

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR  
“VISUALIZING THE ESSENTIAL: MEXICANS IN THE U.S.  
AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE”

a webinar with Dr. Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez



Organizing  
Questions

- What is a bracero?
- What is the bracero program?
- What does it mean to be an essential worker?
- What is the H-2A (temporary worker) program?
- Should temporary workers be given certain benefits?

Materials

The webinar, *Visualizing the Essential: Mexicans in the U.S. Agricultural Workforce*, can be found online at:

<https://youtu.be/FLKbADck1o8>

Sample Reflections, pp. 5–6

Transcript, pp. 7–11

Further Reading, p. 12

Teacher  
Preparation

Before class, preview the webinar, *Visualizing the Essential: Mexicans in the U.S. Agricultural Workforce*, and review this discussion guide.

Procedures

1. Begin this lesson by informing students that they will be watching a recording of a webinar featuring guest speaker Dr. Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez. Share Dr. Ornelas' biography.

*Biography of Dr. Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez*

Dr. Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, Ph.D., is a historian, teacher, and archivist. Ornelas' work and research focuses on California history,

and in particular, Chicano history and Chicano/Latino studies and Latino politics. Much of his work has focused on archival research that documents Mexican and Mexican American history. The history of Mexican labor in the United States necessarily includes the study of civil and voting rights and the generations of Mexicans who advocated for those rights. Ornelas is currently rewriting for publication his dissertation, titled *The Struggle for Social Justice in the Monterey Bay Area 1930–2000: The Transformation of Mexican and Mexican American Political Activism*. Ornelas currently serves on the board of directors of the California Institute for Rural Studies. His areas of expertise include U.S. and California history, political science, and Latino politics.

2. Inform students that the webinar they will watch is titled *Visualizing the Essential: Mexicans in the U.S. Agricultural Workforce*. Lead a classroom discussion using the suggested points below.
  - How would you define the word “essential”? *Some definitions you may want to introduce to students are (1) of the utmost importance (2) something necessary or indispensable.*
  - What are some synonyms for “essential”? *Some synonyms that students may mention are all-important, critical, necessary, imperative, indispensable, needed, required, and vital.*
  - What comes to mind when you hear the term “essential worker”? *Answers will vary, but students might reflect on workers that were designated as essential during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security—which offered guidelines on who should be classified as essential—“essential workers are those who conduct a range of operations and services that are typically essential to continue critical infrastructure operations.” This includes, but is not limited to, workers in the following sectors:*
    - *Healthcare*
    - *Energy*
    - *Childcare*
    - *Water and wastewater*
    - *Agriculture and food production*
    - *Critical retail (e.g., grocery stores, hardware stores, mechanics)*
    - *Critical trades (e.g., construction workers, electricians, plumbers)*
    - *Transportation*
    - *Nonprofits and social service organizations*
3. Ask students to share what they know about the bracero program. A brief description of the bracero program is provided below.

During multiple periods of economic crisis, the U.S. economy has depended on Mexican labor. The bracero program began during World War II during a massive labor shortage largely due to the military draft and the internment of Japanese Americans, a high

percentage of whom worked in agriculture. Over 4.5 million contracts were awarded to over 2 million young male Mexican immigrants from 1942 to 1964 to work primarily in agriculture. The work of *braceros*, or “individuals who work with their arms,” to harvest fruits and vegetables across the United States was deemed essential. It was the largest guest worker program agreement in U.S. history. President Franklin Roosevelt noted, “Mexican farmworkers, brought to the United States in accordance with an agreement between our two governments,... are contributing their skill and their toil to production of vitally needed food.”

4. Ask students to share what they know about the H-2A program. A brief description of the H-2A program is provided below.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 introduced a temporary unskilled worker category, the H-2 category for foreign agricultural and non-agricultural workers who were coming to the United States to perform temporary work. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 subdivided this category into two subcategories: the H-2A (an uncapped category for temporary agricultural workers) and H-2B (a capped category for non-agricultural fields). After the law was signed into effect, several years passed during which time regulations were written and an eligible countries list was established. Finally, in 1992 first-year visas were issued and the program began in earnest. Changes to those regulations have been made over the years, but for the most part this is the same program that is in effect today.<sup>1</sup>

