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• Stanford University Special Collections and University Archives and the Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE), in particular Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez and Dr. Gary Mukai, EdD

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INTRODUCTION
The Bracero program was a migrant labor program that grew out of a series of agreements between the U.S. and Mexican governments. It lasted 22 years from 1942 to 1964, and in that time, 4.6 million Mexicans signed contracts to work temporarily in the United States. It has been cited as the largest contract labor program in U.S. history. This mini-unit examines the socio-economic, environmental, political, and cultural aspects of the Bracero program.

Initially prompted out of concerns for agricultural labor shortages during World War II, the program had long lasting consequences that extended beyond its official end in 1964. The program grew in concert and in context with its times. A close examination of the program, including the little known experiences and oral testimonies of the Braceros themselves, allows for a rich interdisciplinary understanding of an important aspect of immigration law, policy and history.

Using a blend of primary and secondary accounts, as well as audio and visual content, students will vividly examine the origins and consequences of the Bracero program. They will consider how immigration and labor affect the goods they consume today and have the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of these issues.

The Braceros mini-unit is divided into three parts designed for high school teachers to adapt and revise as necessary in order to shorten or extend learning. We estimate for most classrooms to teach all three lessons in their entirety will take 5 class periods of a traditional 50-minute length.

LESSON PLANS

1. WHERE DID THE MONEY GO?
   • PROCEDURE PAGE 4

2. WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE FOR A BRACERO?
   • PROCEDURE PAGE 8
   • RESOURCES PAGE 16

3. HOW DID IT END?
   • PROCEDURE PAGE 12
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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
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ABOUT US
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LESSON 1:
WHERE DID THE MONEY GO?

STUDENTS WILL LEARN ABOUT THE ORIGINS OF THE BRACERO PROGRAM AND BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE OF THE BRACEROS.
LESSON 1:
PROCEDURE
SETTING THE LESSON: WARM-UP
• Have students read the short article “Braceros March to U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, Demand Missing Retirement Funds” and list three things they learned about the Bracero program.
• Provide a brief opportunity to share and discuss.
• Then, ask students to infer the reasons why Braceros were so upset with President Fox.

A CLOSER READ
• Still referencing the same article, ask students to identify the following 5Ws of the program either individually or in pairs as appropriate:
  1. Who are the Braceros?
  2. What are they protesting for?
  3. When did the program start?
  4. Where are they protesting?
  5. Why did the Bracero program originate?
• Check for understanding. Have students reference context clues and use the text in their answers. Students should take notes during the discussion.

LISTENING TO MIGRANT WORKERS
• Next, have students listen to an audio clip (4:00) in the KPBS article “Guest Worker Programs Have a Long History in the U.S.”
• Ask students to reflect on the experiences of migrant workers interviewed in the audio segment. Record their responses on a white board while students take notes.
• After writing, ask students to talk about the following:
  • What are some of the ramifications associated with migrant labor?
  • What are the human consequences of migrant labor?
  • Why are such programs attractive to employers? To employees?

KEY TERMS
BRACERO—A SPANISH TERM DEFINED LOOSELY AS “ONE WHO WORKS WITH HIS ARMS” OR A FIELD HAND.
FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT: WRAP-UP

- Ask students to write an answer to the following prompt using evidence to support their thinking. (This writing can be given as homework or completed in class.)

  Based on the readings in class and what you know, compare and contrast concerns of migrant laborers then and now.

- Let students know that for the next class they will dig deeper into the stories of Braceros in order to understand their experience in evaluating the effects of this public policy.

END OF LESSON 1

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

HIGH SCHOOL

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1**
  Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.1**
  Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2**
  Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2**
  Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

C3 FRAMEWORK

- **D2.Civ.13.9-12.**
  Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes and related consequences
BRACERO [BRAH-SAIR-OH]—
A SPANISH TERM DEFINED LOOSELY AS ‘ONE WHO WORKS WITH HIS ARMS’ OR A FIELD HAND
LESSON 2:
WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE FOR A BRACERO?

STUDENTS WILL ANALYZE PHOTOGRAPHS AND FIRST-HAND ACCOUNTS FROM BRACEROS TO COMPREHENSIVELY SYNTHESIZE THE EXPERIENCES OF THE WORKERS.

1-2 CLASS PERIODS
(RECOMMENDED TIME)
LESSON 2: PROCEDURE

SETTING THE LESSON: WARM-UP

• How would you define courage?
  Give students time to write their responses and share definitions aloud.

• Then, tell students that Stanford University researcher and Bracero descendant, Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, recorded the history of individual Braceros after the program ended in 1964. During his interviews, he frequently asked Braceros to define courage in their own words, and this is some of what they said.

