

# SUEÑOS URBANOS URBAN DREAMS

The Search for a Better Life in Bolivia

*Jerome Crowder*

Photographs by Jerome Crowder

Cover: Nevado Illimani, Lake Titicaca, Bolivia, 2000

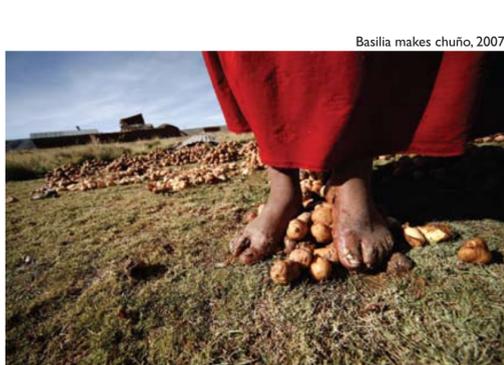
**Sueños Urbanos – Urban Dreams** follows Alvaro in his journey from a rural community on the Altiplano to his new home in El Alto, near La Paz, Bolivia. We met while I was conducting research in Bolivia. As I came to know him and his family, I glimpsed some of the larger truths of urbanization. As a cultural anthropologist, I seek to understand migrants' strategies for living in the city, and I use my photography to explore this process and elicit responses directly from them. They speak of their difficulties, and their hopes, and they tie both to the visible world evoked in these photographs. I have found in my dual role that the photographs resonate with stories, but also recorded any particular person's experience. The beauty of the mundane, as human experience becomes visible, constitutes the subject of my work as anthropologist and photographer.

Alvaro and his family invited me to live with them in El Alto, allowing me to witness their daily struggle to make ends meet as well as their regular celebrations with family and friends. The photographs capture both the straightforward story about subsistence, adaptation and resilience and the unspeakable beauty of that life, pushing my anthropological work toward visual means. It also has made the process of anthropology — and the complicated problems of modern cultures — visible to diverse audiences in new ways.

The research and photography for this project began in the mid 1990s and has continued for more than a decade, most recently taking place in 2007. Major portions of the research were funded by the J. William Fulbright Scholars program.



Preparing the soil, 1995



Basilia makes chuño, 2007

## SPECIFICATIONS

The 40 framed photographs will be shipped in six separate crates, weighing approximately 100 lbs. each. Photographs appear in three different sizes 30x40 (4), 20x24 (7) and 16x20 (29). The space required for mounting the complete exhibit is 525 running feet.

### Support Materials Include

- CD of promotional images and sample publicity material, PC disk containing captions and text for the production of information panels
- All text in English and Spanish
- Map, Artist's Statement
- Specific images may be selected for display apart from entire collection



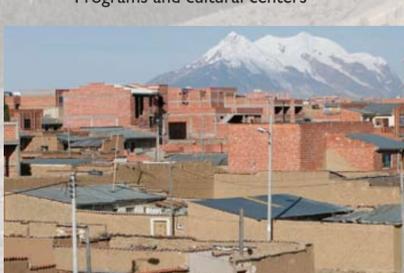
Rutuch'a in El Alto, 1995



Family at the edge of the city, 1993

### Target Audience

- Those interested in migration, urbanization, and globalization in Latin America
- Local photography classes and field trips
- Cooperative programming with a photography center, University Libraries, Anthropology/ Sociology Departments, Latin American Studies Programs and cultural centers



Homes in the barrio, 2007 (detail)



Evangelical Revival in El Alto, 1995

**"Urban Dreams sparked a lot of interest among the Latin American community and served as a catalyst for several collaborations with the University of Pittsburgh. It is a beautiful set of photographs around an important theme for Bolivia and the developing world in general. ... I would highly recommend it for consideration to any venue interested in promoting cultural themes."**