5. Ask students to consider the following questions while watching the webinar.
  - What are some perspectives that braceros have shared about their experiences?
  - How are the bracero program and the H-2A program similar and different?
  - What are some examples of the diversity of people that have contributed to agricultural development in states like California?
  - Essential workers then and now
6. Show the webinar.
7. After showing the webinar, have students discuss the questions above in small groups for five minutes. Ask each group to select a spokesperson to share a one-minute summary of its discussion.
8. During another class period or for homework, ask each student to write a 300-word reflection on the interview. Sample reflections, written by high school students, are included on pages 5 and 6 of this guide.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fb.org/market-intel/h-2a-program-use-continues-to-rise#:~:text=The%20Immigration%20and%20Nationality%20Act,U.S.%20to%20perform%20temporary%20work.>

9. The following are suggested extension activities for future class periods or for homework.
  - Use art of your choice to capture and /or symbolize some aspect of the bracero program.
  - Research the bracero program and write a one-page supplement to your world history textbook. If you could choose two images to include, which images would you include and why?
  - Watch the 12-minute film *Searching for the Bracero's Legacy: A New American Encounter for a Place in History*, produced by Dr. Ornelas. Write a short film review of the documentary.
  - Research the agricultural history of your local area and the groups that contributed to its development.
  - Examine the Bracero History Archive website at <http://braceroarchive.org/>. Use the website to explore:
    - Oral histories of braceros in the United States. Ask students to think about what we can learn from speaking with people who lived during historic events; how we can preserve and share oral histories; and what oral histories have been passed down in their own families.
    - Images related to the bracero program and braceros working in the United States. Ask students to describe what they see in the photos; what thoughts and feelings the images evoke; and what questions students have after viewing the images.
    - Documents related to the bracero program and braceros working in the United States. Ask students to think about the different types of documents in the archive; how historians might use these documents to piece together past events; and what other types documents that are not in the archive might be useful to historians.
  - Research ways in which braceros advocated for their rights, e.g., through negotiations and strikes.
  - Research the Chualar bus accident that occurred on September 17, 1963.
  - Reflect on your response to the photos from the webinar and write a short story based on the photos.
  - Research the role of women in the bracero program or H-2A program.
  - Research the short-handled hoe and its use in agricultural development.
  - Research songs about the bracero program.
  - Imagine you are a reporter for your local newspaper covering this webinar. Write an article or OpEd on the bracero program based on the webinar (approximately 300 words).

## SAMPLE REFLECTIONS

Reflection on *Visualizing the Essential: Mexicans in the U.S. Agricultural Workforce*

By Niki Chen, Castilleja School, Palo Alto, California

The bracero program has been restricted to this single-story narrative of victimization and exploitation. In understanding not only the program but the individuals and their histories, secondary sources and distanced research is not enough; rather, the bracero program is layered with diverse experiences and additional narratives that require a more nuanced approach. My textbooks briefly touch upon Mexican contract laborers, but in understanding California's history, I never learned about the history of farmworkers, despite their being the reason our agricultural industry is so profitable today. However, through Dr. Ornelas' research into the roots of the program, within the context of California's agricultural history, I realized that the braceros played an essential part in sustaining our economy and cultivating the land we live on today. During COVID-19, farmworkers are similarly deemed essential despite many being undocumented or having an ambiguous legal status. Understanding the protections essential farmworkers have, within the context of the Bracero and H-2A program, is important in giving history a face and demonstrating how prevalent the braceros' history is, today. Regarding its legacy, Dr. Ornelas' study allows for a more multicultural and holistic perspective. Through his interviews and connections to braceros, Dr. Ornelas highlights how the program was both a story of pain and opportunity. The bracero program often entailed horrible conditions, back-breaking work, unethical practices, crowded housing, and long workdays. However, the bracero program was additionally a "launching pad" for Mexican immigrant workers to achieve a more permanent legal status in the U.S., work in the agricultural industry, and to demonstrate their autonomy, strength despite arduous labor, and pride in their work. Ultimately, the braceros worked for their own and their families' futures, and we have a responsibility to continue research and keep their stories alive when history books fail to do the same.