• Project the following passage on the screen:

  From his research, Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez found that many Braceros “maintained that courage was passed from older relatives and grandparents; likely a sign of their working class backgrounds or dire conditions. Many mentioned that even though they were poor, they still maintained their dignity and culture; they had pride and bravery that was instilled by their family members. Their endurance stooped over in a field cutting lettuce while maintaining a sense of humor confirmed their courage. This form of courage in work or being able to overcome extreme working conditions reaffirmed their pride and willingness to persevere. Many of them said that you had to have courage to survive.”

• Read the passage aloud, and ask students what stands out for them. Have them expand on their own definitions after reading this passage either orally or in writing.

KEY TERMS

PUSH FACTORS (OF IMMIGRATION)—
REASONS THAT ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO LEAVE PARTICULAR PLACES, I.E., RELIGIOUS OR POLITICAL PERSECUTION, FAMINE, WAR, ETC.

PULL FACTORS (OF IMMIGRATION)—
REASONS THAT ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO RELOCATE TO PARTICULAR PLACES, I.E., BETTER WAGES OR JOBS, FAMILY, EDUCATION, ETC.
DEMONSTRATING PRIMARY TEXT ANALYSIS

• Have students break into small groups to analyze the testimonials Rodriguez gathered in his research and images from selected archives. Before students break into groups, model the analysis of a photo with this image. (For assistance in analyzing primary texts, refer to the Library of Congress “Analyzing Primary Sources: Photographs and Prints” Professional Development page.)

• Ask students the following question: Which category(ies) of experience does the image illuminate?
  • wages
  • work habits & agricultural skills
  • push/pull immigration factors
  • medical testing / healthcare

• Facilitate about a ten-minute discussion analyzing the image. Students will use these same categories to analyze the testimonials of Braceros.

BRACEROS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

• Next, break students into small groups (3 members per group recommended). Distribute the Bracero Experience graphic organizer to all students. Also, distribute one testimonial and one photo per student.

• Provide students with the following instructions:
  1. Read your passage, and analyze your image. Each passage and image best expresses one category of experience as defined in your organizer.
  2. Identify the category of experience for your passage and image.
  3. Record evidence from your source, either a quote or image description, in the appropriate column.

  This analysis activity should take around 15 minutes, but can be adjusted as you see fit. Students should be working for the most part individually at this point.

• Ask students to share their evidence with the rest of their groups. They can pass around the images and the testimonials. Have all students take notes and fill in their graphic organizers together.

  This sharing of analysis should take approximately 15 minutes. For some classes, this may be an appropriate time to stop in a traditional 50 minute time block. However, if you have more time or multiple periods, you can continue the lesson.
• After students have shared their evidence, have students write in their own words what they think each testimonial and each image says about the Bracero experience in the appropriate column. (There should be at least 3 testimonials and 3 images per small group.)

• Have students merge their group of 3 with another group of 3.

• Ask new groups of 6 to discuss some of the most poignant examples from students’ collective observations. Circle around and ensure students are addressing the question: what was the experience like for a Bracero?

• Have students return to and facilitate a full class discussion.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT: WRAP-UP

• Ask students to synthesize what they learned about the Bracero experience by completing one of the following:
  • writing a paragraph
  • producing a visual representation
  • writing a brief script
  • or constructing a brief position statement that synthesizes three categories of experience.

Feel free to add any alternative assessments you think are appropriate.

END OF LESSON 2

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

HIGH SCHOOL

• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1
  Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.1
  Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1
  Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1
  Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

C3 FRAMEWORK

• D2.Civ.13.9-12.
  Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes and related consequences
STUDENTS WILL ANALYZE HOW THE BRACERO PROGRAM ENDED, ITS LEGACY, AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE BRACERO PROGRAM TODAY, ESPECIALLY WITH REGARD TO THE ROLE OF IMMIGRANT LABOR IN THE PRODUCTION OF GOODS.
LESSON 3:

PROCEDURE

SETTING THE LESSON: FOLK SONG WARM-UP

• Listen to the "Bracero Song" by folk singer Phil Ochs (4:05). At the end of the song, ask students to write a brief response to the question: In your words, what is the central theme of the song?

• Have students read the lyrics for a second time as they complete the corresponding close read chart. Students should complete the first read questions then the second read questions afterwards.

WHAT PRECIPITATED THE END OF THE BRACERO PROGRAM? CRASHING TO A HALT

• Display a photo of the Bracero Memorial Highway as well as photos of Chualar Bus Crash 1963 and newspaper clippings (images and historical news articles are easily available on an Internet search). A Southern Pacific freight train crashed into the long bus filled with Braceros as the vehicle moved over the crossing. While the engineer stated he blew the whistle, he was not able to stop the bus in time. Thirty-two Mexican nationals lost their lives and the result was a national tragedy and memorial.

