



final evaluation of the Latino History Project:  
a Pilot Youth Program for Collecting Community History  
**research summary : 01**

## Latino History Project Youth Outcomes

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**“I just felt a really big connection with the elders. They’re so proud of everything they did...That’s what made me see what a real community is. It’s not just this small little area that you live in, but it’s much bigger than that. And what you do within the few blocks you live in affects not just those people, but the larger community.”**  
—*youth interview*

The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA), in collaboration with the Spanish Speakers Citizens’ Foundation Youth and Family Services, the Puente Project, and its Hayward High School Puente Project designed the Latino History Project: A Pilot Youth Program for Collecting Community History (LHP). This project was developed as a summer program in Oakland and an after-school program in Hayward. During the course of these two different project phases, the LHP

- recruited students to become Latino community youth historians,<sup>1</sup>
- taught the youth how to conduct historical research, including oral histories,
- guided the youth through the completion of written narratives, poster designs, and a group website, and
- offered paid internships for the youth at the OMCA.

With regard to youth outcomes, the LHP designed a curriculum to improve students’ historical research skills, increase students’ knowledge of Latino history, and strengthen students’ communication skills. They also hoped to teach new job skills, and strengthen students’ ties to the Latino community.

This evaluation finds that the youth showed improvements in:

- knowledge of Latino history,
- archival research, note taking, and research topic development skills, and
- poster and web-design skills.

This evaluation also documents profound social outcomes for the youth involved in the LHP. 12 youth have an increased sense of pride or self-respect.<sup>2</sup>

**“After being in the project and listening to the stories of some Latinos I am more proud and honored to be who I am and to come from where I do.”**—*final evaluation comment*

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<sup>1</sup> Fifteen students completed the project. Fourteen of these students have Mexican or other Latino ethnic identities. One of these students has an African American ethnic identity. Ten of these students are young women, five of these students are young men.

<sup>2</sup> The number of students cited in this section comes from the analysis of documents from thirteen students. Two other students were not included in the analysis and may have experienced similar changes in skills and attitudes.

11 youth want to continue as community historians and leaders.

**“Now we can share what we found with the next generation .” —youth journal**

**“This project is going to affect my life. I would like to do community service, spend a couple of hours a week while I’m going to college helping my community. I learned a lot of things. I think I’m capable of helping out and making an impact.”  
—youth interview**

In addition, 10 youth gained new job experience and 9 youth developed new relationships with adults that have helped shape college and career goals.

This evaluation uncovered several other findings. Most importantly, this evaluation shows that community history projects lead to greater retention of history. Analysis of youth historian journals indicate that the youth learned many details related to Latinos’ everyday lives:

**“From our group interview with Yolanda I was very interested in the topic of her uncles in the war. I thought it was very sad to hear that her favorite uncle came back from the war and didn’t speak for 6 months. I find that interesting because I would like to know what he was thinking about. What he felt and what it was like to be back home. I mean just to imagine all those men coming back from the war, having flashbacks.” —youth journal**

**“Sugar, nylons and other good things were hard to get.” —youth journal**

**“I didn’t know the children had to wear dog tags to identify them in case of an emergency.” —youth journal**

At the same time, the LHP fostered a love of history.

**“I didn’t really care (about history) when I was younger...Until the Latino History Project, that’s when I got really interested in everything and I heard everybody’s lives and how they were so amazing ...” —youth interview**

**“I really, really loved it. I was like, ‘OK, now I love history.’” —youth interview**

Findings also suggest that by focusing on World War II and Latino political organizations, this particular community history project underpinned students’ sense of patriotism.

**“These are people who weren’t from here, you know from Mexico, and here they come and they’re trying to help their country and they’re helping. It just gave me a sense of pride and I really admire them...They worked really long and hard and the men, too, the *braceros*...I admire all of them (for) doing all that hard work and helping this nation.” —youth interview**

## **Conclusions**

The LHP met their desired goals with regard to student educational and social outcomes, though further improvement in writing skills may have been attained through additional revisions of narratives.

In attaining these outcomes, this evaluation offers some significant contributions to the educational literature. This evaluation supports the existing education literature by showing that a community history project can

- introduce students to new primary sources of information,
- improve the acquisition of historical knowledge,
- improve students' research skills,
- encourage new relationships with adults as role models,
- improve self-respect,
- underpin feelings of patriotism, and
- foster a love of history.

This evaluation of the LHP also uncovers some new findings by showing that a community history project can

- introduce elders as invaluable sources of community history,
- teach students poster and web-design skills as a means of communicating historical research findings, and
- encourage students to continue as community historians and leaders.

In attaining these outcomes, the LHP also reinforced a range of California State English and Visual Arts content standards and supplemented a number of History and Social Studies Content Standards for 11<sup>th</sup> Grade U.S. History and Geography.

Differences between the two phases did occur. Overall, Hayward youth gave the LHP lower ratings than the Oakland youth. Content analysis of the final evaluations indicate that Hayward youth were frustrated because they were not given lead roles in the interviews with adults. Interviews with project educators also indicate that the after school structure of the Hayward program inhibited post-interview discussions. In contrast, the Oakland summer program met daily and debriefed regularly. The summer program structure also fostered a strong sense of teamwork.

## **Recommendations**

Educators implementing the LHP in the future might spend more time revising written narratives to strengthen writing skills; explore ways to include youth more centrally in the interviews with elders; develop consistent research instruments; and consider combining the structure of the Oakland and Hayward phases, offering a program that begins with a daily summer program and extends through the school year.