Reflection on *Visualizing the Essential: Mexicans in the U.S. Agricultural Workforce*

By Kalia Lai, The College Preparatory School, Oakland, California

Before this webinar, I had never heard about braceros. Despite living a couple hours away from the Monterey area, my school curriculum did not discuss braceros or their impact in the region, specifically during World War II. I find it interesting that history always covers the American men drafted to fight in the army and the internment of Japanese Americans but not the men who stepped up in their absence and took on essential agricultural work to support a country of which they were not even citizens. While braceros were briefly celebrated as contributors to the war efforts, it was disappointing to hear how American employers often treated braceros poorly and outsiders regarded braceros' work as menial. I came to deeply respect how, despite those

challenges, braceros proudly embraced their work as an opportunity to better their families' lives and their own careers in agriculture.

Dr. Ornelas' comment that most Mexican are connected to a bracero one way or the other surprised me. The sheer number of braceros, over two million, holds the record as the U.S.'s largest work program agreement, an impressive undertaking. While it is wonderful that the legacies of these braceros have been carried on by their descendants, many of whom have found successful lives in the U.S., the fact that braceros aren't known locally or nationally needs to change. Braceros, while part of a now-defunct program, still paved the way for the Mexican agricultural workers considered "essential" to the U.S. government today, and hopefully the increase in resources about braceros and other migrant workers means that their stories will be taught in all classrooms. Considering my complete lack of knowledge about braceros, at least partly due to the education system, it was shocking and disappointing to find out that braceros, as essential now as before, still fail to be recognized for their historic and lasting contributions to this country.

Reflection on *Visualizing the Essential: Mexicans in the U.S. Agricultural Workforce*

By Elena Gutierrez, San Lorenzo High School, San Lorenzo, California

Viewing the webinar featuring Dr. Ornelas on the Mexican workforce in agriculture, I noted the rich history that was embedded in the Bracero program. As a Latinx student I found the webinar extremely vital to my understanding of my Latino culture and work ethic. I have observed how social media supports diverse stories and experiences of people in the Latinx community, whether it be about gender, language, or immigration status. However, I had yet to see any content so positive about the agricultural workforce for Latinx people. Generally, there is acknowledgement of workers and their long, brutal hours. Yet, after viewing this webinar, my view of workers in the agriculture industry has shifted in a positive way. There is great pride to be had in the extremely hard work Latino men and women do, and to note the sacrifices they have made. These braceros remained positive and optimistic, despite the racism and abuse many of them faced at work. It was eye-opening to me to see how the workers never pitied themselves, and instead validated to the world how valiant they are for the choices they have made for themselves and their families. I believe the contributions of braceros to the economy deserves and needs more recognition. Agricultural workers remain an essential and vital part of our economy. As Dr. Ornelas noted, as a result of the Bracero program, the total value of agricultural products rose from 17 million dollars in 1942, to 152 million dollars in 1964, and this only accounts for Monterey County's total value in agriculture. The amount of work braceros put in is reflected in the positive effect it had on the economy. Braceros clearly take pride in their skills, which I found extremely important. Not just anyone can walk into a field and know how to work the land, or can work under such severe conditions. These braceros were highly skilled and had such a tolerance for their work conditions. There must be more recognition of the essential workers who risk their lives to support their families. With grace and honor, the braceros paved a path for future generations to be proud of their work ethic and achievements.

## TRANSCRIPT

**Visualizing the Essential: Mexicans in the U.S. Agricultural Workforce****by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez**

My talk today will first provide a brief history of the agriculture workforce in California. Secondly, I will be discussing my research surrounding the Bracero era, 1942–1964 and provide primary sources from the Ernesto Galarza Collection at Stanford. Lastly, I will share oral histories I conducted with braceros, the importance of their legacy in educating future generations and how they want to be remembered.

Because of writers like John Steinbeck we have learned about the beautiful regions of the larger Monterey Bay Area in, *Of Mice and Men*, based right outside of Soledad and Chualar and in *East of Eden* of course. Yet, little is known about the majority of the laborers who worked in these regions. The historical image of the laborer who toiled in the area is far from a former Mexican worker who migrated legally during the bracero program. These workers have always been “essential” to the American economy.