• As students look at these images, ask them to read the introduction to the article "Second survivor of 1963 Chualar bus crash emerges." You can stop reading after the introduction, but if students are engaged and you have time, you can continue reading the full article.

• Ask students where have they heard this name Hernandez Tovar before? (He was a former Bracero whose story they encountered in the previous lesson.) Ask: what do they think it means to Tovar that there is now a marker to remember this tragedy? Why is it important to remember?

ANALYZING THE END TO THE BRACERO PROGRAM

• Tell students that though the Bracero program officially ended in 1964, as they read in the article, like many other programs, it did not happen overnight and it did not happen for one reason. The end of the program was a product of multiple forces including: social, cultural, political, environmental, and economic.

• For homework (and if time, start in class) have students read, "A Town Full of Dead Mexicans: The Salinas Valley Bracero Tragedy of 1963, the End of the Bracero Program, and the Evolution of California’s Chicano Movement (Student Version)" by Dr. Lori Flores.
Ask students to identify the 5 major (social, cultural, political, environmental, and economic) forces that effectively ended the Bracero program. Using colored pencils or highlighters, have students code the text identifying these forces while reading. Establish a color code as a class beforehand. For example:

- = SOCIAL
- = CULTURAL
- = POLITICAL
- = ENVIRONMENTAL
- = ECONOMIC

NEXT CLASS PERIOD

- Warm-Up: Review your colored notes from the homework and star the most compelling example for each of the 5 forces.

- Divide students into groups of 3-4, and allow time for students to discuss their most compelling reasons. Create a graphic organizer as a group. Tell students they should spend about 5 minutes discussing and agreeing upon the most compelling example for each of the 5 forces. Everyone should write notes in his or her organizer.

- Now that students know about the forces that ended the program, tell them that they are now going to look at these forces in a historical context. Draw a timeline on the board and have students copy in their notes. Have students identify key moments in the history of the Bracero program as identified in the article. Be sure to include the following:
  1. 1960 Harvest of Shame
  2. 1963 Chualar Bus Crash
  3. 1964 Bracero program officially ended

- Then, have students hypothesize about other events taking place in the early 1960s that may have impacted public perspectives on the Braceros program. For example, the Civil Rights movement, publication of Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring, Cold War, etc. Ask them to also place these events on their timeline.

- Be sure students understand the following key points from this activity:
  - Nothing exists in a vacuum
  - Every action or inaction has a consequence for other human beings.

CONNECTIONS TO TODAY

- To get students to make connections between the forces around the Bracero program and today, start the following discussion:

  “The Bracero program and other programs made it possible for middle class Americans to affordably eat fruit and vegetables in the mid-20th century. What does it take to get the products we consume today?”

- Have students think about the true cost of the goods that we consume and the factors that go into production. Discuss as a class. Then ask students:

  “What impact does the production and our consumption of the good have on humans and the environment?”
• **Analyze a good you consume** in order to model thinking for students to analyze the question above. **Example:** Reese’s peanut butter cup.

• **Discuss briefly** some of the impacts of industrial agriculture through your example and **create a flow chart** with students detailing the many steps, persons, and materials involved in the production of a good.

• Now, it is their turn. **Ask students to identify a product** they consume on a daily basis. For homework, have students identify in writing or through a chart of their design the human and environmental factors associated with a good that they have consumed. Tomorrow, they will display and/or talk about their good. If students want, they can bring their product to class (as long as it is safe and legal).

### NEXT CLASS PERIOD

**CONTINUING TO MAKE CONNECTIONS TO TODAY**

• **Warm-Up:** Have students code their flow charts for human and environmental factors. Have students circle any place where immigrant labor has contributed to the good that they consume.

**SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT: PRESENTATION**

• **Have students present their flow charts.** Depending on your class size, all students can present to the class or in small groups. The small groups could nominate one flow chart to be presented to the class as a whole.

### END OF LESSON 3

**COMMON CORE STANDARDS**

**HIGH SCHOOL**

• **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1**
  
  *Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.*

• **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.1**
  
  *Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.*

• **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1**

  *Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.*

• **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1**

  *Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.*

**C3 FRAMEWORK**

• **D2.Civ.13.9-12.**

  *Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes and related consequences.*
LESSON 2 RESOURCES:

BRACEROS PHOTOS

This following photos have been selected from online archives, available at the Bracero History Archive, the Bracero Program Images at the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) Historical Library, and the “America on the Move” collection from the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. Bibliographic citations are included in the captions.

