

Robstown Area Historical Museum Community History Day (Abridgment)

In January 1996, Ines Ramon gathered interested people from the Robstown community and the first official meeting was held at the Church of Christ. Over the next few years the meeting place jumped from building to building as we started to collect objects but had nowhere for them to be displayed. In 2000, Dr. and Mrs. Roberto Bosquez offered to donate the old family Bosquez Grocery Store Building on Main Avenue. The building was refurbished and with the help of countless individuals, local business, and churches, the Robstown Area Historical Museum has since expanded from its original 1,500 square footage to now 4,500 square feet -- quadrupling in size. Now the time has come to begin to incorporate the larger community in the collection of historical archives.

I, Jonathan Cortez, came to the Robstown Area Historical Museum during my junior year while at The University of Texas at Austin when I was writing my first honors thesis about the Chicana/o Movement. Upon realizing the museum did not have any archives, I set out to conduct interviews with local participants in the movement. Here, six participants whom I interviewed revealed to me their boxes of photos, documents, stickers, newspapers, etc., buried deep in their garage and closets. Since then I have been continuously thinking about how the Robstown Area Historical Museum can work with the community to construct a comprehensive history of the Robstown area. Now at Brown University pursuing my doctoral degree in American Studies and Public Humanities, I am equipped with the knowledge to plan and carry out this project.

The Robstown Area Historical Museum (RAHM) is holding a "Community History Day" in an effort to increase community participation in local history, increase the amount of documents the museum currently holds, and to build awareness about the museum throughout the community (e.g., schools, churches, etc.). This is an open call for community members to contribute to the growing collection of archives (e.g., photos, objects, documents, personal papers, oral histories, etc.) at the Robstown Area Historical Museum. This event will take place on July 9, 2016 from 9am to 4pm at the Nueces County Keach Family Library.

The audience for the Robstown Area Historical Museum Community History Day is any member of the Robstown community or those who have known someone who lived in, or has archives from, someone affiliated with Robstown. In addition, those from neighboring towns with an interest in this local history would be welcomed and could benefit. We also foresee that schools, scholarly and community researchers (including those interested in genealogy), and local government agencies will benefit from a better understanding and documentation of this community's history.

The RAHM Community History Day will be publicized through the creation of a Facebook event page. Most Robstown community members utilize Facebook to maintain high school class pages and other community events. Therefore, Facebook pages affiliated with Robstown will be targeted to create excitement behind the event. To focus on those communities who do not use Facebook, advertisements in local newspapers (e.g., *Nueces County Record Star* and *Corpus Christi Caller Times*) will be published. In addition to these platforms, fliers will be posted in restaurants, churches, schools, and other community-based locales. These three modes of contact will be available in Spanish and will hopefully result in significant, diverse attendance.

At the Community History Day event, members from the community of Robstown, or anyone who has documents that contribute to that history, can bring their photos, documents, and other items to be kept or scanned so that the Robstown Area Historical Museum has a copy of the originals. A short, index-card length survey will accompany each archive in order to collect

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necessary metadata (i.e., information about the archive). Attendees will also have the option to record an oral history memory with a trained interviewer. There will also be other activities for attendees to keep busy while their archives are being scanned.

I, Jonathan Cortez,¹ will give a talk about the importance of community participation in building the collection of the Robstown Area Historical Museum. In 2014, while a junior at The University of Texas at Austin, I presented my Latina/o undergraduate honors thesis titled “Occupying *La Lomita*: Claiming Chicana/o Space and Identity in Robstown, Texas” at the Nueces County Keach Family Library. In my presentation I spoke about my use of interviews with Robstown community members and my use of their private collections. This lecture will build on those sentiments in attempts to get community members to share their archives with the RAHM. The lecture will take place during the Community History Day event around 11 a.m.

Current volunteers from the Robstown Area Historical Museum will be at central locales (e.g., welcome table, head of scanning stations, etc.). We are also in contact with volunteer students from the Robstown High School Kiwanis Club and a few history courses in hopes that their students can volunteer at the event. We project over two hundred community members will attend, contribute, and/or participate.

In order to fully carry out this project, we estimate a cost of \$4,500. This includes travel and lodging and a honoraria for the project manager, Jonathan Cortez, for his time and lecture he will present titled “Documenting Robstown: The Importance of Community Participation.” These costs also include event space, promotional costs, supplies, equipment, and incidental costs. The project manager has submitted a Humanities Texas Mini-Grant for the amount of \$1,500 in hopes of subsidizing the cost of the honoraria, promotional costs, and the purchasing of equipment. We anticipate hearing back from Humanities Texas by the end of March.

This project is important not only for the museum, but for the community of Robstown in which we grew up. What we are trying to achieve through this project is to allow people to tell and preserve their own histories. Recognizing that our histories are important has the ability to inform racial and ethnic identity formation. And what can grow out of this project are possibilities for community organizations, schools, and the city of Robstown as whole to become better equipped at answering future questions by looking to the past. In conclusion, this project is an open call towards the development of community empowerment.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Cortez
Doctoral Student | American Studies
M.A. | Public Humanities
Brown University
(361) 726-3116 | Jonathan_cortez@brown.edu

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¹ Jonathan Cortez is currently a Ph.D. student at Brown University. Accompanying his Ph.D. in American Studies, Cortez is in the process of receiving an M.A. in Public Humanities from the John Nicholas Brown Center for Public Humanities and Cultural Heritage. Cortez received his B.A. in Sociology and Latina/o Studies from The University of Texas at Austin after graduating from Robstown High School. His academic focus is in the areas of Latina/o Studies, rural studies, transnational rural social movements, labor studies, knowledge production, dissemination of knowledge, and informal, private archives.