

Researching the Bracero Program

What is a Bracero? The Bracero program took place from 1942 through 1964 and allowed Mexican nationals to take temporary agricultural work in the United States. Over the 22 years of the program more than 4.5 million Mexican nationals were legally contracted for work in the United States (some individuals returned several times on different contracts). Mexican peasants, desperate for cash work, were willing to take jobs at wages scorned by many Americans. The Braceros had a significant effect on the business of farming and the culture of the United States. The Bracero program fed circular migration patterns of Mexicans into the U.S.

The following guide provides selected readings that discuss the program and the workers. There is an assumption that the user of this guide has general knowledge of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the U.S. Users of this guide will need to check their local library catalog for these items.

Must Read:

Galarza, Ernesto. *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story: An Account of the Managed Migration of Mexican farm workers in California 1942-1960*. Charlotte: McNally & Loftin, 1964. -- *The book is the first to document the Bracero*

Gamio, Manuel. *The Life Story of the Mexican Immigrant: Autobiographic Documents Collected by Manuel Gamio*. New York: Dover, 1971. -- *The first book to provide a set of interviews of pre-Bracero immigrant workers*

Other Readings:

While there are many items to read on the Bracero here is a limited few.

Books:

Anderson, Henry P. *The Bracero Program in California*. New York: Arno Press, 1976.

Calavita, Kitty. *Inside the State: The Bracero Program, Immigration, and the I.N.S.* New York: Routledge, 1992.

Daniel, Cletus E. *Bitter Harvest: A History of Californian Farmworkers, 1879-1994*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981.

Driscoll, Barbara. *Tracks North: The Railroad Bracero Program of World War II*. Austin: Center for Mexican American Studies, University of Texas at Austin, 1998.

Fisher, Lloyd H. *The Harvest Labor Market in California*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953.

Gamboa, Erasmo. *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942-1947*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.

Garcia, Juan Ramon. *Operation Wetback: The Mass Deportation of Mexican Undocumented Workers in 1954*. Westport: Greenwood, 1980.

Garcia, Mario T. *Desert Immigrant: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.

Gonzales, Gilbert. *Guest workers or colonized labor? : Mexican labor migration to the United States*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2006.

Garcia, Matthew. "Interethnic Conflict and the Bracero Program." In *American Dreaming, Global Realities*. Edited by Donna R. Gabaccia and Vicki L. Ruiz, 399-410. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006.

Kirstein, Peter Neil. *Anglo over Bracero: A History of the Mexican Worker in the United States from Roosevelt to Nixon*. San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1977.

Martinez, John. *Mexican Immigration to the U.S., 1910-1930*. San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1971.

McWilliams, Carey. *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*. Santa Barbara: Peregrine Publishers, Inc, 1971.

Scruggs, Otey M. *Braceros, "Wetbacks," and the Farm Labor Problem: Mexican Agricultural Labor in the United States, 1942-1954*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1988.

Articles:

- Cohen, Deborah. "Caught in the Middle: The Mexican State's Relationship with the United States and its Own Citizen-workers, 1942-1954." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 20, no. 3 (2001): 110-132.
- Durand, Jorge, Douglas S. Massey, and Fernando Charvet. "The Changing Geography of Mexican Immigration to the United States: 1910-1996." *Social Science Quarterly* 81, no. 1 (2000): 1-15.
- Gilmore, N. Ray and Gladys W. Gilmore. "The Bracero in California." *Pacific Historical Review* 32, no. 3 (1963): 265-282.
- Grove, Wayne A. "The Mexican Arm Labor Program, 1942-1964: Government-Administered Labor Market Insurance or Insurance for Farmers." *Agricultural History* 70, no. 2 (1996): 302-320.
- Jones, Lamar B. "Public Law 78 and Farm Manpower Problems." *Labor Law Journal* 17, no. 2 (Feb 1966): 83-88.
- Kiser, George C. "Mexican American Labor before World War II." *Journal of Mexican American History* 2, no. 2 (1972): 122-142.
- Mize, Ronald L., Jr. "Mexican Contract Workers and the U.S. Capitalist Agricultural Labor Process: The Formative Era, 1942-1964." *Rural Sociology* 71, no. 1 (Mar 2006): 85-108.
- Scruggs, Otey M. "Texas and the Bracero Program, 1942-1947." *Pacific Historical Review* 32, no. 3 (1963): 251-264.
- Street, Richard Steven. "First Farmworkers, First 'Braceros': Baja California Field Hands and the Origins of Farm Labor Importation in California Agriculture." *California History* 75, no. 4 (1996): 306.
- Zatz, Marjorie S. "Using and Abusing Mexican Farm-workers: The Bracero Program and the INS." *Law & Society Review* 27, no. 4 (1993): 851-863.

Women Workers:

The Bracero program was a male program. Although Mexican women were migrating to the U.S. for work during the same time period, their labor consisted in the cannery and factories rather than in the fields and were not subjected to labor contract between Mexico and the U.S. Here is a sampling.

- Duron, Clementina. "Mexican women and labor conflict in Los Angeles: the ILGWU dressmakers' strike of 1933." *Aztlan* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 145-161.
- Kossoudji, Sherrie A. and Susan I. Ranney. "The Labor Market Experience of Female Migrants: The Case of Temporary Mexican Migration to the U.S." *IMR: International Migration Review* 18, no. 4 (Winter 1984): 1120-1143.
- Ruiz, Vicki. *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987.
- Zaragosa Vargas. "Tejana Radical: Emma Tenayuca and the San Antonio Labor Movement during the Great Depression." *The Pacific Historical Review* 66, No. 4 (Nov 1997): 553-580.

Reference Materials: Reference materials will provide you with a quick description of a topic. In some cases you might find additional references as well.

Latino Encyclopedia

Encyclopedia Latina: History, Culture and Society in the United States

Oxford Encyclopedia of Latinos and Latinas in the United States

Handbook of Texas Online: <http://www.tshaonline.org/index.html>

Need More? Online databases are a good resource to locate additional articles. Visit your Public or University library.

Keyword examples: "Bracero"; "Mexican Labor and World War II", "Operation Wetback", or "Guestworker."

Academic Search Premier (EBSCOhost)

JSTOR

Chicano Database

America History and Life

Sociological Abstracts

Wilson's Reader's Guide Retro (for magazine articles published in the 1942-1964 time period)

Web links: Visit www.braceroarchives.org for additional resources. Additional bibliographies along with interviews and pictures are available.