

Kenyon College
“Latinos in Rural America”
Major Grant Application Narrative

1. What do you plan to do?

Latinos in Rural America (LiRA) is a public humanities project designed to broaden knowledge, engagement, and understanding of the Latino experience in rural Ohio. LiRA will achieve this objective by building from past successful efforts, which have served a similar purpose for other ethnic minorities in Knox County, Ohio, a small rural county at the outer edge of Central Ohio. The initial stage to enable this project-planning and engagement with the local Latino community was completed (fall 2014) with support from other sources.

The funding now sought from Ohio Humanities will complete the next two stages of the project: community-based research phase (summer and fall 2015) and public dissemination of project outcomes across diverse media (fall 2015 and spring 2016). The project engages members of the Knox County Latino community and institutions in the county seat of Mount Vernon, such as the Knox County Health Department, Knox County United Way, Mount Vernon’s St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church (a pivotal hub for Latinos in Mount Vernon, even for those not denominationally affiliated) and other community organizations. In addition, LiRA will include two humanities scholars, Howard Sacks and Jeffrey Cohen, who specialize in Ohio rural life and Latino immigration respectively, as well as work with Kenyon College students. This collaboration will culminate in a public bilingual exhibition. *Latinos in Rural America*, which will travel locally and throughout Ohio, December 2015 – March 2016, and which will constitute the primary vehicle to bring visibility and cultural presence to the emerging Latino community in rural Ohio.

Themes of the exhibition will include: history of the Latino population in Knox County: journey stories (the past); what and where is home (the present); food culture; church; family life; personal and community aspirations; Latino communication norms: contributions to local, state, and national life: and perceptions of diversity and inclusion. Using content collected from primary sources, the core of the exhibition will feature a series of panels depicting the Latino experience in Knox County. Two digital stations will supplement the exhibition. One will project a selection of video interviews onto a screen. The second station will support an online, on-site reflection piece/evaluation to measure the impact of the exhibition on participating audiences. To date, confirmed venues that will host the exhibition include the Kenyon College Library, Mount Vernon Public Library, and the Center for America and World Cultures at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. We are continuing to discuss exhibition opportunities with the Columbus Metropolitan Public Library and at Ohio State University. As a traveling, bilingual exhibition, LiRA joins in a national conversation about the compelling history and experiences of Latinos who have helped shape the United States over the last five centuries and constitute the country's largest minority group today, with more than 50 million people.

As part of our public humanities goals, we will produce a brochure with images and bibliographical information from the exhibition, and a primer pamphlet sharing background knowledge, information on cultural roots, and communication norms for successful interactions with Latinos, including tips to better bridge cross-cultural gaps. The primer is a community need already identified by the Knox County Health Department and clearly has potential to benefit other organizations and residents who

interact with Latinos. In designing this pamphlet, we will seek suggestions from key leaders of local institutions and the Latino community to optimize content and presentation.

To provide added perspective and knowledge on the elements of rural life and potential impact of Latino immigration issues, we will consult two experts—Howard Sacks and Jeffrey Cohen—in their respective fields. As humanities scholars, both will review and provide feedback on the proposed content of the exhibition. In addition, they will supply related materials that may enrich the project's outcomes. We will archive these additional materials with the project's source collection. On the topic of rural life, Howard Sacks, professor of sociology and director of the Rural Life Center at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, has agreed to offer his considerable expertise. Dr. Sacks coordinates educational, scholarly, and public projects to ensure the vitality of local rural life. On the subject of Latino immigration, we will consult Jeffrey Cohen, professor of anthropology at The Ohio State University. Dr. Cohen is a widely published scholar with a specialty in cultures of migration and ethnographic research, including Latinos in Central Ohio.

Specific activities that will support the project follow below:

1) Development of Expertise in Oral History: Principal, humanities scholar and project Director, Dr. Clara Roman-Odio, professor of Spanish and director of Latino Studies at Kenyon College, and two emerging humanities scholars (Kenyon College students) will participate in the Ohio Humanities Oral History Institute (Kenyon College, June 2015) to enhance expertise on the production, dissemination and storage of oral history.

2) Video Interview Capabilities Videographer/educator David Kachadourian will train the emerging humanities scholars on the use of video cameras and key elements of video documentation to support the needs of the project. Kachadourian conducted video interviews for the Welfare Rights Movement in Cleveland and the Kenyon College Gullah oral history project in South Carolina, among others.

Project Timeline:

a) June and July of 2015. Project director and emerging humanities scholars will conduct research on and with local Latino community members to produce the bulk of the materials for the project, including: archival work on the history of Latinos in Knox County; video interviews of local community members: short narratives (multigenerational) and photography of community members. Kenyon College Library will archive these materials and provide a permanent home for them.