TEACHERS

Each of these photographs has been selected to best demonstrate a category of life experience as a Bracero. The categories are: wages, work habits and agricultural skills, push/pull immigration factors, and medical testing/healthcare. Please cut along the lines, and give one photo to each student as they work in groups during Lesson 2.

- Be careful not to let students see the category that best fits the testimonial, as classifying the photographs is part of the activity. Students may offer compelling reasons to argue why a given photograph fits another category better. Some photographs blend categories. Use your discretion.

- We recommend that students in a group each receive a different photograph so they have a more comprehensive perspective of life as a Bracero. If you have more students than photographs, make additional copies.

- Remember to give each student a testimonial to analyze, in addition to the testimonial.
LESSON 2—BRACEROS PHOTOS

- Print, double-sided, and cut along dotted lines to distribute.

Leonard Nadel Photographs and Scrapbooks, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution


LESSON 2—BRACEROS PHOTOS
• Print, double-sided, and cut along dotted lines to distribute.
Leonard Nadel, "This is housing provided by a Texan farmer for 200 braceros in this long building, with the beds made out of stretched canvas, upper and lower. Such close living conditions make for high incidences of respiratory illnesses among the braceros," in Leonard Nadel Collection, National Museum of American History, http://amhistory.si.edu/onthemove/collection/object_1113.html (accessed January 14, 2016)


Leonard Nadel, "Much in the same manner and feeling used in handling livestock, upon crossing over the bridge from Mexico at Hidalgo, Texas, the men are herded into groups of 100 through a makeshift booths," in Leonard Nadel Collection, National Museum of American History, http://amhistory.si.edu/onthemove/collection/object_441.html (accessed January 14, 2016)

LESSON 2—BRACEROS PHOTOS

- Print, double-sided, and cut along dotted lines to distribute.
Leonard Nadel, “As the men line up initially to be put on the list at the Control Station in Monterrey Mexico, they are kept in lines by Mexican policemen. The rubber truncheon he has in is hand is used only playfully on the men, and many of them laugh at it. The groups behind the barbed wire enclosure are waiting to be called up the [sic] present their credentials,” in Leonard Nadel Collection, National Museum of American History, http://amhistory.si.edu/onthemove/collection/object_1125.html (accessed January 14, 2016)

Leonard Nadel, “We are paid with checks at the camp,’ one man said. ‘Sometimes the check stubs indicate the deduction and sometimes they don’t. Most of the men do not check [the] stubs with explanations in Spanish. If you ask any questions to have explain to you, they get very mad,” in Leonard Nadel Collection, National Museum of American History, http://amhistory.si.edu/onthemove/collection/object_1123.html (accessed January 14, 2016)

“Temporary clerks typed I-100(a) & (b) and fingerprint cards after obtaining necessary information from the applicant. All clerks were proficient in both English and Spanish. Rio Vista Reception Center, El Paso, Texas,” in USCIS History Library, Images of the Bracero Program, http://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/historical-library (accessed January 14, 2016)

Stanford University researcher and Bracero descendant, Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, recorded the history of individual Braceros decades after the program ended in 1964. He generously shared excerpts from his interviews to be used for this lesson.

TEACHERS
Each of these excerpts has been selected to best demonstrate a category of life experience as a Bracero. The categories are: wages, work habits and agricultural skills, push/pull immigration factors, and medical testing/healthcare. Please cut along the dotted lines and give one testimonial per student as they work in groups during the analysis activity in Lesson 2.

- Be careful not to let students see the category that best fits the testimonial as classifying the interview excerpts is part of the activity. Students may offer compelling reasons to argue why a given testimonial fits another category better. Some testimonials blend categories. Use your discretion.

- We recommend that students in a group each receive a different category so they have a more comprehensive perspective of life as a Bracero. If you have more students than interview excerpts, make additional copies.

- Remember to also give each student an image to analyze in addition to the testimonial.
TESTIMONIAL 1

Hernandez Tovar benefited greatly from the information provided by a home town friend; Sixto Lopez had migrated as a bracero the year before and eventually motivated Hernandez Tovar to sign up as a bracero. Hernandez Tovar recalled that the goal of migrants during that period was to save 2,000 pesos (Mexican currency) and to purchase cinco mudas de ropa (five changes of clothing). The money he earned in three months as a bracero would have taken him over a year to earn in Mexico. His earnings could also be used to get married. He was inspired to migrate by seeing braceros like Donatalo Lomeli return to his home town with the blue denim Levi's jeans, yellow boots, and a transistor radio that distinguished braceros.

