

BITTERSWEET HARVEST

The Bracero Program 1942–1964

HE IS CALLED
A *BRACERO* . . .



EXHIBITION PROSPECTUS



COSECHA AMARGA
COSECHA DULCE

El Programa Bracero 1942–1964

"HE IS CALLED A *BRACERO*. . . A MAN WHO COMES UNDER A CONTRACT BETWEEN HIS GOVERNMENT AND OURS. THAT CONTRACT GUARANTEES HIS DIGNITY, HIS WELFARE, AND HIS RIGHT TO EARN A LIVING WAGE. . . OR SO IT SAYS IN THE FINE PRINT."

— LEONARD NADEL, PHOTOJOURNALIST, 1957



**Announcing Bittersweet Harvest:
The Bracero Program, 1942–1964,
a bilingual SITES traveling exhibition
developed by the Smithsonian's
National Museum of American History
with support from the Smithsonian
Latino Center**

The largest guest worker program in U.S. history, the bracero program brought millions of Mexican nationals north to work on short-term labor contracts across the country. The work was backbreaking and living conditions poor, but the program offered Mexican men economic opportunities and much-needed work. Their contributions to communities in Mexico and the U.S. have had a lasting impact on the political, economic, social, and cultural landscapes of both nations.

By addressing an important but overlooked chapter in American history, *Bittersweet Harvest* offers a timely exploration of an issue that remains relevant today. The exhibition opens at the newly renovated National Museum of American History in September 2009 before beginning its national tour in February 2010.

Now available for booking



“THE WORK WAS GRUELING,
THE TIME SPENT AWAY FROM
HOME DIFFICULT, BUT THE
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WAS TRULY BITTERSWEET.”

— PETER LIEBHOLD, CURATOR,
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF
AMERICAN HISTORY, 2008

EXHIBITION AT A GLANCE

- 15 freestanding illustrated banners with text; tabletop audio component
- 1,000–1,500 square feet
- Limited security
- \$2,000 per 10-week booking period
- Tour begins February 2010

SITES CONTACTS

Scheduling

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Content | Design

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Opportunity or Exploitation? ¿Oportunidad o explotación?

Between 1942 and 1964, the Emergency Farm Labor Program, better known as the bracero program, enabled millions of Mexican nationals to come to the U.S. to work on short-term labor contracts. Small farmers, large growers, and farm associations in California, Texas, and some 25 other states hired braceros to provide manpower during peak harvest and cultivation times. By the time the program was canceled in 1964, an estimated 4.6 million contracts had been awarded.



Activist Photographer Fotógrafo activista

The program did not escape controversy. Exploitation of bracero workers and violations of their legal rights and civil liberties prompted efforts to repeal it. In 1956, Leonard Nadel, a successful magazine photographer, documented the harsh reality of bracero life, intending to highlight employer violations and improve bracero working conditions. Nadel's images, which the Smithsonian acquired in 2000, provide the visual focus of *Bittersweet Harvest*.

"NADEL'S BRACERO PRINTS AND NEGATIVES REPRESENT AN IMPORTANT ADDITION TO THE MUSEUM'S LATINO HOLDINGS."

— STEVE VELASQUEZ, EXHIBITION CURATOR,
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY, 2008



A Topic that Resonates Today Un tema de resonancia actual

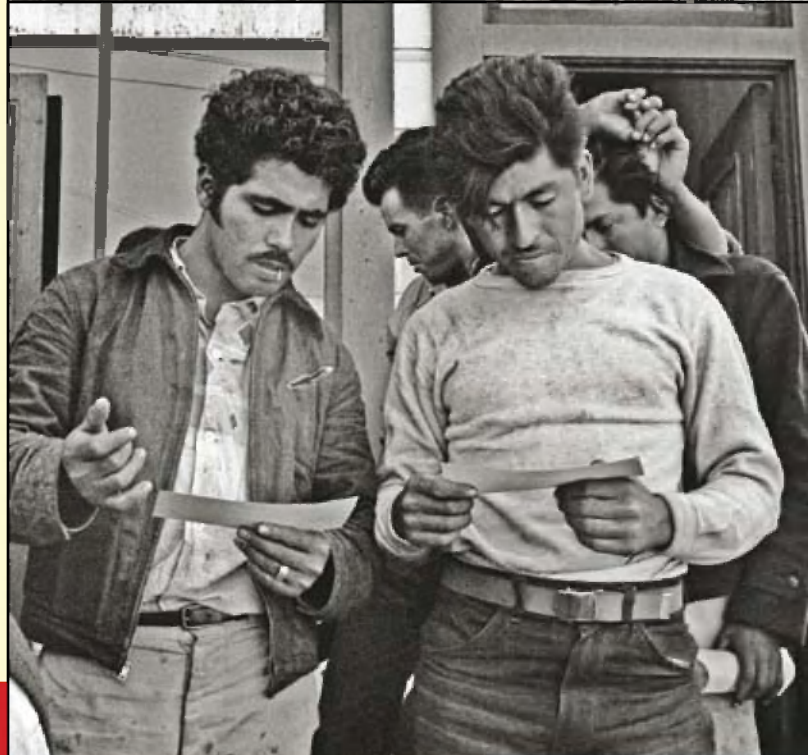
Visitors to *Bittersweet Harvest* will experience the stories of braceros and their wives, families, friends, and communities. Freestanding banners with photographs and text depict the recruitment, processing, and working and living conditions of farm laborers, while an audio program conveys excerpts from oral histories of former braceros, many of whom are in their 70s and 80s. Exhibitors are encouraged to supplement the exhibition with local materials and to generate community programs and discussion about a topic that's more relevant than ever.

