



CI Participates in Exhibition at Smithsonian National Museum of American History

Camarillo, Calif., Nov 4, 2009 - A new exhibition, "Bittersweet Harvest: The Bracero Program, 1942-1964," recently opened at the Washington, D.C. Smithsonian National Museum of American History (SNMAH). In late September, Dr. Richard R. Rush, President of CSU Channel Islands (CI), and Pilar Pacheco, Assistant Director of the Center for Community Engagement, attended a reception at the SNMAH honoring the University's contribution to the national oral history project, among others.

At the opening of the exhibit in Washington, Rush and other partners in the oral history project were recognized for their work and institutional commitment in preserving this part of America's history. Also attending were Mexico's former Secretary of Foreign Affairs Jorge Castañeda, Arizona's U.S. House of Representative Raúl Grijalva, and Director of the National Museum of American History, Brent Glass.

CI collaborated with the Smithsonian National Museum of American History as a collection partner and is now part of a national consortium of higher education institutions including George Mason University, University of Texas at El Paso, and Brown University, dedicated to documenting and preserving this critical piece of history.

CI's role in the project was to collect, document, exhibit, and locally share the history of the 1942-1964 Bracero Program, which brought approximately three million Mexican male guest workers into the United States to provide emergency farm labor. The impact of the program significantly affected the business of farming, immigration patterns and organized labor, making it an important part of this nation's history to understand and preserve.

"It was an honor for CI to be acknowledged by the Smithsonian and to be a part of this national project, which highlights the historical legacy of our local community. Great credit goes to Pilar Pacheco for her outstanding work in engaging the University with this project," stated Rush.

CI's participation in the 2008-2009 oral history project served as a service learning component for the Chicana/o Studies, History, Library and Spanish programs. To date, two town hall meetings have been conducted to identify braceros, their descendants and family members, and those who had substantial personal interactions with braceros and/or the Bracero Program, willing to be interviewed. As a collection partner, CI organized the town hall meetings, conducted and transcribed interviews, and collected both stories and local artifacts from the 1942 to 1964 time frame. Oral histories collected from participants will become part of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History museum's

Web site collection and will also be part of a local student-created bracero exhibit. The CI project will continue as long as the community wants to share their stories about this time period.

CI will have the honor of hosting the Smithsonian's national traveling exhibit, "Bittersweet Harvest: The Bracero Program, 1942-1964," in August, 2010. The exhibit will feature bilingual labels, listening stations, and will celebrate the contributions of braceros and their families to U.S. and Mexican history.

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