TESTIMONIAL 2

Rafael Silva Puentes spoke about finding the right path in life, when he found a purpose working as a bracero. He described his first year picking cotton in Parker, Arizona: “When I arrived in Parker, I found out what this country was all about. I learned that this country was for me because there was so much work. I enjoyed the work because I kept multiplying the dollar to peso earnings and so I did well.” Silva Puentes says that he was re-inspired every time he did the math to convert the dollars he was earning to pesos. His prospects in Mexico had been minimal for a young and ambitious young person who wanted to buy land, and start a family. He explained that he never viewed cutting celery or lettuce as degrading, or oppressive. He said this of his youth and time as a bracero: “You need to understand that I didn’t have anything; I didn’t have a family, and little prospects of ever owning a home, a piece of land, or cattle. At a young age I wanted to raise cattle and have a life. Thanks to migration I have done well. Of course not all of my migrations were good: on one occasion, I can remember the weather was extremely hot. That season I didn’t even make enough money to return to Jalisco. Another year I was robbed in Guadalajara. On another occasion during a 45 day contract, I did really well. Most of the other times I did well because I worked for longer contracts.”

TESTIMONIAL 3

Oscar Hernandez explained why he wanted to work by the piece rate instead of a guaranteed hourly wage that did not require the same amount of intensity and speed. Hernandez stated that he could earn more money during tomato harvests. Every time he was asked to choose his work day, by the piece rate, or the hour, he stated the following, “I never wanted to work by the hour. They would ask “how many of you want to work by the hour?” And all of the huevones (lazy people) would go that way, and I didn’t. I always wanted to work by the contract!”

I thought it was good working by the piece. I liked working with the cortito (short handle hoe) by the piece rate; otherwise you would only make about .85 cents an hour which would equal to $8.50 for a ten hour day. Alternatively, if you got paid by the contract you could make up to $16-$18 for a ten hour day instead of the $8.50 for ten hours. You also wanted to score points and demonstrate that you could work hard. My hard work and ambition paid off. I was taken out of the thinning crew where I was working with the short handle hoe to do irrigation work and the foreman began teaching me how to drive a tractor and handle other equipment. Whatever I was told to do, I did it. You volunteered; you had to work without flojera (laziness).
TESTIMONIAL 4

**Eustaquio Zúñiga Nieto** developed work skills and an appreciation for agriculture early on, from his parents and uncles in a rural area surrounding San Rafael de Nietos, San Luis Potosí, Mexico. Born into a family of nine siblings, he started working in agriculture with his family and uncles by the time he was eight years old. He began by observing his uncles plowing the soil and he applied the techniques he learned from them. He described what rural life was like in Mexico. “The only way to survive on the ranch was by harvesting maize and beans or by having animals, so you developed good working habits at a very young age.” His parents instilled in him an appreciation for rural life, agriculture work and a strong work ethic. He recalled that the family had about fifteen animals and if their maize harvests failed, they resorted to selling their livestock in order to purchase necessary food. He rarely attended school in his community, and only as he got older did he have the opportunity to practice his literacy and writing skills. The work habits and skills he learned in his youth would become quite valuable when he migrated as a bracero.

TESTIMONIAL 5

Most of the braceros I interviewed, described learning agricultural work skills as early as seven years old. For example, **Eustaquio Zúñiga Nieto** explained: “The work was difficult but you also began to appreciate agricultural work through each harvest.” When I sat down to interview him he reflected about his work in those years and said, “Comparatively speaking, the work we arrived to do as braceros was easy.” He recalled having to cultivate the land with a plow that was pulled by two bulls. He explained how the harvests were dependent on seasonal rains. Toward the end of May they would expect storms and by the end of June the soil was soft enough so they could till and prepare it to plant seeds that would bloom into corn and vines of beans that would be picked in October. That work, he said, was much more difficult than his time as a bracero. He explained that their entire harvest could be ruined by the sequías (droughts) that afflicted his hometown. When he arrived as a bracero he encountered similar work, but it was much more mechanized and they used tractors and heavy equipment to cultivate the land. Eustaquio Zúñiga Nieto envisioned himself one day driving and operating the equipment and moving from stoop labor to an irrigation position.

TESTIMONIAL 6

Getting up early required a formed habit and it was a skill that many domestic agriculture workers complained more and more of having to do. If braceros were told to get up at 5:00am, many got up at 4:00 and were right by the bus waiting for the driver to start the engine as opposed to being asked to get up and having to wake workers up to go to the fields and work. **Rafael Silva Puentes** explained that “complaining was not going to get us anywhere, so it was better to demonstrate that we could get up early.”[1] They developed work ethic and habits that after a while became a natural routine that they simply understood as a way of life. Such habits required discipline and many years to learn.