The history of farmworkers in California is long, dating back to indigenous people in the 18th century. Many indigenous communities and their labor were exploited to grow the vast agriculture economy that surrounded the missions. During the Mexican era the Ranchos grew enormously setting the foundation for a booming hide trade and agriculture economy. As immigrants flocked to California during the Mexican and U.S. period, agriculture depended heavily on Mexican workers and Chinese immigrants who had previously worked on the railroad. Mexican labor grew through the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Mexican and Japanese workers in Oxnard, California, organized one of the first multi-racial labor unions with the Japanese Mexican Labor Association in 1903. Japanese immigrants were pioneers in developing an expansive vegetable and fruit industry across California including in the Santa Clara Valley orchards, but also in the Salinas Valley with crops such as lettuce and strawberries. African Americans also have a long history in California agriculture, initially recruited to develop cotton growing techniques in the Central Valley during the late 19th century and later settled permanently in regions like Corcoran, California, to work in agriculture.

Filipino migrants worked in agriculture dating back to the 19th century, but their numbers expanded through the 1920s and 1930s when they became pioneers in the labor movement, establishing crucial labor organizations in Salinas and in Guadalupe, California.

The Great Depression saw a large population of white migrants arrive from Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and other states to work. Many of these migrants eventually founded farming and packaging companies; notable names are the Antle and Ramsey families. The history of California agriculture is truly an ethnic mosaic of the world.

By the 1940s row crops such as lettuce, cauliflower, and broccoli were replacing sugar beet production in greater quantities. A new era of industrial agriculture was heavily mechanized and the labor became more regimented. Workers worked longer and bodies suffered. As demand for staple products like lettuce grew across the country, demand for laborers also grew. While the 1930s allowed some gains in labor organizing the beginning of World War II swept workers into the home front military industry and thousands were drafted. Men and women

left the fields and canneries for the military assembly factories of Richmond, Long Beach, and other cities in California. A demand for laborers was exacerbated because of Japanese American internment in 1942. A large percentage of the 120,000 Japanese Americans who were interned were agriculture pioneers like the Tanimura family from the Salinas Valley. Thousands were incarcerated during internment and the United States needed workers.

Previously, during World War I the U.S. had a temporary guest worker agreement with Mexico. By 1942 during the U.S. escalation and entry into World War II, the U.S. again looked south to Mexico for workers. The initial agreement was signed in July 1942. Eventually known as the bracero program, a temporary labor agreement, was only supposed to last the length of World War II.<sup>1</sup> The first braceros arrived in Stockton, California, on September 30, 1942. They immediately became essential workers and they eventually would save the industry.

I've been conducting research and documenting the history of braceros and their legacy in the Salinas Valley and Watsonville, California, for some time now. My interest in learning about braceros was ignited by my grandfather's personal bracero journey. Who were these men, what were their contributions, and why is so little known about how they viewed their work? As a former bracero, my grandfather shared stories of betterment and progress. He spoke about working with honor in the fields of the Salinas Valley. He described his work in agriculture very differently from the common narrative of the victimized farmworker. Growing up, I was often frustrated as I heard stories about the docile farm worker. The stories of agricultural workers taught in schools were for the most part about how terrible farmworker conditions were and how the public should feel pity for them.

But having grown up in a farm worker family, I learned a very different story. Yes the work was very difficult, but my family members learned to navigate the arduous labor and took great pride in their skilled work and production of vegetables.

*Ay que tener ley*, my grandfather would teach us. *Ley*, in Mexican working class culture is a tremendously important concept that stems from Mexicanos' fiercely independent, autonomous, and self-sufficient ways. The Spanish term *ley* literally means, to have honor, courage, to do things in life well when you encounter an obstacle. *Ley* also carries a sense of pride like the word *orgullo*. This is how my grandfather described doing hard agricultural work.

I began conducting numerous oral history interviews with former braceros and wanted to learn about their experience directly from them, and not secondary sources. I anticipated hearing stories of worker abuse, and exploitation. Because after all, some scholars called braceros, "modern day slaves." I expected to hear stories of oppressed and victimized farm workers, but I heard a very different narrative. Former braceros shared stories of having used their experience in the program as a launching pad to greater opportunities in the agricultural industry.

Drawing heavily from interviews I conducted with braceros that worked in the Salinas Valley, and Watsonville my research analyzes their experiences and pays special attention to how they viewed their work. My research offers a previously under-discussed perspective that is at odds with the most popular narrative regarding braceros; I argue that many of them remember their work with dignity, as opposed to viewing themselves as victims.<sup>2</sup>

1 The bracero program was an agreement between the United States and Mexico signed on August 4, 1942 to recruit and contract temporary workers from Mexico. The agreement was supposed to last six months, and was renewed through the end of World War II and renewed subsequent times. In 1951 it became known as Public Law 78. The bracero program was finally terminated on December 31, 1964.

