End-Of-Project Report

“Postcolonial Humanities: Crossing Borders, Making Connections”
Humanities Council 2015 Symposium
Nancy S. Love, Coordinator

The Humanities Council received $2,500 in QEP funds to support its October 9, 2015 symposium on “Postcolonial Humanities: Crossing Borders, Making Connections.” Additional funds were provided by a Grassroots Grant from the North Carolina Humanities Council ($2,000) and the Humanities Council annual budget.

1. Progress and Results
   a) Progress toward goals and objectives as stated in the grant proposal

   The symposium supported two QEP learning outcomes: develop globally competent knowledge and cultivate intercultural competencies. Its guiding question was: How can the life stories of colonized peoples reclaim and transform the humanities for a postcolonial world? The symposium included three external plenary speakers, a panel of ASU faculty, and a community partner panel. [See the complete program below.] The community partner panel was added at the suggestion of the North Carolina Humanities Council.

   The symposium generated an ongoing campus conversation among external scholars, ASU faculty, staff, and students, and community partners about postcolonial humanities. Multiple participants commented that they had not considered the humanities from a postcolonial perspective before, or considered our campus and community as postcolonial.

   The closing community partner roundtable identified opportunities for faculty, student, and community collaborations: tutors for children of migrant farm workers; research on the stories of those who work the seasonal Christmas tree industry; public history projects to educate campus and community about the diverse peoples of the region; and advance education in the cultural practices for students studying abroad.

   The Humanities Council provides interdisciplinary academic programs in the humanities that engage and educate the campus and community. Campus units, such as the Office for Academic Civic Engagement and Multicultural Student Development, bear primary responsibility for organizing subsequent student internships and service-learning projects. The Humanities Council will continue to work with these campus units and community partners in planning future programs.

   b) Key Evaluation Results

   Responses from participants were very positive overall. [See #4 below.]

   Increased student and faculty attendance at subsequent events suggest a continuing campus conversation about postcolonial humanities.
Some participants suggested posting the full symposium schedule in advance to allow participants to choose which sessions to attend. We will do this next year.

Faculty members serve on the Humanities Council in addition to their departmental responsibilities. Their contributions made this a collaborative effort and were crucial for its success.

2. Successes and Challenges
a) Project-related
98 people registered for the symposium, a larger number than previous symposia which drew approximately seventy-five participants. We offered in advance and onsite registration; some advance registrants did not attend. The audience was also more diverse than past years, and included multiple faculty and graduate students of color. Our NC legislative representative, Jonathan Jordan, attended the morning session and requested information about future Humanities Council events.

The greatest success was the continuing conversation on campus about postcolonial humanities. We filled a 125 person lecture hall for our first follow up program on November 12, an evening lecture on “Intersectionality: Moving From Tolerance to Solidarity,” by Dr. Ange-Marie Hancock. Many students and several community members from Lifelong Learners of the High Country and the Watauga County NAACP attended. In March, Walter Mignolo’s book discussion and public lecture, “Decolonial Humanities and Geopolitics of Knowledge: Dwelling, thinking, doing, and being in the Borders,” attracted the largest number of faculty members we have had at our programs.

The Council will continue to build on campus and community interest with its 2016-17 theme, “Intersectionality, Pedagogy, and the Humanities: Rethinking Knowledge.”

b) Grant-related
The Humanities Council budget is administered by the College of Arts and Sciences Dean’s Office. QEP funds of $2,4000 were requested to support partial honoraria for symposium speakers and travel reimbursement. A $100 balance covered supplies. To comply with the terms of the NC Humanities Council grant (which limits honoraria to $400) honoraria and travel reimbursements for symposium speakers had to be handled separately. This required an exception to university policies.

3) Lessons Learned
Begin planning early and choose speakers whose interests overlap in order to foster an interdisciplinary conversation. The interaction between the symposium speakers inspired audience members and illustrated the value of interdisciplinary collaboration.

Provide information in multiple formats for different audiences; the combination of humanities symposium and art installation (not QEP funded) increased our audience and impact.
Although symposium publicity was successful overall, we attracted fewer students and community members than hoped. Evaluation forms suggest this was partly because we asked participants to commit for the full day. Next year we will publicize the detailed symposium schedule to allow participants to select among the lectures and panels.