TESTIMONIAL 7

Braceros also shared an appreciation for the work and the agricultural tools. For example, **Pablo Camacho**, often spoke about knowing how to handle the tools and equipment aggressively and with skill. “Asi se usa una pala y un asadon, con fuerza and con ganas” (This is how you hold a shovel and a hoe, with force and with desire). Camacho repeated how braceros could not be afraid of working, “no hay que tenerle miedo al trabajo.”[1] (Let’s not be afraid of work). That fear must have been synonymous with the physical pain many braceros endured and overcoming the recurring pain was perhaps interpreted as conquering fear. Knowing how to overcome pain and fear was learned at a very young age.
WORK HABITS & AGRICULTURAL SKILLS

TESTIMONIAL 8

One of the most difficult tasks in agriculture is thinning lettuce. The rows are long and workers have to stay stooped over as long as they can until the entire row is thinned, a row can be over one hundred yards long. The more a worker stands up, the longer it will take the worker to finish the row. The slower the worker moves, the more it affects their wage for the day. Yet, though braceros proclaimed that the work was difficult, the reality was that workers had to demonstrate their endurance on a regular basis in order to keep working.

The difficulty of this type of work became evident when we visited a bracero’s house and they took out their old tools, lettuce and celery knives and the infamous cortito, (short handle hoe). Eighty-two year old Juan Vasquez Martinez wanted to demonstrate his ability to thin a row of lettuce using the short handle hoe and the following impromptu example of work demonstrated the context in which braceros viewed their work. Vasquez Martinez began to show me how to thin vegetables with a short-handled hoe that Mr. Eustaquio Zúñiga had in his yard, but Oscar Hernandez Calderon interrupted and stated, tu no sabes desahijar, (you don’t know how to thin). “I don’t think you know how to thin. Thinning was done like this! Haber tiendete, a pata crusada, rapido, echando chingadosos, dejame enseñarte” (stoop over, cross your feet, quick, throwing blows, let me show you). Hernandez Calderon began an impressive demonstration of how to use the short handle hoe. At eighty-one years of age, he stooped over with a short handle hoe in the back yard and swung it in front of him, hitting the ground to demonstrate how he would thin lettuce as a bracero. He continued in a fast-paced motion, quickly crossing his feet and stayed stooped over for about a twenty-yard stretch, and then stood up, making a fist, and said, “Asi se desaija!” (That’s how you thin!). He concluded with a fighting or boxing metaphor when he claimed that you had to throw blows while doing the work, referring to how he approached his work as a bracero.

PUSH/PULL IMMIGRATION FACTORS

TESTIMONIAL 9

Guadalupe Rodriguez left San Francisco Asis, Jalisco in Los Altos (highlands) of Jalisco, where the Cristero war had been fought over religious secularization. His journey from Los Altos to Salinas, California was close to 2,000 miles. Such a trip took courage and they handled their anxieties in various forms. Rodriguez explained that some braceros worked overtime on Sundays because down time meant feeling nostalgic about their loved ones in Mexico. The work, Rodriguez repeated, was easy; it was la nostalgia (feeling nostalgic) that was difficult, missing his family, his hometown, even though he understood that he would eventually return to Mexico. The work he repeated was not the hard part

TESTIMONIAL 10

Most of them [Braceros] spoke about the family (their parents and grandparents) having debt which forced them to find wage work and pay off debts accumulated from crop investments and failures or from borrowing money to simply purchase beans, rice and corn to eat. Some of them had their homes mortgaged by borrowing money from a local family. I asked another bracero about his experience and he shared the following, “We were so poor back then, during my time as a bracero we were able to help ourselves, we owed a lot of money, my parents and grandparents owed a lot of money. Those debts were paid with the money I sent home as a bracero.” Braceros often repeated how young they were and how much energy they had to do the work.
PUSH/PULL IMMIGRATION FACTORS

TESTIMONIAL 11

Mr. Flores Barragan claimed that he wanted to work and explained the progress he made because of his work as a bracero. “Back then, 15,000 pesos was a lot of money to owe on a house. I paid the debt on our home.” Flores Barragan also explained that he was able to pay off such debts because of longer eighteen-month contracts he received as a bracero. On return trips to México he noticed significant improvements to his house. His family even improved their diet. Flores Barragan stated he never liked wasting his money on vices during his tenure as a bracero; his earnings were ultimately sent home to his family because he knew, that doing so would improve his family’s lives. For Flores Barragan it was important to explain his rationale for returning as a bracero after his accident [on the Chualar bus]. “I did well but of course it cost me a lot of hard work, and I felt the rigor of the work, but I learned how to dominate the work, so I didn’t resent it as much. I molded it. All that time with the short handle hoe [sighs].”