2 By pride I mean an appreciation and respect for agriculture work. For braceros agriculture work was not backward or dirty, it was respectable work that demonstrated their abilities as workers contributing to agriculture production. Braceros spoke about their ability to endure long hours of exhausting work but not about feeling pity for themselves, but wanted to demonstrate how capable during their working years of doing difficult work.

The braceros I spoke with shared a narrative that departs from previously held beliefs of the bracero program. Their stories were about hope and the opportunity to improve their lives and to make a lasting contribution to their families through difficult working conditions. Their personal accounts in the Salinas Valley and Watsonville demonstrate how the bracero scholarship formerly has been one dimensional. Despite this departure from the mainstream, it is not the goal here today to dismiss an exploitation narrative found in the bracero literature; rather I aim to offer additional perspectives found within the stories of the braceros themselves, of agency, of progress and their children, a second generation that transformed the political landscape of regions like the larger Monterey Bay Area.

Up until a few years ago, there was no historical marker that recognized the labor contributions made by former braceros and their history is hardly taught. The former braceros I interviewed toiled for decades in California.

This is the land braceros worked in, yet the region hardly has any recognition of their contributions, no marker, no plaque, no statue, no building commemorating how their labor made Monterey County the multi-billion dollar industry that it is today.

The first braceros contracted to work in the Monterey Bay Area arrived in Salinas in 1942. They began working in the sugar beet and celery fields of the Salinas Valley.<sup>3</sup> Two years before they arrived, the total value of Monterey County agriculture products was \$17,454,348. By the end of the bracero program in 1964 the value was \$152,679,620.<sup>4</sup> The pictures, articles and documents detailing the braceros arrival demonstrate how they were initially welcomed with patriotic fervor, citing the collaboration of both U.S. and Mexico cooperating to win World War II. Franklin Roosevelt even proclaimed his support for the program: “Mexican farm workers brought to the United States in accordance with the agreement between our two governments... are contributing their toil to the production of vitally needed food.” In a *Southern Pacific* magazine, braceros were called *Soldados del Ferrocarril* (Soldiers of the Railroad) and about fifty braceros are shown holding a U.S. and Mexican flag and signaling V for victory during World War II. However, these celebrations were short-lived and soon thereafter braceros were guided by police escorts to their labor camps in the outskirts of town. While some braceros were welcomed many faced racial and ethnic discrimination and domestic agricultural workers viewed them as competition for scarce jobs.

Unlike the steel builders of the East, who have been memorialized through photographs as they built the New York City skyscrapers, farmworkers from the region have hardly been recognized. Braceros began working with the infamous *cortito* (short-handle hoe), but some of them like Oscar Calderon had his eye on other jobs within the agricultural industry, as an irrigator, a tractor driver, or supervisor. These men enjoyed working in the agricultural industry!

During my interview with Leon Ventura who began working as a bracero, I learned that he eventually served in the U.S. Army. Mr. Ventura served with distinction and returned to his position as a cauliflower supervisor with the Bud Antle Corporation and later Dole. He had a remarkable story to tell about his career in agriculture and it was not about feeling pity for him. On the contrary, Mr. Ventura told a story of progress, of having mastered the work. *Yo nunca me raje* (I never gave up), he proclaimed.

<sup>3</sup> Salinas Index-Journal, November, 1942. Gary S. Breschini, Trudy Haversat and Mona Gudel. *10,000 Years on the Salinas Plain: An Illustrated History of Salinas City, California*. (Carlsbad, CA: Heritage Media Corp., 2000), 125.

<sup>4</sup> Monterey County Agricultural Crop Reports, 1940–1964. Office of the Agricultural Commissioner, Salinas, CA., [ag.co.monterey.ca.us](http://ag.co.monterey.ca.us).

Mr. Ventura was also an inventor and innovated agricultural machinery to prevent worker injuries.

These were stories I was familiar with from my youth because my family spoke about the ingenuity in the fields, innovation and the camaraderie that took place among workers. Braceros that I interviewed took pride in working with their equipment, tools, knives, and the machinery, a narrative we don't hear enough. Leon Ventura and his wife put their children through, Princeton, U.C. Berkeley and Santa Clara universities. One daughter is a doctor in Salinas. His daughter Ana Ventura Phares was elected the first female and Mexican American Mayor of Watsonville.

