Salvadoran Refugees Audio Cassette Collection

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California State University, Los Angeles
5151 State University Drive
Los Angeles, California 90032-8300
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2019
Descriptive Summary

Title: Salvadoran Refugees Audio Cassette Collection

Dates: 1983

Collection Number: 2017.010

Creator/Collector: Sabiá (Cindy Harding, Libby Harding, Mari Riddle, and Ericka Verba)

Extent: .92 linear ft.

Repository: California State University, Los Angeles
Los Angeles, California 90032-8300

Abstract: The Mesa Grande refugee camp was located 30 miles from the border of El Salvador in Honduras. Over 10,000 refugees lived there in 1983, mainly children, women and elderly people from the rural provinces of Cabañas, Chalatenango, and Morazán in northern El Salvador. They had fled into Honduras to escape Salvadoran Army counter-insurgency tactics that included the murder, torture and rape of unarmed peasants and the destruction of entire villages through the burning of houses and crops. Their stories are told through songs and poems which give testimony to their violent past, depict their present life in the refugee camp, and express their strong will to survive and undaunted faith in the future. Firmly rooted in oral traditions, these songs and poems represent the refugees' collective memory; they document the trauma they endured and insure that the past will not be forgotten. The material was recorded in Mesa Grande by the members of the Latin American folk music group Sabiá (Cindy Harding, Libby Harding, Mari Riddle, and Ericka Verba), who also performed for the refugees during their visit to the camp. Based in Los Angeles, the band was committed to promoting cross-cultural understanding and human rights through song. Founded in 1976 and disbanded in 1989, Sabiá was active in the U.S. solidarity movement with Central America, toured extensively throughout the United States and Canada, and recorded three albums.

Language of Material: English

Access
Access is available by appointment for Cal State LA student and faculty researchers as well as independent researchers.

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Preferred Citation
Salvadoran Refugees Audio Cassette Collection. California State University, Los Angeles

Biography/Administrative History
The Mesa Grande refugee camp was located 30 miles from the border of El Salvador in Honduras. Over 10,000 refugees lived there in 1983, mainly children, women and elderly people from the rural provinces of Cabañas, Chalatenango, and Morazán in northern El Salvador. They had fled into Honduras to escape Salvadoran Army counter-insurgency tactics that included the murder, torture and rape of unarmed peasants and the destruction of entire villages through the burning of houses and crops. Their stories are told through songs and poems which give testimony to their violent past, depict their present life in the refugee camp, and express their strong will to survive and undaunted faith in the future. Firmly rooted in oral traditions, these songs and poems represent the refugees' collective memory; they document the trauma they endured and insure that the past will not be forgotten. The material was recorded in Mesa Grande by the members of the Latin American folk music group Sabiá (Cindy Harding, Libby Harding, Mari Riddle, and Ericka Verba), who also performed for the refugees during their visit to the camp. Based in Los Angeles, the band was committed to promoting cross-cultural understanding and human rights through song. Founded in 1976 and disbanded in 1989, Sabiá was active in the U.S. solidarity movement with Central America, toured extensively throughout the United States and Canada, and recorded three albums.

Scope and Content of Collection
The collection contains approximately ten hours of songs and poems by Salvadoran refugees, recorded in August, 1983, in the UN refugee camp of Mesa Grande, Honduras, by members of the music group Sabiá. The audio recordings are accompanied by text files containing hand-written field notes for all of the tapes, loose sheets of song lyrics, the published book and accompanying audio cassette Escuchen Nuestras Voces/Hear our Voices (Sabiá, 1984) based on the material, and miscellaneous related items. The collection also contains approximately forty minutes of songs and poems of the refugees that was recorded and sent to Sabiá sometime after their visit to Mesa Grande.

Indexing Terms
Salvadoran Refugees