



CSUCI Joins Smithsonian for Bracero Oral Histories Project; Town Hall Meeting Kick-Off Feb. 26

Camarillo, Calif., Feb. 8, 2008-California State University Channel Islands is partnering with the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in an effort to collect oral histories from those who participated in the bracero program, a guest worker program administered by the United States government from 1942 to 1964.

The Center for Community Engagement and the Center for Multicultural Learning and Engagement at CSUCI invites former braceros, their family, growers, administrators, and those that had interactions with braceros to a town hall meeting at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 26 at Café on A, 438 South A Street, Oxnard. Food and refreshments will be provided, and the event is free of charge.

During this town hall meeting, representatives from CSUCI, University of Texas at El Paso, and the National Museum of American History will share information about The Bracero History Project, Legacy of a Community, which is a grass-roots effort to collect, document, exhibit, and share the complex and sometimes controversial history of the bracero program.

In the weeks and months following the Feb. 26 event, CSUCI students will conduct in-depth interviews with those who wish to share their stories and experiences with the program as well as share objects-including hand tools, clothing, photographs, and documents such as contracts, identification cards and letters-used during that time. The oral histories will become part of the Smithsonian collection and will be featured in a traveling exhibit, Bittersweet Harvest: The Bracero Program 1942 - 1964. The exhibit is being developed by the National Museum of American History and Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibit Service and is expected to come to John Spoor Broome Library.

"Today many historians have recognized the bracero program as a watershed in the history of Latinos in the United States. Yet few people today know of them or their stories," explained Pilar Pacheco, Assistant Director of the Center for Community Engagement at CSUCI.

"This project aims to capture the history and stories of the bracero program in order to recognize and educate our students and the community about this important chapter in history. In doing so we hope to give voice to this time period, while preserving and celebrating the legacy of these hardworking individuals who gave so much in helping grow and shape the identity of United States."

Ventura County was one of the locations to which many Mexican workers came through the bracero program. These guest workers were contracted because of the labor shortage of labor in the agriculture industry created by World War II. At the end of their labor contracts, some of those who participated in the bracero program remained while others returned to Mexico and later immigrated to the U.S.

Funding for CSUCI's participation in this project was provided by a grant from the University's Instructionally Related Activities Fund. Initial funding for the Bracero History Project was provided by the Smithsonian's Center for Latino Initiatives, the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History and the National Endowment for the Humanities. For more information about the Bracero History Project, visit <http://braceroarchive.org>.

For media inquiries about CSUCI's participation in The Bracero History Project, Legacy of a Community contact Ceal Potts, Communications Specialist at CSUCI, 805-437-8940 or cecilia.potts@csuci.edu.

For more information about the Feb. 26 town hall meeting contact Pilar Pacheco, Assistant Director of the Center for Community Engagement at CSUCI, 805-437-8851 or pilar.pacheco@csuci.edu.

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