Project director will consult with Dr. Sarah Murnen, professor of psychology at Kenyon College for the design of the online/on-site reflection piece. In particular, we will measure attitudes toward and knowledge about the Knox County Latino population, as well as perceptions of diversity and inclusion. The questionnaire will be bilingual (English and Spanish) and presented both online and on paper to accommodate visitor preferences. The questionnaire will help participants to reflect on their own beliefs, values, and community aspirations and to understand and engage with the diverse local Latino culture. This reflection piece aims to develop innovative opportunities for community building and relationships among Ohioans, including Latinos. To ensure compliance with applicable regulations and guidelines on research with human subjects, the Kenyon College Institutional Review Board will review all questionnaires, as well as the oral history project. As part of this process, the project director and emerging humanities scholars will complete the Kenyon IRB 's Human Subject training course prior to beginning summer research.

- b) September 2015. Editing and Translation of Collected Project Materials. In the fall of 2015, Roman-Odio will task Kenyon students enrolled in her Introduction to Chicano/a Cultural Studies course (SPAN 380) with editing and translating the collected project materials. As part of the course, students will also be given the opportunity of participating in the exhibition, helping with the set up and reflecting on the stories they encounter.
- c) October 2015. Exhibition Design. Designer Justin Bryant from Think Brand Studio will design the panels using the content edited and translated by students in SPAN 380. He will also design the exhibition brochure and primer. Bryant previously designed another Ohio Humanities-funded project. Coshocton Crossroads, and we envision a similarly dynamic design for this project.
- d) November 2015. Production of Exhibition Materials. PIP Printing will carry out printing and panel production.
- e) December 2015 - March 2016. Exhibition Presentations. The Latinos in Rural America exhibition will tour, beginning with Kenyon College the first week of December 2015, followed by Mount Vernon Public Library in January 2016, an anticipated venue in Columbus in February 2016, and Miami University in Oxford in March 2016.

2. How do the humanities inform this project?

The humanities enable us to interpret the past and envision the future. They emphasize the exchange of stories and ideas, helping us to engage more thoughtfully with our surroundings, including diverse cultures. LiRA's theme is intercultural development, a way of imagining a shared future that includes interaction of different ethnic, linguistic, and racial groups based around a shared appreciation of place—in this case, Knox County. In order for this work to be effective, it is important to tell the story of the place and the stories of its people, with the focus here on the small but growing Latino population. With the continued demographic shift and migration from urban spaces in the U.S. to rural communities and, thus, the slow but steady growth of Latinos in rural America, we need new models of intercultural development to ensure a rural sustainability that includes Latinos as valued community members. By telling new stories of distinctive rural communities and the people who live there, the public humanities can play an important and strategic role in cultural brokerage.

LiRA will invite Knox County Latinos to document their own cultural heritage stories, individual beliefs, values, and aspirations, in two languages. These multigenerational stories will build relationships across Knox County communities by fostering opportunities to enhance understanding, while increasing the quality of life of Knox County residents. In this way the emphasis and approach of the LiRA project is fully convergent and consistent with goals of a public humanities effort. The model for LiRA is Journey Stories, an exhibition by the Smithsonian Institution and the Federation of State Humanities Councils, which Roman-Odio attended while participating in an oral history workshop in Canton, Ohio, October 2013. This outstanding exhibition tells stories of courage, new beginnings, adventure, and freedom of peoples from diverse cultures that helped build this country. Closer to home, another model is Community Within: Black Experience in Knox County, Ohio. This public humanities project brought to light the remarkable stories of the African-American community in Knox County. The Community Within, which now exists as an online exhibition (Knox County Black History Digital Archives), began in 1992-1993 and led to a shift in the cultural landscape of Knox County by increasing visibility and cultural presence of this previously under-represented local community. LiRA emulates these historical journeys by focusing on the noteworthy stories of Latinos in rural Knox County. Finally, LiRA extends the humanities goal of telling richer and more nuanced stories than those offered by mass media culture, which typically portrays Latinos in rural areas as migrant farm

workers, unattached to place. While LiRA will include the migrant farm worker experience, it will also gather a wide range of personal stories from diverse individuals to offer a comprehensive view of the Latino population in Knox County.

3. Who are the humanities professionals and what are their roles in this project?

Clara Roman-Odio, Ph.D., professor of Spanish, Latino and Latin American literature at Kenyon College and director of Latino Studies, will serve as the principal humanities scholar of the project. Her areas of expertise include Mexican literature and culture, Latino/a Studies, Latina feminism, and Spanish language and culture. Widely published as a specialist in Mexican and Latino literature and culture, her most recent books include *Sacred Iconographies in Chicana Cultural Productions* (2013) and *Transnational Borderlands in Women's Global Networks: The Making of Cultural Resistance* (co-editor, 2011). At Kenyon, she co-founded the Latino Studies program and currently spearheads the Community-Based Research (CBR) and Service Learning (SL) Initiative at the College. This extensive background and expertise assure the achievement of LiRA's intercultural development goals in ways that support the larger Knox County community.

