

Exhibition Development/Panel Discussion: The Quinceañera Tradition Among Hispanic Families of North-Central Louisiana

Project Abstract

please provide a condensed (2-3 sentence) description of your project.

Union Museum of History and Art will explore the tradition of the Quinceañera, the deeply ingrained ethnic Hispanic custom of observing a girl's 15th birthday with religious customs and lavish celebration. Through a five-week exhibit and a panel discussion, the museum will reveal the importance of the Quinceañera tradition within the growing Hispanic population of Union Parish and other nearby North-Central Louisiana parishes.

Project Description*

Describe your project, including its measurable goals, format and humanities content. 300 word limit.

Applicant will present an exhibition exploring how the quinceañera cultural tradition is celebrated by Hispanic families in North-Central Louisiana. The museum will hold a panel discussion to further study the quinceañera: its history, community and family involvement, its significance as a rite of passage and as a reflection of home and its traditions. The discussion will be videotaped and aired on the museum's You Tube channel.

The quinceañera is the deeply ingrained Hispanic tradition of observing a girl's 15th birthday. Hispanic families, even those of limited means, may hold a lavish celebration embracing religious customs, family, friends, music, beautiful garments, and abundant food. Catholic celebrations may include a Mass followed by a party with dancing, while Baptist quinceañeras exclude dancing and alcohol.

The project will focus on quinceañeras in the quickly growing Hispanic population of Union Parish. Very few local non-Hispanics are aware of the quinceañera custom's significance and its popularity.

The exhibit will feature colorful formal gowns, portraits, and traditional accoutrements. Humanities [scholar name] will provide several photographs and video from her ethnographic fieldwork, and she will guide the creation of interpretive labels for artifacts. The panel discussion will be moderated by humanities [scholar name] and panelists will include a bilingual cultural consultant and representative of three Baptist Hispanic congregations; a Hispanic coordinator of the local Catholic church; priest of the local Catholic Church; a young woman who celebrated her quinceañera some 12 years ago and has helped with several others; a native of Mexico, who organizes traditional Hispanic rituals and celebrations.

GOALS: (1.) Attract 250 exhibit visitors, and 50 panel discussion attendees. (2.) Educate non-Hispanics about the quinceañera and other Hispanic traditions. (3.) Draw Hispanic persons into the museum and make them feel part of the larger community.

Sample Rebirth Grant Narrative

Excerpts

Humanities Content*

List which HUMANITIES DISCIPLINES relate to your project and describe the critical, analytical, and/or historical application of these disciplines, illustrating by specific example. How will these humanities disciplines be used to address the important cultural topics in your community and throughout the state? Click here for a list of humanities disciplines. 500 words max.

For our project, The Quinceañera Tradition Among Hispanic Families of North-Central Louisiana, an exhibition will present artifacts and ethnographic photographs from actual quinceañeras held in the region and a panel discussion. With the assistance of a folklorist who has documented three traditional quinceañeras and a Hispanic cultural specialist who is familiar with the tradition, the museum will be able to draw on four humanities disciplines to interpret the artifacts and photographs and to discuss the beautiful tradition.

First and foremost, the exhibition and panel discussion draws on the research done through the lens of cultural anthropology/ folklore. The artifacts used in traditional quinceañeras will each have an interpretive label to discuss the object's function and meaning in the ritual event and how it reflect the beliefs and values of the various Hispanic groups, including Mexicans and Guatemalans. This cultural exploration of the rite of passage that is a marker of a change of status from child to adult will include the various folklore genres of ritual, dance, foodways, and aesthetics in the quinceañera. Interpretation and discussion will explain the various rituals within the rite of passage. For example, in the celebration following the religious service, the celebrant is given her last doll and her first pair of high heels to show that she is giving up the toys of childhood and becoming a young woman who will wear womanly apparel.

The panel discussion will include comparative religion by examining both Baptist and Catholic expressions of the quinceañera. For instance, the Catholic mass is quite different from the Baptist service in a variety of ways. Also the subsequent secular parties are different in that the Baptist celebrations do not allow dancing, while the Catholic ones usually have bands playing banda for the celebration and include special dances where the young woman dances with her father and then the chambelanes, her first time to dance with young men. A Catholic priest will assist in the discussion of the place of the quinceañera in religious belief systems. The discussion and the interpretive labels and materials will be presented in English and Spanish so that the audience will develop a better appreciation of the foreign language of Spanish.

Because it is a special Hispanic tradition, the quinceañera can be viewed as an important symbol of ethnicity, and because it is a special event organized by women in celebration of a young girl's transition into womanhood, the quinceañera must be viewed as a women's ritual; thus women's studies will also shed light on this cultural practice. The panel discussion will feature women who have produced and experienced this ritual celebration so that they can share their cultural expertise about the preparations and decorations, and the ritual process, as well as their values and the meaning behind the quinceañera.

Sustainability*

Sample Rebirth Grant Narrative

Excerpts

Please state any plans to replicate this project in the future, and/or any related initiatives for the project director and sponsoring organization. 500 word limit.

The panel discussion on Jan. 24 will be recorded in HD video, edited, and uploaded in Mpeg2 format to the museum's existing You Tube channel for public viewing in perpetuity. This channel is easily accessed by the public at no charge. A link to the channel is available on the museum's website. The videographer has created three previous documentary videos for the museum.

Target Audience*

The LEH is committed to maintaining a statewide impact and geographical considerations factor into each of these partnerships. Priority is given to projects that reach audiences in multiple parishes. Please estimate total audience size, projected demographics and location. 300 words max.

Based on the museum's traditional exhibit visitor patterns, some 25% of exhibit visitors will come from outside the parish (mostly Lincoln and Ouachita parishes). We believe the uniqueness of this particular project will attract visitors far and wide who are curious about the Hispanic culture which is becoming a vital part of Louisiana's varied landscape. This project will target (1.) non-Hispanic individuals, knowing that very few are aware of the quinceañera and its importance as a milestone in the lives of Latina young women and their families, and (2.) Hispanic individuals of the region, in a gesture to make them feel a part of the greater population and place value on their customs within the context of Louisiana's richly diverse culture.

Outreach*

How will you publicize the project to audiences? Please detail any public relations and/or social media strategies. 300 words max.

We will use social media, our website and e-newsletters, local and regional newspapers, other organizations' web links (e.g. calendar on public radio website), printed fliers, and personal contact with local organizations (e.g. historical associations, clubs, and churches).

