



Historical and cultural context

Folk musician Sixto Rodriguez (aka Rodriguez, Jesus Rodriguez, and Sugar Man) is the sixth son of Mexican immigrants who moved to the American midwest for work in the 1920s. Many of Rodriguez's songs, including "Cause" (the last song he ever recorded before being dropped from his record label in December 1971), reflect the struggles of the marginalized city poor who often used alcohol and other drugs to cope with harsh conditions.

Until recently Rodriguez was largely unknown, except in South Africa and a few neighbouring nations where people were inspired by his lyrics. Even Rodriguez himself was unaware of his fans and the sale of more than 500,000 of his records. He worked for decades for low wages as a labourer and advocate for the poor in Detroit, Michigan, raising a family in a down house he bought for \$50 in a government auction in the 1970s, and graduating from university with a degree in philosophy in the 1980s.

Rodriguez learned of his overseas fame and influence in the late 1990s, after his daughter stumbled upon an online request from South African fans for information about the thought dead singer. (A rumor had been swirling that Rodriguez had set himself on fire on stage.) The fans' quest for answers about Rodriguez led to the creation of the 2012 award-winning film "Searching for Sugar Man" and, ultimately, the reintroduction of a musical poet to the world.

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