surrogate mother to so many, keeping track of "things," she is the liason for Gloria, the Latina social worker, and confidante. When it comes time for summer school registration, Dulsá distributes and collects the necessary information, making sure everyone has been contacted and knows where to catch the bus in the morning.

Dulsá is a one-stop shop for the children of Snipes Trailer Park. She can tell you where to find someone, and she knows who is up to what. Once, she learned about the rampant spread of chlamydia in Snipes and single-handedly organized a group of teenagers to visit the local health-clinic to be checked for sexually transmitted diseases. Although no one likes the thought of 11 year-olds engaged in sex, Dulsá was realistic about life at Snipes and brought the younger children as well. Her energy is amazing; she remains a pillar in her community, and children know where to come for assistance.

As I look around Snipes Trailer Park, I think of Bob Marley's song "Concrete Jungle." Inside the walls of Marley's "Concrete Jungle," urban guerillas fight new dimensions of warfare. Within a socially constructed fighting ground, we all are, inevitably, self-defeated.

Perhaps Dulsá's song would be similar, fighting for survival in an aluminum-siding niche, resting on concrete slabs and surrounded by accumulations of daily trash. She is a warrior, with great courage she struggles against the great, intangible forces of an aggressive environment. She links arms with the services available, making sure that all resources are tapped, hoping to keep one more child innocent in a place tainted by man's murderous ways toward man.

Celebrations



On her 15th birthday, Monica Segundo joins her family for a portrait. *Quinceañeras*, fifteenth birthday parties, are important coming of age ceremonies for young Latina women. The Segundo family spent all day preparing for the festivities. Monica's mother helped prepare her daughter's outfit and hair for the party. Both her mother and her father spent time cooking for the large group of friends and family.

Photo by Luis Velasco



Monica Segundo's doll stands on a table surrounded by flowers. Once a symbol of Monica's childhood, the doll is now a memory of her youth and a reminder of her emergence as a woman. *Quinceañera's* celebrate a girl's passage into womanhood and emphasize the support she receives from family and community as she begins a new journey.

Photo by Luis Velasco



Ángel García Soto welcomes his mother to her wedding ceremony. He stands, dressed in his black *Noreño* suit and boots, to greet the wedding party as they approach the church.

Photo by María García Campos

SAF Alumni Updates

1990 intern **Luisa Tio** graduated from New York University in May 1999 with a masters degree in studio art. LTIO@compuserve.com

1993 intern **Amy Glenn Vega** worked for Harnett County Health Department, Central Carolina Community College, and FirstHealth Moore Regional Hospital since her ITF internship. She says working as a SAF intern made her realize how much her Spanish language skills and background in healthcare are needed to serve farmworkers. thevegas@spritmail.com

1994 interns **Juan and Lupe Ramirez** had their first baby in 1997. Lupe graduated in 1998 with a bachelor's degree in bilingual education. Juan is working for a non-profit organization that serves the farmworker community. He teaches ESL and citizenship classes. ctlearn@earthlink.net

1995 intern **Genny Grabman** has worked at Orange-Chatham County Community Health Services, Orange County Libraries ESL programs, and the United States Peace Corps since her ITF internship. Through the Peace Corps, she worked with UNICEF and USAID on children's rights. web1091@charweb.org

1996 intern **Joanna Johnson** decided to major in Sociology at Appalachian State University after she participated in the SAF internship. Since her internship, she has volunteered with a Hispanic Women's Support group at Watauga County Hospital. 529 Hillsborough St., Apt. C-5, Chapel Hill, NC 27514, (919) 967-4530

1997 intern **Jenny Souk** mentored Hispanic youth through a dropout prevention program called Alianza Escolor. She is currently interested in finding a volunteer position through Americorps. jdsouk@hotmail.com

1998 intern **Shaundra Young** participated in an exchange program in San Juan, Puerto Rico during the 1999 spring semester. She will return to the University of South Carolina-Columbia this fall. lisaeny@hotmail.com

If you are a former SAF intern and have not completed & returned the Former Intern Survey, please mail it to the SAF office as soon as possible.

Thank You

Thanks to all those individuals, university departments, churches, and businesses who made contributions to the 1999 Into the Fields Program!

Get Involved with SAF

Sowing Seeds for Change Symposium

This symposium is for students, faculty, farmworkers, and advocates. SAF will co-sponsor this year's conference with Frontier College. Frontier College is a literacy program based in Canada which recruits, trains, and sends individuals to work and teach on farms, railway camps, factories, and other places where people live and work.

The conference will be held in Toronto, Canada, October 22-24, 1999. Session highlights include Literacy & ESL, Current Farmworker Organizing Campaigns, Documentary Work with Farmworkers, and a Farmworker Organization Information Fair.

For more information, contact Lori Fernald Khamala at lkhamala@duke.edu or 919-660-3652.

Education Director Position Available

SAF's Education Director coordinates Project Levante, a drop-out prevention program for migrant farmworker students. Applicant must be fluent in Spanish & English, have public speaking skills, an interest in popular education, and able to make at least a 2-3 year commitment. Experience working in farm work and/or from a farmworking family preferred. Salary: \$22,000- \$25,000 plus excellent benefits. Send resume with references & cover letter to SAF by Oct. 15.

For a complete job description, contact Melinda Wiggins at mwiggins@duke.edu or 919-660-3652.

Workplace Giving

Do you work for a corporation or non-profit that has a NC Community Shares workplace giving campaign? If so, please designate SAF as your donor recipient. SAF's state employees combined campaign code is 1713.

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