The son of a former bracero Simon Salinas became the first Mexican American elected to the city council in Salinas and just retired as a Monterey County Supervisor. Other elected officials have also served and were the children of former braceros, Abel Maldonado became a California Lt. Governor, Juan Vargas is currently in the U.S. Congress, professors at UCLA, U.C. Berkeley and Stanford had bracero parents. The first chair of the California Strawberry Commission Lorena Chavez, and entrepreneur from Santa Maria is the daughter of a former bracero from Jalisco.

Mr. Rafael Silva and his wife Eva Silva who I interviewed have successful children who are doctors, entrepreneurs and their son Francisco Silva is the General counsel for the California Medical Association.

Some of you might wonder how common this narrative was since there were over two million braceros. Perhaps, these examples are on one spectrum of the bracero experience, but we haven't heard them, and they need to be shared. You would be surprised, but they are more common than we might think. For certain scholars the stories of the bracero program are examples of frightful and exploitative labor conditions that braceros lived through as guest workers in the United States.

Braceros were heavily exploited, worker abuses were common and many died in terrible accidents, the most notorious at Chualar where 32 braceros tragically died. Being so far away from their homes braceros suffered depression and anxiety and some fled and never returned. But we know that thousands also viewed the program as an opportunity to meet new friends, established new work and social networks, and the opportunity to stay in the United States.

So there is an alternative narrative that braceros such as Salvador Flores Barragan shared about his experience. His story is an example of how braceros wanted to improve their lives by migrating to work in U.S. agriculture. As a survivor of that terrible tragedy at Chualar on September 17, 1963, his journey sheds light on how braceros saw the Program as an opportunity to better their lives, even if it meant putting their lives in danger. Their *ganas* (desire) to work and the skills they possessed have been left out of the narrative.

For the historian, the research is housed in the archive, and our writings are presented to a select few scholars within our field. If we are lucky a larger audience is exposed to our work. My research and work in public history is about educating a larger population, it's about what the writer Anne Loftis stated when she analyzed the works by John Steinbeck, the photographer Dorothea Lange, the scholar Paul Taylor and Journalist Carey McWilliams. Loftis stated that, "... their documentary writing interpreting the events of the depression decade was significant as an outgrowth of our national democratic tradition of investigation, of protest, expose and analysis." She added that, "...in the final analysis, it was the artists who gave history a human face." My research and collaboration across disciplines provides a new interpretation of the bracero experience of pride and dignity.

For me, it's critical that humanists work transnationally, across borders. My collaboration with an artist in Mexico, for example has taken my research outside academia to reach and educate a larger populace hungry for a history that gives them recognition and affirmation that they too made major contributions. This is a generation of young people that need this history.

The bracero program ended in 1964, but today the H-2A Program is recruiting hundreds of Mexican farmworkers. So how far have we ultimately come since the labor crises in 1942?

During the current pandemic, farmworkers are deemed "essential" while many don't have permanent legal status. We eat fruit and salads, drink wine, but don't ever ask who harvests our food and what types of protections they have. Times have certainly changed and regulations are much stricter. However, employers continue to recruit H-2A guest workers, but a new generation of leaders has demanded better protections for workers, including better housing. For example, employers like Tanimura and Antle, a company founded by Japanese Americans who lived through internment and Texas migrants from the Great Depression built affordable housing for their guest workers. They also provide some of the best wages, health care and retirement benefits. But there are other painful stories of workers living in terrible conditions, crammed together in small spaces leading to outbreaks of COVID-19.

My research on the bracero program has given life to the Ernesto Galarza Collection. The collection at Stanford has been revived; it's outside of the archive. In this collection, you see the images of the workers and the daily reality they faced when they arrived to work with the short-handle hoe as they stoop over for long periods doing this backbreaking work. You see the recruiters visiting potential workers, inspecting and physically handling them to check for skills and strength. Braceros were sprayed with DDT, a chemical that was eventually banned. But the photographs also show images of hope and braceros on their way to the Promised Land the way we have seen so many images of European immigrants arriving at Ellis Island. Images of hope, of progress, and of an immigrant generation that wanted what others before them hoped for, a better future for their children, and for future generations. My research seeks to give greater voice and recognition to bracero labor. Through historical research, I aim to articulate a new narrative of hope and progress.

FURTHER READING

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