



MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL COUNCIL  
FOLK & TRADITIONAL ARTS PROGRAM

FIELDNOTES

Fieldworker(s) [(Initials) Name]: (KK) Kate Kruckemeyer, ( )

Accession Numbers:

KK-07-01-FN

- - -C

- - -CS

KK-07-01-M

Fieldnotes

Audio recordings

Photographic documentation

Additional materials

Initial Contact: 2/9/2007 Contact Date: 2/9/2007

Related Accession Numbers: - - - - -

Individual/Group/Event: Angel Rodriguez

Address: c/o Serena Stone, [REDACTED]

City: [REDACTED] Zip: [REDACTED] County: [REDACTED]

Phone: Daytime: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: [REDACTED] Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Needs (including translation): \_\_\_\_\_

Traditions documented on visit (traditional art/skills, occupational experience, ethnic or religious community): Latin percussion, especially Latin jazz and connections between Latin and hip hop; world percussion styles

Traditions noted for follow-up: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Possible Contacts: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary Description: see attached; including for more complete contact information

**Contact information:**

Mr. Rodriguez currently lives and works in the Bronx (as of February 2007) but will be relocating to Leverett as soon as he has work lined up here. Here are a variety of ways to contact him:

NYC home: [REDACTED]

NYC work voice mail (the Point): (818) 542-4139 x53

MA contact person, Serena Stone: [REDACTED]

**Pronunciation:**

When he called me and introduced himself, Mr. Rodriguez pronounced his name the English way [Angel] rather than the Spanish way [An-hel].

**Fieldnotes:**

I was given Angel Rodriguez's name by Enchanted Circle Theater here in Holyoke [(413) 534-3789]. They are interviewing him for a position and were impressed by him [Celine's note to me says: "he's very impressive on paper and lovely in person."]

Angel Rodriguez is a percussionist of some note. He also has extensive work with teaching, community organizing, and cultural presentation. His resume, enclosed, lists a number of his accomplishments and performances. In terms of the content of the Teacher Institute, his work with young people at the Point CDC and Bronx Charter and his consulting work with schools shows his skills and interest in the process we're engaged in. He has used music extensively in anti-gang work. In terms of Folk Arts and Heritage, please note the enclosed information about the walking tours he helped design about music in the Bronx. In regards to both the Teacher Institute and Folk Arts and Heritage, I think Angel would be a good presenter on Latin music generally, and in particular I think he would be a great source for explaining this history of hip hop and Puerto Rican influence and participation in the growth of the style.

Angel describes himself as able to play all forms of Latin percussion and also a number of styles of world percussion (he mentioned recent performances with both African and Hawai'ian traditions). He has extensive work as a stage and band musician, particularly in Latin jazz. He also composes. For our purposes, I think the most relevant areas of interest are Latin jazz and hip hop. As to Latin jazz, he has performed with the likes of Tito Puente, and he describes it as his specialty ("I've played it with the best in the City"). As to hip hop, Angel grew up in the Bronx and describes himself as integrally involved in the music scene there as it developed from the mid-1960s onward, and he can speak quite eloquently about the development of musical traditions there. As shown by his work developing the "Mambo to Hip Hop" walking tour, and my brief conversation with him, he can put the development of hip hop in context and speak cogently to the

influences of Latin styles on the music. I think this would be of particular interest to young people and to teachers who want to reach them through culture!

Angel Rodriguez is currently 52 years old. He was born in Puerto Rico and came to New York City at age 12. He has lived in the Bronx since then, where he raised 3 children. He is in the process of relocating to Leverett, MA. He described two reasons for his relocation: one being a personal relationship of great importance here; the other being that he feels that the work and organizing he has done in the Bronx is in good hands with a younger generation, and that he can find a new place to be helpful in community organizing through music.

I asked him how his interest in music began, and he laughed. He grew up on a farm in rural Puerto Rico 2,500 feet above sea level. During his childhood, running water and electricity came to the area. His Aunt Eva got the first local television set, a 10" black and white. There were only two channels then in PR, and Angel's favorite show aired Sunday at noon ("El show de las Doce"). Angel's family was very religious, so at that time of day on Sunday everyone was supposed to be in church. Angel described hiding under the house (which was on stilts) until everyone left for church, and then sneaking over to "Titi's" house to watch the TV. Lo and behold, when he got there, he found that a number of other members of the family had done the same thing. The most compelling thing for him about the show was the band El Gran Combo, the famed salsa band. He was particularly taken by the conga player, who was also the "funny man" in the band, a role Angel says he himself later played. He was inspired to begin to play percussion. When he came to NYC at age 12, he began playing with other musicians outdoors, for instance playing *rhumba cubana* in the parks, and being part of the "kikiriqui" scene (spelling?—it is what roosters say in Spanish) that centered on abandoned parking lots in the South Bronx and later the "cuchi-cuchi" scene (again, spelling?) at parties and clubs. By age 15, he says, he was playing for money in clubs. His mom, who loved the music, would have to escort him because he was too young to get into the clubs on his own. Also very important to his musical and personal development is Babafemi Akinlana (Albert Humphrey), a percussionist from the older generation who became a surrogate father to Angel as he was growing up. He describes in one of the attached articles how music kept him from the pitfalls of drugs and violence in the South Bronx.

Angel's resume lists a number of the music education and community organizing efforts he has been instrumental in. In response to an e-mail follow-up question I asked about documentation that might have been done of his work, Angel wrote to me: "When we opened The Point CDC I started to bring in concerts once a month. Soon after that I was joined by the famous archivist and radio personality Mr Henry Medina. We started to document events, interview artists in the neighborhood that were part of the Mambo King era. Then Came City Lore, Roberta Singer, Elena Martinez. I already had been thinking of doing the tours when we joined forces to make it happen. I was also part of helping out to do the research for The Mambo to Hip-Hop Documentary. City Lore came to me because they felt it was important that they contacted me before they went on with another project called Places Matters hence, Mambo to Hip-Hop."

**Additional sources of information:**

Mr. Rodriguez is featured in the documentary "Mambo to Hip Hop" by director Henry Chalfant, which was produced by Elena Martinez of City Lore (and the South Bronx Latin Music Project).

He is also featured in an NPR piece by Nancy Solomon on the Tour and the Documentary. Search [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org) for "Mambo to Hip Hop," or go directly to: [www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5170142](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5170142).

Given his involvement with City Lore, I have suggested to Maggie Holtzberg that we contact City Lore to see if they have additional documentation on Mr. Rodriguez, since their history of work with him and knowledge of his work in context would put his knowledge and skills more firmly in context than I am able to do from a distance.