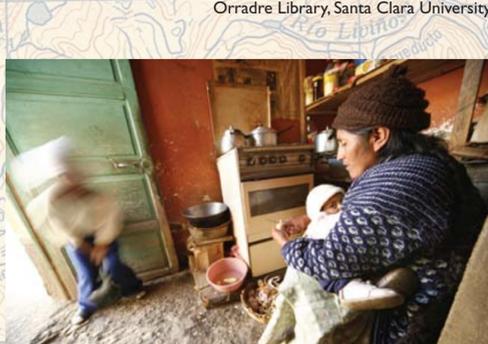
– Billie R. DeWalt, Ph.D., Director  
Carnegie Museum of Natural History

Soccer Game in Huayna Potosí, 2007



**"The impact of urbanization and globalization on this family is reflective of the experiences of the people the world over... the exhibit served well as a tool for cross-disciplinary inquiry, moral and ethnical reflection, and a dialogue with the broader community about globalization."**

– Anne McMahon, University Archivist  
Orradre Library, Santa Clara University



Silvia prepares a Meal, 2007

**"The message conveyed by Urban Dreams is effective and ties in well with current events, not only in Latin America, but also in Houston. We realized this first hand when several groups of migrants toured the exhibit and explained to us how similar their lives are in Houston to that portrayed in your photographs and text about El Alto."**

– Dirk van Tuerenhout, Ph.D., Curator of Anthropology  
Houston Museum of Natural Science

## JEROME CROWDER

photog@jeromecrowder.com  
www.jeromecrowder.com  
713.888.0165

### EDUCATION:

1998 Ph.D., Anthropology, University of Pittsburgh.  
1989 B.A., Anthropology, University of Texas at Austin.

### PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITS:

*Alchemy*. Fotofest 2008. *Becoming Luis*. MindPuddles Gallery. Houston, TX. March – April.  
*The Space Between: A Unique Relationship*. (one of three photographers). *Compadrazco: A Unique Relationship with Alvaro Mamani Quispe*. Whiteswan Studio. Houston, TX. March – April.  
*Mirage*. Fotofest 2006. *Tierra Andina* (photos of people and the land in Perú). MindPuddles Gallery. Houston, TX. March – April.  
*Elements*. Fotofest 2006. *A Selection from 24 Horas de Puno*. Potter's Guild Gallery. Houston, TX. March – April.  
*24 Horas de Puno*. Instituto Nacional de Cultura. Puno, Perú. June 2005. Curator and Producer Universidad Nacional del Altiplano, Puno. September – October.

*Sueños Urbanos / Urban Dreams: The Search for a Better Life in Bolivia*. Houston Museum of Natural Science, Hall of the Americas. March – August 2000.

### Other Exhibit locations and dates:

- University Center Art Gallery, Angelo State University, San Angelo, TX. January – February 2001.
- Orradre Library at Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA. September 1 – December 13, 2002.
- Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh, PA. January 18 – September 25, 2006 (updated material).

Imágenes de Bolivia. El Museo Nacional de Etnografía y Folklore, La Paz, Bolivia, April – May 1996. Solo Exhibition.



Gas Delivery, 2000



Wash day, 2007

Funeral in El Alto, 1996

One day Alvaro went to visit Eusebio, a friend, business associate, and longtime resident of El Alto... to Alvaro's surprise, his friend had died the day before and he had come upon the wake in progress. Eusebio's family and friends stayed with the body for the next two days, before taking it to a cemetery on the periphery of El Alto. In the shadow of Nevado Illimani, the family recedes from the gravesite to receive condolences from friends and visitors who knew Eusebio.

Thus is the routine of life in the city and in the campo: people striving to make their lives better through any possible means. The city provides new opportunities for Aymara peasant farmers, offering commerce and employment as well as social, religious, and political alternatives. At the same time, it provides a cutthroat atmosphere in which survival requires that residents persevere, depending upon their family ties and other forms of social security for support. Alvaro and his family strive to make the most of their lives in El Alto, knowing that one day their spirits will be with those living in the sacred mountains nearby.