MEDICAL TESTING AND HEALTH CARE

TESTIMONIAL 12

Leon Ventura was contracted to work as a bracero in the late 1940s and went through the medical physical required to work. Ventura was also drafted into the U.S. Army after his time as a bracero in the late 1950s when he applied for United States permanent residency. He compared and contrasted his medical physical as a bracero and the one he went through before boot camp and stated that the military physical was far worse and humiliating than being powdered with DDT as a bracero. “It was not about being humiliated, it was a process we had to go through,” Ventura said.

TESTIMONIAL 13

Benjamin Zúñiga recalls that “they always checked you to see that you were an agriculture worker with skills, and that you were healthy. He explained the process of being sprayed with DDT, “te davan una sopleteada para saber que no tenias piojos” (they would give you a blowing of powder so that you didn’t carry any lice). Zúñiga added that, “it was a bit humiliating but you wanted to come to the United States [he laughs] but as long as they didn’t do too much it was fine.” He also stated that on one year during his physical doctors found a health issue with his lungs and he had to return home and receive medical treatment before he was contracted again. He added that the physical likely prevented his health from worsening. These braceros admitted that going through the medical exam was a bit humiliating but the opportunities they envisioned as contracted workers far outweighed the humiliation or fear of returning home with no contract.
Stanford University researcher and Bracero descendant, Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, recorded the history of individual Braceros decades after the program ended in 1964. He generously shared excerpts from his interviews to be used for this lesson.

TEACHERS
Each of these excerpts has been selected to best demonstrate a category of life experience as a Bracero. The categories are: wages, work habits and agricultural skills, push/pull immigration factors, and medical testing/healthcare. Please cut along the dotted lines and give one testimonial per student as they work in groups during the analysis activity in Lesson 2.

- Be careful not to let students see the category that best fits the testimonial as classifying the interview excerpts is part of the activity. Students may offer compelling reasons to argue why a given testimonial fits another category better. Some testimonials blend categories. Use your discretion.

- We recommend that students in a group each receive a different category so they have a more comprehensive perspective of life as a Bracero. If you have more students than interview excerpts, make additional copies.

- Remember to also give each student an image to analyze in addition to the testimonial.
**INSTRUCTIONS**

**FIRST:**  
1. Read your passage and analyze your image. Each passage and image best expresses one category of experience as defined in your organizer.  
2. Identify the category of experience for your passage and image.  
3. Record evidence from your source, either a quote or image description, in the second column.

**THEN SHARE EVIDENCE WITHIN YOUR GROUP:**  
1. Write what each quote and image says about the Bracero experience in the third column. (This is your analysis).

**LASTLY, SHARE WITH ANOTHER SMALL GROUP:**  
1. Merge with another small group and using examples from the texts, discuss what the experience like was for a Bracero.  
2. Write notes in the last column.  
3. Share your thoughts in a full class discussion!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Evidence: Quote and Image Description</th>
<th>What it Says About the Bracero Experience</th>
<th>What I Learned from Discussion</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Evidence: Quote and Image Description</td>
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<td>Push/Pull Immigration Factors</td>
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<td>Medical Testing and Health Care</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CLOSE READ CHART

TEACHERS

- Listen to the “Bracero Song” by folk singer Phil Ochs (4:05). At the end of the song, ask students to write a brief response to the question: *In your words, what is the central theme of the song?*

- Then have students read the lyrics for a second time as they complete the corresponding close read chart. Students should complete the first read questions then the second read questions afterwards.
‘BRACERO’ BY PHIL OCHS

INSTRUCTIONS:
PART 1 OF 2: As you first listen to the song, complete the first read questions below.

“BRACERO” LYRICS

[1] Wade into the river, through the rippling shallow water
Steal across the thirsty border, bracero
Come bring your hungry bodies to the golden fields of plenty
From a peso to a penny, bracero

Oh, welcome to California
Where the friendly farmer will take care of you

[2] Come labor for your mother, for your father and your brother
For your sisters and your lover, bracero
Come pick the fruit of yellow, break the flower from the berry
Purple grapes will fill your belly, bracero

Oh, welcome to California
Where the friendly farmer will take care of you

[3] 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

Oh, welcome to California
Where the friendly farmer will take care of you

[4] When the weary night embraces, sleep in shacks that could be cages
They will take it from your wages, bracero
Come sing about tomorrow with a jingle of the dollar
And forget your crooked collar, bracero

Oh, welcome to California
Where the friendly farmer will take care of you

[5] And the local men are lazy, and they make too much of trouble
Besides we’d have to pay the double, bracero
But if you feel you’re fallin’, if you find the pace is killing
There are others who are willing, bracero

Oh, welcome to California
Where the friendly farmer will take care of you

FIRST READ QUESTIONS:

What border is the singer referring to?