Preserving Their Voices Preservando sus voces

Bracero narratives are virtually absent from most traditional accounts of American migration and immigration. The National Museum of American History is leading a national consortium of universities, museums, and other cultural institutions to document this chapter of American and Mexican history. A bilingual website (www.braceroarchive.org) offers additional oral histories, transcripts, images, essays, bibliographies, glossaries, and a special feature that allows braceros and their families to contribute their own stories and images.

"THE PROCESS OF DOCUMENTING BRACERO WORKERS' CONTRIBUTIONS AND SACRIFICES IS A POWERFUL EXPERIENCE. WITH OUR PARTNERS, WE HOPE TO PRESERVE THE LEGACY OF THESE HARDWORKING INDIVIDUALS."

— KRISTINE NAVARRO, INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, EL PASO, 2008



EXHIBITION SPECIFICATIONS

Contents: 15 freestanding illustrated banners with text; tabletop audio component

Participation fee: \$2,000 per 10-week booking period, plus outgoing shipping

Size: 1,000-1,500 square feet

Weight: 4, est.

Crates: 455 pounds, est.

Shipping: Outgoing

Security: Limited

Tour begins: February 2010

A COMPLETE PACKAGE

The exhibition itself is only a portion of what SITES delivers. You'll also be provided with these additional resources to enhance your presentation:

- Complete curatorial and registration information
- Complete shipping, handling, and installation instructions
- Wall-to-wall fine-arts insurance coverage under the Smithsonian's policy
- Public relations support, including sample press release, images, logos, and advice on promoting the exhibition and hosting special events
- Digital graphic templates of programming and promotional materials
- Bilingual website (www.braceroarchive.org) developed with George Mason University's Center for History and New Media
- Educational and programming resources, educator resources, speaker list, bibliography
- Ability to link to and from the SITES website

PROJECT PARTNERS

National Museum of American History

The Museum collects, cares for, and preserves more than three million artifacts that form a vast and fascinating mosaic of life in America. Through its collections, it documents our national heritage in political history, technology, industrial development, military history, transportation, textiles, costume, domestic life, sport, the arts, and community life. The Museum's exhibitions reflect the experience of the American people, while its outreach programs bring music, drama, storytelling, scholarly symposia, film series, and oral histories to museum visitors and the larger community. www.americanhistory.si.edu.

Smithsonian Latino Center

The Center celebrates Latino culture, spirit, and achievement in America. By facilitating the development of exhibitions, research, collections, and educational programs at the Smithsonian and its affiliated organizations, the Center turns a powerful spotlight on Latino heritage and culture in our country. Over the past decade, the Center has been the catalyst for some 300 Latino-themed projects, from exhibitions to live arts performances, underwritten with federal and private-sector support. www.latino.si.edu

Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

SITES has been sharing the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside Washington, DC, for more than 50 years. SITES connects Americans to their shared cultural heritage through a wide range of exhibitions about art, science, and history, which are shown wherever people live, work, and play. www.sites.si.edu



IN ADDITION TO DOCUMENTING THE WORK ITSELF, THE EXHIBITION TRACES THE ENTIRE BRACERO EXPERIENCE, FROM LEAVING HOME AND FAMILY TO MAKING NEW LIVES IN THE UNITED STATES.

REGISTRARIAL REQUIREMENTS

This exhibition has been designated Limited Security by SITES. Institutions hosting the exhibition must adhere to the requirements listed below. (Requirements are subject to change, depending on the final checklist and exhibition design.)

Space

- The exhibition may be displayed in a gallery or lounge area, but not in a hallway. It may not be displayed outdoors or in a tent or a temporary building.
- Secure, pest-controlled storage for crates must be provided.

Security

- Supervision may be by guard, volunteer, or receptionist. Someone must be in the room with the exhibition at all times but may perform other duties while watching the exhibition. The exhibition must not be left unguarded at any time while open to the public.
- The exhibition area must be locked and secured during closed hours.
- Fire protection that meets local ordinances must be provided and is subject to SITES' approval.