Collect evaluation forms before participants leave the symposium. The return rate by campus mail and email was low.

4) Additional Information:
Selected Comments from Symposium Evaluations
1) “It has emphasized the many voices, many truths that we overlook each day and challenges us to consider our own words/works.” [Audience Member]
2) “Encouraging/engaging students in extracurricular events is something I’d like to work on.” [Audience Member]
3) “I equally enjoyed both sessions I was able to attend. I relish the opportunity to learn more about our faculty and their research.” [Audience Member]
4) “The Postcolonial Humanities Symposium was a very important event and I am grateful for being included. The invited speakers helped to build and draw-out campus conversations on this important topic. Personally, I benefitted tremendously from the lectures, conversations and the opportunity to meet people from different institutions. This event was excellent!” [Faculty Panel Participant]

Selected Student Responses to the “Milagros for Migrants” Art Installation
1) “The entire exhibit was both touching and educational. Until now, I had no idea how important migrant farm workers are to our economy. My hope is that in the future, people will become more educated about these types of issues.”
2) “These hard working men and women are people. They are people that deserve everything everyone else does.”
3) “Seeing the suitcases full of migrants’ personal photographs, specialized for each individual, just made their struggles feel real to me.”
4) “I was very thankful to have had the opportunity to experience the migrant exhibit in the multicultural center....This exhibit was very powerful. It just makes me sad to think about how often this happens and how little I think of it, especially while at the store.”
5) “With more awareness, people must come to realize and affirm these people’s nature as human beings.”
6) “We don’t like to acknowledge their [migrants’] existence, because that would mean acknowledging the fact that we are okay with exploiting another human being as long as we don’t have to personally deal with it....As a society, we generally dehumanize migrants to the point that their motives for coming over aren’t considered. They are vilified and simply shown as job stealers, when in reality they are doing necessary work that others are unwilling to do, to provide for their families.”
7) “This was an interesting exhibit and an enlightening experience for me. I never thought about the workers who made my food and their life conditions. I also realized that I know next to nothing about where my food really comes from and the hard work that does into it. It truly is a global world.”
Postcolonial Humanities: Crossing Borders, Making Connections
Blue Ridge Ballroom, Plemons Student Union
Appalachian State University
October 9, 2015, 9AM-5PM

9:00 AM-9:15 AM  Welcome and Opening Remarks
Anthony Calamai, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences
Nancy Love, Humanities Council Coordinator, Government & Justice Studies

9:15 AM-10:30 AM  Tomasita Meets Tomati: Crossing Geopolitical, Ecological and Epistemological Borders on the Tomato Trail
Deborah Barndt, York University

10:30 AM-10:45 AM  Break – Refreshments Provided

10:45 AM-12:00 PM  Postcolonial Biology: Empire, Psyche, Flesh
Deepika Bahri, Emory University

12:00 PM-1:15 PM  Lunch – On Your Own

1:15-2:15 PM  Faculty Panel: Why Postcolonial Humanities?
Moderator: Laura Ammon, Philosophy & Religion
Sushmita Chatterjee, Gender, Women’s and Sexuality Studies Program
James Ivory, Language, Literature, and Culture
Diane Mines, Anthropology
William Schumann III, Appalachian Studies

2:15 PM-2:30 PM  Break – Refreshments Provided

2:30 PM-3:45 PM  Sweat Equity Investment of Cotton Pickers of America
C. Sade Turnipseed, Mississippi Valley State University and Khafre, Inc.

3:45 PM-4:00 PM  Break

4:00 PM-5:00 PM  Closing Roundtable: Postcolonial Humanities in the Community
Moderators: Clark Maddux, Watauga Residential College and Kin-Yan Szeto, Theater and Dance
Brian MacHarg, Office of Academic Civic Engagement
Roberta Jackson and Andrea Burns, Junaluska Heritage Association
Michelle Pelayo, Ashe County Migrant Education Program
Ms. Prasanna Gnanamani Duraisamy Paul Devadasan and Ms. Thilakavathi Arumainayagam, Madras Christian Council of Social Services, Chennai, India

5:00 PM-6:00 PM  Reception in the Solarium for Symposium Attendees and Speakers