

RSC Grant Report (2016-2017)

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The RSC grant I received for the academic year 2016-2017 was critical to the development of my new research project on undocumented Italian migrants throughout the twentieth century. As I mentioned in my application, I used the funds to conduct research at the National Archives in Washington, DC. My main goal for this research trip was to identify key archival collections and understand whether I would be able to find enough material for an article in the short-term and a book manuscript in the long run. Given the elusiveness of my subject, I considered this trip a critical step in deciding whether I should and could pursue this project further. I came back from Washington, DC convinced of the feasibility of the project and with a clearer grasp of its importance for migration studies, U.S. history, and the current historical moment. I also realized that I will need to go back since I found so much material. Since the end of my research trip, I have had the opportunity to use my findings in several different venues.

First, I have been working on an article for a peer-reviewed journal that combines the research I did last summer thanks to the RSC grant and the research I conducted two summers ago in Italy. The article seeks to place undocumented immigration to the U.S. in a global context and to challenge assumptions about undocumented immigration as a recent phenomenon that only involves immigrants of color. My plan is to submit the article to the *Journal of American History* by the end of 2017.

During the spring semester of 2017, I incorporated some of my preliminary findings from my research trip during a Shop Talk presentation organized by the Kendall Center. It was an incredibly valuable experience because it forced me to think about what I had found in the

archives, communicate it to my colleagues as clearly as possible, and receive feedback from the people in attendance. The questions my colleagues asked helped me reframe some parts of the article and generated new issues for me to explore in my next research trip to the National Archives in Washington, DC and the Center for Migration Studies in New York City.

I also had the opportunity to share my findings with the students who took my immigration history course this past spring. The course devoted considerable time to tracing the history of the spiral of illegality, exploring the racialization of undocumented immigrants of color, and reflecting on the invisibility of undocumented white immigrants in Americans' collective imagination. My students found it helpful to hear about my new research project to grapple with some of these issues and place the current debate on undocumented immigration in a more complex historical context. It also provided them with an opportunity to see firsthand what professors do as researchers and think about how a research idea becomes a contribution to the historiography.

Lastly, because of the research I conducted thanks to this RSC grant, I was able to accept an invitation to participate on a panel for the annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians in 2018. The organization is the most important organization for historians who work on U.S. history and acceptance into its annual conference is highly competitive. I am glad they accepted the panel I am part of because it will allow me to share my project with a broader audience of experts in my field and talk to publishers about my new project.

Considering how important and fruitful my research trip was, I plan on continuing to apply for new grant opportunities both internally and nationally. I have already used the new research and the article I am working on to revise my application for an NEH summer stipend

and look for other grant opportunities so that I can continue working on this project. My hope is to start working on a draft of my book manuscript when I go on sabbatical in 2019-2020.