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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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University of Wisconsin-Rock County welcomes speaker on the migrant worker experience in Wisconsin

(Janesville, Wis.) – Jesus Salas, a leading member of the migrant farmworker movement in Wisconsin during the 1960s, will present a talk and lead a discussion entitled “Obreros Unidos (United Workers) in Wisconsin” on March 7 at University of Wisconsin-Rock County as part of the Wisconsin Humanities Council’s ShopTalk series. The discussion will be held in Williams Hall 130 at 6:30 p.m. and focus on the experiences of migrant farm workers and the history of the farm worker movement in Wisconsin.

Jesus Salas is the descendant of a Mexican American family who first came to Wisconsin in the 1940s, and, like other family members, he started life as migrant farmworker. After high school in 1961 he returned to migrant labor camps to help organize. Throughout his college years, he spent summers helping to establish migrant child education programs and advocating for improved migrant working and living conditions on Wisconsin farms. By the mid-1960s, Jesus was an important leader and organizer of the farmworker movement in Wisconsin.

In this talk, Salas will tell stories from his own experiences as a worker and leader of migrant laborers in Wisconsin. In addition to his experiences with the migrant community, Salas has an undergraduate degree from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and a graduate degree from University of Wisconsin-Madison. He has worked as a teacher and scholar at UW-Milwaukee, UW-Madison and Madison Area Technical College (MATC). He served as a member of the UW System Board of Regents from 2003-2007.

This event is part of the Wisconsin Humanities Council’s Working Lives Project, the goal of which is to deepen and broaden the conversation about what it means to make a living and a life here. ShopTalk humanities experts spark conversations that explore the forces that have made work what it is today, and invite participants to consider what work might look like tomorrow. ShopTalk presenters share their own work and life stories, inviting audiences to learn how others experience work and to share their own stories.

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“Our aim is to bring people together, sidestepping partisan rhetoric and building bridges by creating opportunities for community members to reflect on real issues in a place of deep thinking and respect,” said Dena Wortzel, executive director of the Wisconsin Humanities Council.

“We jumped at the opportunity to bring Mr. Salas to campus,” said Elizabeth Jozwiak, associate professor of history at UW-Rock County. The UW-Rock County History and Spanish departments are co-sponsoring this event. “Our students and the community will have the opportunity to learn from his first hand experiences and we’ll be able to open up the conversation about the issues facing migrant and immigrant workers today as well,” Jozwiak emphasizes.

For more information about this event, contact Jozwiak at elizabeth.jozwiak@uwc.edu or 608.758.6565. For more information about UW-Rock County, visit rock.uwc.edu.

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