

Communities Speak, the Council's largest and most far-reaching program under California Stories, consists of eight groundbreaking projects that use story to address critical community issues. Communities Speak builds on the success of our seven Community Heritage projects, funded by the Council in 1999. Those projects, which spanned the state and brought people together to tell and listen to stories, sparked community dialogue about such important issues as ethnic relations, land use and community identity.

communitiesspeak



Addressing issues and inspiring change

With Communities Speak, the Council intensified its efforts to use story to make communities stronger by supporting two- to three-year projects that use story to achieve fundamental change. Communities Speak projects, which are now under way and will continue until 2005, address a wide range of issues.

In South Los Angeles, "From Generation to Generation: Making a Life in South Los Angeles, 1940-2005" is collecting stories from several generations of African American, Asian American and Latino residents with the aim of enabling people to find common ground for action. "The area is viewed as crime-ridden and drug-infested," said Project



Above top: Jesus Suarez del Solar, one of the first U.S. casualties of the Iraq War, is featured in *Un Soldado Mexicano*, a video produced by at-risk youths as part of the "Tu Voz" Communities Speak project.

Above bottom: Jesus' father, Fernando, now an outspoken opponent of the war in Iraq, talked to young "Tu Voz" filmmakers about his son's life.

Far left: "Guadalupe Speaks" is using a variety of story-based activities to help revitalize the town of Guadalupe, in economic decline for several decades. Here families gather on Main Street as part of an earlier project.

Director Alexis Moreno, "but people in South L.A. have a long history of banding together to address concerns. We hope that the stories will inspire residents to realize that they can make a difference the same way an earlier generation did."

In the Inland Empire, the "Living on the Dime" project is using story to explore the impact of the I-10 freeway on people's lives. "Typically, freeways go through ethnically diverse, heavily populated areas where people are least able to speak out," Project Director Robert Gonzales said. "'Living on the Dime' will give those people a voice."

And in Stockton, "When We Were Young: The Experiences of Stocktonians Across Three Generations" is gathering intergenerational coming-of-age stories from 11 of

the city's ethnic groups. The aim of the project is to strengthen intergenerational ties and foster understanding across and between cultures.

Projects are also taking place in Marin County, the San Diego-Tijuana border region, San Francisco, Guadalupe and San Diego. Among the many issues those projects address are affordable housing, urban gentrification and migrant life.

So far, we see encouraging evidence that these projects are bringing people together in new ways and increasing people's sense of community. As they continue to unfold, we anticipate that they will have an even greater impact on community life.