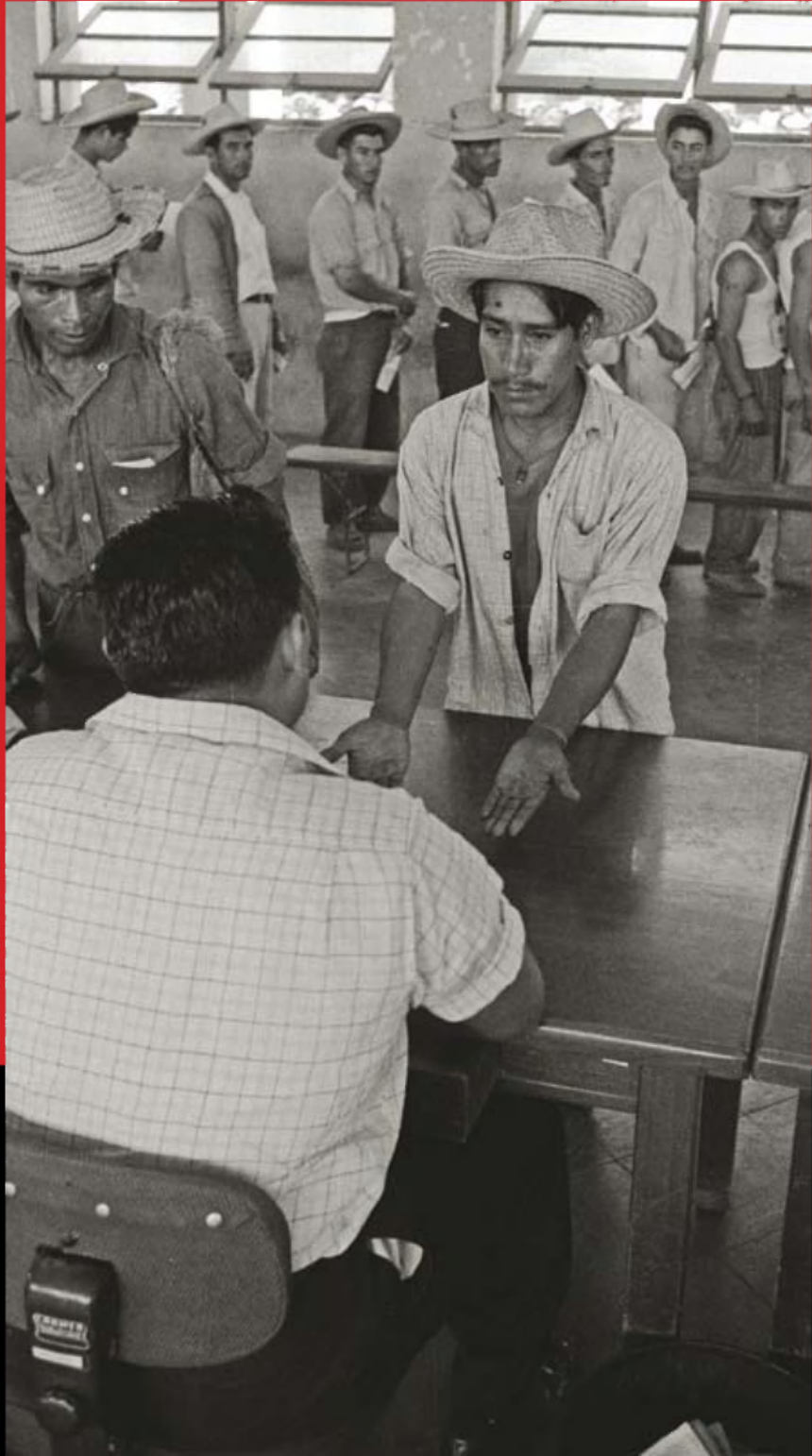
Environmental Controls

- Direct sunlight should be eliminated to prevent fading of banner graphics.

. . . COME LABOR FOR YOUR MOTHER, YOUR FATHER AND YOUR BROTHER
FOR YOUR SISTER AND YOUR LOVER, BRACERO
COME PICK THE FRUIT OF YELLOW, BREAK THE FLOWER FROM THE BERRY
PURPLE GRAPES WILL FILL YOUR BELLY, BRACERO . . .

. . . AND THE SUN WILL BITE YOUR BODY, AS THE DUST WILL DRAW YOU THIRSTY
WHILE YOUR MUSCLES BEG FOR MERCY, BRACERO
IN THE SHADE OF YOUR SOMBRERO, DROP YOUR SWEAT UPON THE SOIL
LIKE THE FRUIT YOUR YOUTH CAN SPOIL, BRACERO . . .

— “BRACERO” BY PHIL OCHS



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Design by Nancy Bratton Design
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