

# BRACERO ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW CHECKLIST



## 1) SETTING UP THE INTERVIEW TIME

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**Prior to the interview please take the time to listen to a few interviews on the Smithsonian's website at [braceroarchive.org](http://braceroarchive.org). Become familiar with this time period by looking around on their website. Familiarizing yourself with the program and the era will allow you to be a better interviewer.**

**PHONE SCRIPT:** Hello XXXX, my name is XXXX and I am a student at Cal State Channel Islands enrolled in the Spanish Program. I am involved in the Bracero Oral History project. You attended a town hall meeting for former Braceros and at that time you let us know that we could contact you to do a followup interview of your experiences in the Bracero program.

I am calling today to see if I and my student colleague XXXX might be able to set up a time to come to your home and interview you.

We would be asking you questions about your family background, where you were born, when you came to the United States, what you did as a Bracero, etc. This information will be used to create a University Bracero exhibit.

If they say yes let them know that we are grateful for their participation and you look forward to speaking with them. If they say no, mark it on their pre-interview sheet and let me know. I will give you another participant.

- Go over with the participant what topics you would like to interview him/her about.
- Inquire if the participant has any old photos, mica cards, contracts or documents from the Bracero Program. **IF SO THEY WILL NEED TO SIGN THE IMAGE IDENTIFICATION FORM.**
- Explain that the interviews will be taped and they will be asked to sign a release form before the interview begins.
- Before the interview, try to establish rapport and build trust.
- Explain that third parties, such as husbands or wives, should be strongly discouraged from being present during the interview.

## 2) BEFORE LEAVING FOR THE INTERVIEW MAKE SURE YOU HAVE:

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- **DOUBLE CHECK THAT THE ADDRESS IS CORRECT AND YOU HAVE DIRECTIONS TO THEIR HOME AND THEIR HOME PHONE NUMBER.**
- The correct guide/questions
- Interview Packet that should have the following forms included:
  - Pre Interview Form
  - Image Identification Form
  - Interview Consent/Release Form
  - Summary of Interview Form
- Recording Device
  - Be extremely familiar and comfortable with your equipment before you begin.
  - You should know exactly what each button does.
  - **MAKE SURE IT IS CHARGED**
  - Double check the equipment before the interview because you do not want to take up valuable interview time figuring it out.

**LEAVE EARLY SO YOU ARRIVE ON TIME. IF YOU ARE GOING TO BE LATE CALL THE PERSON.**

## 3) INTERVIEWING

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- **Before each interview please record the following introduction: “This is an interview with INTERVIEWEE’S NAME on DATE OF INTERVIEW in CITY and STATE. The interviewer is YOUR NAME. This interview is part of the BRACERO ARCHIVE PROJECT.”**
- Notice the noise levels once you arrive. There should be as little extraneous noise as possible.
- The key to a good interview is to develop trust and a good rapport with the narrator.
- Maintain constant eye contact.
- The information given by the interviewee that is the most valuable is what he/she experienced, witnessed or felt in connection with events of which he/she has first – hand knowledge.
- Tell the interviewee that you will be taking notes of names and places he/she mentions during the interview.

- Be relaxed and natural as you conduct the interview. Keep in mind that this is a friendly conversation, a cooperative opportunity for you and the interviewee.
- Watch body language.
- Start with more impersonal areas of questioning, or topics on which the narrator can speak with ease and comfort; then move into more sensitive areas as the interview progresses.
- Do not avoid sensitive or controversial subjects. A polite, neutral stance often works best.
- Please **DO NOT INTERRUPT**.
- Pay close attention to your interviewee's answers.
- If you are receiving broad answers, listen for the "holes" in the information - details that you will want later.
- Listen to what the interviewee says! The point is to record his/her own story.
- Limit your own remarks.
- Do not ask leading questions — those that indicate to your interviewee how you want him/her to respond.
- Ask follow-up questions. For example:
  - Silent question
  - That is interesting, can you tell me more about...?
  - Can you elaborate on that a bit more?
  - Can you give me more details on....?
- Open-ended questions *empower* interviewees by encouraging him/her to relate and to interpret their own stories. For example:
  - What do you remember about....?
  - Can you tell me about....?
  - How did you feel about...?
  - Why did your family....?
  - Why did you choose....?
  - What was it like.....?
  - What was work like?

- **Ask ONE question at a time.**
- **Please do not combine your questions into half Spanish/ half English –**
- Please make sure to ask your question in the proper format using USTED – not tu.
- Please do not repeat the bracero's answers – chances are we heard them the first time.
- Don't let periods of silence bother you. Give your narrator a chance to think of what he/she wants to add before you hurry along the next question.
- Always listen for underlying words and their meaning.

#### **4) AFTER THE INTERVIEW**

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- Summarize the interview. Give as much details as possible on the of topics covered and provide the length of the interview.
- Place tape(s), summary, and signed release form in manila envelope.
- Thank them for their time and let them know ask the person if they want a copy of the interview. If so DO NOT write it on the release form, write it on the pre-interview form, envelope or anything but the release form. Once they write it on the release form it becomes a restriction and the condition has to be met before the interview can be released.