

Project uncovers oral histories of women along Historic Highway 66

Written by Staff Reports

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On Oct. 27 at 5:30 pm, documentarian Katrina Parks brings her latest women's history project to Gallup's El Morro Theatre, 207 W. Coal Ave, for an evening of screening and discussion. The event is free and open to the public.

The Women On The Mother Road in New Mexico: Route 66 Oral Histories reexamines iconic Route 66 from a female, New Mexican perspective.

The Women On The Mother Road

is a follow up to Parks' first women's history documentary,

The Harvey Girls: Opportunity Bound

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The program will highlight several notable Gallup women and include filmed interviews with several Harvey Girls whose lives intersected with Route 66 — Katherine Augustine from Laguna Pueblo will share her memories of growing up along Route 66 and working in Gallup; and Rose Marie “Shorty” Sandoval will talk about her mother Mary Mochimaru Montoya who was a Japanese American Harvey Girl in Gallup during World War II.

When project director Katrina Parks began her research for the project, she was surprised by the breadth of women’s experiences along Route 66, as well as by the cultural diversity of the stories she was told.

“As you might expect, women often worked in family businesses along Route 66, but they also struck out on their own as artists, anthropologists, architects, waitresses, entrepreneurs, executives and real estate magnets, ” Parks said.

Themes of growing up, traveling, challenging gender stereotypes, confronting prejudice and pushing boundaries in a man’s world run through the new oral histories.

The National Park Service’s Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program manager Kaisa Bartuli, librarian and archivist Rose Diaz (the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque), and author Sharon Niederman will join Parks in presenting a slide lecture and several filmed and edited oral histories on Oct. 27.

The project and event are made possible with support from New Mexico Humanities Council, a nonprofit partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Additional supporters include the National Park Service’s Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, the Octavia Fellin Public Library and El Morro Theatre.

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