Why is the border described as “thirsty”?

How does the bracero labor for his family?
What does it mean to labor?

How is the work described in verse 3?

What does the phrase “sleep in shacks that could be cages” convey about the Bracero experience?

Is the farmer is the song “friendly”? Circle yes or no. How do you know?
INSTRUCTIONS:
Part 2 of 2: Then, read the lyrics below once more and answer the second read questions and brief response.

"BRACERO" LYRICS

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SECOND READ QUESTIONS:

What tension is introduced in verse 1? (For example, how does “hungry bodies” contrast to “golden fields of plenty”?)

How does the work described in verse 2 compare to the work described in verse 3?

How does the repetition of the “friendly farmer” refrain develop the song’s theme?

In your words, what is the central theme of the song? Analyze how it has developed over the course of the song. Use details to support your thinking.
THE PRICE OF LABOR

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES


All materials are available for download through Untold History.
The UNTOLD HISTORY EDUCATION PROJECT provides resources to educators who wish to inspire students to think outside the boundaries of traditional history textbooks and beyond hegemonic narratives that reinforce the status quo. Our documentary series Untold History of the United States, accompanying books and Common Core-aligned teaching materials are all designed to foster vigorously critical thought about our collective past so that we may together forge a more sustainable and equitable future for all people. Please visit our website at www.untoldhistory.com for more instructional materials and curriculum.

TEACH IMMIGRATION strives to promote a better understanding of immigrants and immigration by providing educational resources, lessons and professional development that inspire thoughtful dialogue, creative teaching and critical thinking. Dedicated to principles of fairness, social justice, inclusion, and respect, Teach Immigration empowers educators, students, parents, and community stakeholders to engage civically and thoughtfully on an “everybody issue.” Please visit www.sharemylesson.com for instructional materials and curriculum and follow us on Twitter @ThnkImmigration.

SARA BURNETT
Sara Burnett is an educator and a writer. She is a former education associate at the American Immigration Council where she developed programs and curriculum to teach about immigration critically and creatively. Sara has also taught for several years in public high schools in Washington D.C. and Vermont. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Maryland, College Park, a MA in English Literature from the University of Vermont and is a graduate from Boston College. She has received scholarships from the Bread Loaf Writer’s Conference to support her writing and has published poetry and articles on education equity in journals, print and online publications.

ERIC SINGER
Eric S. Singer holds a Ph.D. in History from American University and a Masters of Education from The University of Vermont with a concentration in Curriculum and Instruction. For over a decade, he has helped teachers across the country engage multiple and diverse historical perspectives in the classroom. In addition to his curriculum development expertise, he has provided historical, intellectual and creative context for a wide variety of public history initiatives. In early 2008, Eric became the Principal Researcher for Oliver Stone’s and Peter Kuznick’s Untold History of the United States, a 12-hour documentary series (and companion book) that aired on Showtime and Sky Atlantic, and has since been translated into many languages. The series analyzed and critiqued American foreign policy and domestic politics from McKinley to Obama. After it aired in 2013, Eric conceptualized, designed and implemented the Untold History Education Project, a website, educational outreach and social media program that connects teachers, community activists and the general public to a wide array of teaching tools. Those include standards and primary source-based lesson plans that he wrote to expand on Untold History’s themes. Eric was the Principal Historian for the National Park Service’s Social Conscience Gathering, a major national civil rights conference, which took place at the Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site in November 2015. He is currently adapting volume 2 of Untold History of the United States Young Readers’ Edition, which Simon & Schuster will release in late 2016.

CLAIRE TESH
Claire Tesh is an educational consultant and the former Senior Manager of Education for the American Immigration Council. She holds bachelor’s degrees in Journalism and Media Arts from the University of Arizona and a M.Ed. in Elementary Education and Post-Graduate Specialist in Curriculum and Instruction from George Washington University’s Graduate School of Education and Human Development. Claire designed the Teach Immigration program to empower educators and students to deliberate on important issues around immigration and introduce facts to their school communities and beyond through service learning and internship programs. As a former public school teacher she understands education the classroom, community and boardroom perspectives. Before entering the world of education, she worked in advertising and marketing.

TELL US HOW YOU USE THIS LESSON IN YOUR CLASSROOM
We’d love to know how you have adapted this lesson or any feedback you want to share with us. Please send us a message at contact@untoldhistory.com and teachimmigration@gmail.com.