

BERRIEN FRAGOS THORN ARTS SCHOLARSHIPS FOR MIGRANT FARMWORKERS



Funded by a bequest from Berrien Fragos Thorn, creative arts scholarships have been initiated in order to foster and encourage the creative talents of individuals with a history of migration to obtain work in agriculture. Eligible applicants must demonstrate an interest in pursuing further development of their talents in one of the following disciplines:



- Visual—painting, sculpture, photography, etc.
- Performing—dance, theatre, music, etc.
- Media—film, video, animation, computer graphics, etc.
- Literary—poetry, short stories, etc.
- Crafts—traditional folk arts, furniture, weaving, pottery, etc.

There are two options in applying for funding:

- I. Grants under \$500.00
No deadline for application—requests will be reviewed case-by-case
Complete Sections A and C of this application



- II. Grants up to \$2,500.00 awarded semi-annually
Application deadline June 1 and November 1
A budget or documentation of expenses must be submitted with the application. Money may be used for workshops, materials, study with a mentor, course enrollment, mileage, lost wages....
A portfolio or samples of work are required, i.e. photos, tapes, video, etc.
Complete all Sections of this application

Application criteria:

- Minimum 16 years of age
- Applicant need not be enrolled in school
- Because there is no essay required, the Letter of Recommendation is very important and should address the quality of both the applicant and the intended project.
- A history of movement to obtain work in agriculture is **REQUIRED**.



Submit applications to:

Arts Scholarship Committee
Geneseo Migrant Center, Inc.
P.O. Box 549
Geneseo, NY 14454



Berrien Fragos Thorn

1948 — 1999

Musician and activist Pete Seeger called Berrien F. Thorn “a maker and singer of songs that help bring people together with a flash of poetic insight.” Berrien described himself simply as an “itinerant musician and poet.”

In his youth, Berrien spent summers alongside migrant farmworker Jack Lloyd, learning firsthand about long hours in the hot sun for meager pay and the music and stories that were integral to surviving the evening boredom of isolated camps with no electricity. For many years Berrien dedicated his life to making a difference in the world through social activism, performing with Pete Seeger in his Clearwater’s Great Hudson River Revival, and taking part in numerous fund-raising events and educational programs for museums, bookstores, scholarship funds, migrant farmworkers, conservation groups, music festivals and arts groups. After performing in migrant farmworker labor camps in upstate Western New York for the Geneseo Migrant Center in the mid-80’s, Berrien became committed to helping raise funds for migrant workers, donating both his talents and resources on their behalf.

While touring as a performer with the 1985 Greenpeace Campaign for the Great Lakes, the former world traveler finally found a home in a little cabin in Suttons Bay, Michigan, where he lived more than a dozen years. Once he settled into the area, Berrien wrote about his neighbors for the *Traverse City Record-Eagle* from 1989 to 1996 in a column he titled “Easy Street.” His topics covered folklife, visual arts, music, books, fishing, and other amusements. Some of Berrien’s *Record-Eagle* columns were reprinted as essays in clothbound collections of regional writers. Locally, his newspaper stories drew response from artists who learned about themselves by reading Berrien’s reviews of their work, and from neighbors who chuckled when he revealed “subtle nuances of the mundane.”

Suttons Bay townsfolk once had a parade float in honor of their beloved eccentric, who was sometimes seen pushing down the street a lawn fertilizer spreader with a “poetry wheel” attachment. It was Berrien’s adaptation of the Buddhist prayer wheel and, as it spun, the people he met could snatch from its rim a slip of paper imprinted with one of a thousand poems:

infinity.
these days
fresh as flowers
we can not save them
yet they are always here
walking by the bay.



“There are moments in the long spaces of every existence where time flows together. In that slight infinity, being grows big as the world or little as death,” Berrien wrote. “We are all responsible to pay attention. That’s it.”