The emerging humanities scholars of the project are two Kenyon students, Patricia Mota (class of 2016) and Amelia Dunnell (class of 2017). They have expertise in Latino Studies, Spanish and photography and will receive additional training in oral history and video interviewing. Roman-Odio, Mota and Dunnell will research, produce and archive the oral history materials that will serve as the basis for the exhibition. Specifically, they will:

- a) work with the Latinos in the design of the exhibition
- b) develop questions to elicit multigenerational oral history narratives
- c) create release forms for interviewees
- d) collect, scan and archive pictures from the local Latino community
- e) conduct and edit video interviews
- f) produce new photographs and document contemporary cultural events and community members as they pursue their activities
- g) archive oral history materials for students in SPAN 380. map ideas for the reflection piece, and publicize the project

Students in SPAN 380 will contribute their time to: edit and translate narratives with help of community members; edit and translate the questionnaire for the reflection piece; help set up the exhibition at Kenyon College and Mount Vernon Public Library.

4. How will you publicize the project?

We will publicize the project via three communication vehicles:

- a) Social media/digital networks. We will leverage Facebook, Twitter, email and the Kenyon College website, as well as digital capabilities of the exhibition venues to maximize awareness of the project;
- b) Local/traditional media. We propose a small advertising budget to purchase print ads in local papers. In addition, press releases will be issued to newspapers, radio and television stations.
- c) Relevant communication hubs for Latinos. Popular local sites for the Latino community include the Mount Vernon restaurant Fiesta Mexicana (the owner of the restaurants, Jose

Avalos, is already a supporter and has offered to help with the project) and the local Catholic church where Mount Vernon Latinos also congregate. Additionally, we will reach out to Latino organizations throughout Ohio and to colleges and universities with strong interest in Latino studies and intercultural development.

5. Who is the intended audience?

The intended audiences for the project are: Latinos, both rural and urban in Ohio and Knox County, in particular; residents of Knox County; organizations that interact with Latinos regularly, such as, social services organizations, local schools with an emerging Latino population; broader-based regional and/or national organizations with a common interest to bring visibility and cultural presence to Latinos in the United States.

6. What are the goals of this project and how it will be evaluated?

The goals of this project are to:

- a) Increase knowledge, engagement and understanding of the Latino experience in rural Knox County;
- b) Develop intercultural exchange and relationships between the local Latino community and other Knox County and Ohio residents;
- c) Increase awareness of Latino contributions to the life of Ohio;
- d) Offer Latino youth new opportunities to interpret their past and articulate their future and, in this way, gain access to relevant educational and social goods;
- e) Establish partnerships with local and state organizations and researchers to support intercultural development between Latinos and other state residents.

The project will be evaluated using the following tools:

- a) Forum Group Questionnaire. At the initial stage of the project, Roman-Odio and student assistant Damaris C1ardufio held a group forum with the local Latino community (October 26, 2014), attended by over 40 community members, confirming their enthusiasm for the project. LiRA will offer a way to achieve important communal goals, such as better access to educational opportunities for their youth and public awareness of their goals and aspirations. Hence, the goals of this project reflect the expressed aspirations of the local Latino community. We will continue to collaborate with Dr. Sarah Murnen on metrics to assess value and impact of the project on the Latino community. (Dr. Murnen designed the survey used to measure response in the initial group forum.)
- b) On-site, Online Reflection Piece. Aiming at community building through the sharing of stories, this tool will enable guests to reflect on the oral history they encounter at the exhibition. It will help us understand what Ohioans have learned and interpreted from the stories of Latinos in rural Ohio. We will create the document in consultation with the local Latino community and the Kenyon research team.
- c) Guest Books at Each Site. These guest books will keep a record of community members who come to the exhibition and their comments and impressions.
- d) Outside Evaluator. Lileana Cavanaugh, MBA, CPM and executive director of the Ohio Latino Affairs Commission, will serve as the outside evaluator of this project. Given Cavanaugh's qualifications and the mission of the office she represents—"Advise, Connect and Build" Latinos in Ohio—she is optimally qualified for this task. Cavanaugh will issue a summary report containing her assessment and evaluation of the overall project.

7. Who is the sponsoring organization?

Kenyon College is the sponsoring organization. Kenyon is a nationally prominent liberal arts college offering 1,600 students an academically challenging curriculum in a close-knit community. The College is distinguished by the high quality of its faculty and student body, its small classes, many opportunities for collaborative faculty-student research, and the exceptional beauty of its historic campus in central Ohio. Founded in 1824, Kenyon is the oldest private college in Ohio. Kenyon counts among its alumni such notable figures as President Rutherford B. Hayes, poet Robert Lowell, and actor-philanthropist Paul Newman.