

QUICHUA

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Chimborazo, the 20,000 foot apex of the Andes Mountain range in Ecuador, is an extinct volcano in the center of the country. On this mountain live an indigenous people known as the Quichua. Indigenous empires (Cara, Inca), the Spanish colonial rule (from 1526 to 1830), and long-standing border disputes with Peru, which sits east and south of Ecuador, have come and gone. Enduring are the *campesinos* of Chimborazo Province. A quarter of a million people, they are the largest group of Native Americans in the country. They are also among the most poverty-stricken peoples in South America.

They have endured exploitation for generations through a hacienda system which has resulted in general illiteracy, financial dependence, and social marginalization. Efforts by national and international organizations to improve these conditions have not always been successful, especially when they have failed to take into account the social and cultural contexts of development. Productive efforts to assist the campesinos have been spawned by grassroots organizations with a deeper perception of what was needed and how best to communicate with their compatriots.

Feria Educativa, "Educational Fair," was a seminal group in these latter development efforts. Formed in 1974, the Feria formulated an agenda of goals identified by the campesinos themselves. The Feria's training programs have included some 100 musical performance groups; the Feria has sponsored four festivals of traditional music and dance, produced three cassettes, and generated many pamphlets on the local folk arts and historical lore. Bakeries, artisan-managed workshops, community centers, and

reforestation projects have proliferated thanks to Feria Educativa's collective efforts.

Music and skits have been used to foster a dialogue with campesinos during the more than 750 community tours that Feria Educativa has been invited to undertake in the last 11 years. Singing in their indigenous Quichua language and wearing traditional clothing, the members of the troupe perform to encourage creation of and participation in a community defined by shared culture. After this, the business



Feria Educativa performs a skit depicting campesinos riding on a bus. Music and drama are used to engage Quichua communities in discussions on development needs and strategies. (Photo by Julia Weise-Vargas, courtesy Inter-American Foundation)

of collectively identifying and solving problems begins. One skit that draws nods from the crowd enacts the dilemma of an unschooled campesino unable to read an important letter and dependent on an unscrupulous person who misinterprets the information. Following the performance, an enthusiastic community usually hosts

the visiting group until the wee hours of the morning.

CITATIONS AND FURTHER READINGS

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JOE HILL: UNION ORGANIZING

Some of the most famous songs of struggle in the United States were written during labor conflicts from the mid 19th century up to the present.

Joe Hill (1879-1915) was a songwriter for the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.), a radical movement in the early 20th century committed to the formation of a worldwide workers' organization: One Big Union. His songs described struggles with strikebreakers ("Casey Jones — The Union Scab"), the plight of the homeless and unemployed ("The Tramp"), the economic base of prostitution ("The White Slave"), and charity organizations that help support an oppressive status quo ("The Preacher and the Slave"). His execution in Utah on November 19, 1915, for murder, a charge his supporters considered a class-oriented conspiracy, raised Joe Hill to powerful symbolic status within the labor movement. Many songs and poems were subsequently written about him, among them, "Joe Hill," "Joe Hill's Ashes," and "Joe Hill Listens to the Praying." Both as a songwriter and as the subject of songs, Joe Hill continues to be an important figure in United States labor history.

In a letter to the editor of the I.W.W. newspaper *Solidarity*, from the Salt Lake County Jail, Joe Hill told why he wrote songs as tools for organizing:

A pamphlet, no matter how good, is never read more than once, but a song is learned by heart and repeated over and over; and I maintain that if a person can put a few cold, common sense facts into a song, and dress them up in a cloak of humor to take the dryness off of them, he will succeed in reaching

a great number of workers who are too unintelligent or too indifferent to read a pamphlet or an editorial on economic science.

There is one thing that is necessary in order to hold the old members and to get the would-be members interested in the class struggle and that is entertainment. November 29, 1914.

Seventy-five years after his death, the name Joe Hill is not as widely known as his influence is felt. But Joe Hill remains an inspiration and a model for many songwriters and performers who organize through music.

Smithsonian/Folkways Records, in conjunction with the 1990 Festival of American Folklife and the Joe Hill Organizing Committee of Salt Lake City, Utah, has issued an album of songs by and about Joe Hill that illustrates his skill as a songwriter and shows his influence on the international labor movement: *Don't Mourn — Organize! Songs of Labor Songwriter Joe Hill* (SF 40026, available on CD, LP and cassette).

Anthony Seeger is curator of the Folkways Collection and Director of Folkways Records in the Office of Folklife Programs. He was previously employed at the Museu Nacional in Rio de Janeiro (1975-1982) and Indiana University (1982-1988). Anthropologist, ethnomusicologist and archivist, Dr. Seeger is the author of three books and many articles on the social organization, cosmology and musical performances of the Suyá Indians of Brazil. He was exposed to musics of struggle from early childhood and has performed them as part of his participation in a number of social processes.