

More about the  
**"With Our Own Eyes/Con Nuestros Propios Ojos"**  
documentary photography project

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The California Council for the Humanities has awarded a \$30,000 “New Californians Story Project” grant to The Latino Outreach Council. This prestigious award, only one of five granted statewide, supports photography and video projects documenting the daily lives of contemporary California immigrants and refugees. Through exhibits produced by California immigrant youth, the projects will be displayed as part of *California Stories Uncovered* the California Council for the Humanities multiyear initiative designed to strengthen communities through the sharing of stories.

California Stories Uncovered encourages people across the state to tell and listen to stories that uncover the reality beneath the headlines, statistics, and stereotypes about California and its people. In a state where a majority of residents come from someplace else, California is truly a land of immigrants and refugees, including millions of youth. Their stories uniquely capture the hopes and dreams of Californians, however these stories often remain hidden and untold. California Stories Uncovered provides a powerful forum, which reveals real stories of immigrants and refugees trying to survive and prosper in California.

The Latino Outreach Council of San Luis Obispo County project entitled "With Our Own Eyes/Con Nuestros Propios Ojos," is directed by Pedro Inzunza Arroyo, writer

and cultural activist, Catherine J. Trujillo, Curator of Special Collections and Steve E. Miller, photographer. The project focuses on youth and families in Paso Robles, California and the indigenous community of San Juan Nuevo Parangaricutiro, located in Michoacan, Mexico and provides a bi-national perspective of these communities through the eyes of its youth.

The families and youth from San Juan Nuevo Parangaricutiro are the largest immigrant in the community of Paso Robles, California and are descendants of the P'urhepecha indigenous community of San Juan Nuevo Parangaricutiro, a town in Michoacan. The community of San Juan is recognized throughout Mexico and the world for a tragic volcanic explosion that destroyed the town in 1943. The volcanic eruption forced residents to abandon the town and resettled some 30 kilometers from the original site in what is now known as San Juan Nuevo. All that remains of the old town is the original church façade and massive stone spire that rises over the valley. The rest was swallowed by lava and volcanic ash.

Over the last 30 years many San Juan Nuevo residents have come to the United States in search of better economic opportunities. The destination point for many has been Paso Robles, California. San Juanenses have brought their unique traditions and culture to this Central Coast town. In the same manner San Juanenses living in Paso Robles, return to their town each year taking with them influences gathered in El Norte (The United States). The communities of Nuevo San Juan Nuevo Parangaricutiro and Paso Robles are linked, but very few county residents are aware of the great cultural exchange that has been underway for over 35 years.

The "With Our Own Eyes/Con Nuestros Propios Ojos" project provides insight about the P'urepecha youth, while encouraging student participants to examine important questions about their family, culture, and community. The goal of the project is to create a personal and collective photography exhibit documenting the P'urepecha youth experience from the inside out: narrated and photographed by the youth themselves. The grant funded the purchase of cameras, film and processing, and framing expenses to organize a photography exhibit. Since early September 2004, the immigrant youth participants attended photography workshops and training. Thirteen youth participated in the project and took over 7,000 black and white photographs documenting their experiences, families, traditions, and culture. Forty-three photographs are featured in the exhibit. The exhibit will travel throughout the Central Coast and California.

For more information about the project please contact Pedro Arroyo, Project Director. He can be reached at 805-783-2346 or 805-226-3215; email at: [parroyo@gmail.com](mailto:parroyo@gmail.com)

For information on the exhibition please contact Catherine J. Trujillo with Special Collections Cal Poly at 805-756-2305; [ctrujill@calpoly.edu](mailto:ctrujill@calpoly.edu)