

MAFO

A National Partnership
of Rural and Farmworker Organizations

NETWORKING

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[Bracero Archive Shows Much to Learn from Past Mistakes](#)

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Jesus M. Calles loads or unloads boxes of produce on a truck in [an undated black and white photo](#). With him are two other men, possibly family members. They are from Mexico. It is likely they suffered tremendous abuses to get to that truck such as being doused with DDT when they crossed the border not to mention the wage violations and deplorable living and working conditions.

Sixty years later Jesus still has that photo and has now shared it in an exciting new project called [the Bracero Archive](#): a project to collect the oral histories pertaining to the Bracero program, a guest worker program initiated to bring millions of Mexican men and their families to the U.S. to do farmwork from 1942 until public outrage at the abuses rampant in the program shut it down in 1964. A [Smithsonian Institute blogger asks](#):

"What if an exhibition helps people better understand a contemporary issue by examining a similar historical moment? This is certainly the edifying role that museums should play.

We agree. As Congress considers creating new guestworker programs and the Bush Administration proposes harmful changes to the agricultural guestworker program ([read about it](#)), this project is particularly timely.

The Bracero Archive is a collaboration of The [Center for History and New Media](#) at George Mason University, the [Smithsonian National Museum of American History](#), [Brown University](#), and [The Institute of Oral History](#) at the University of Texas at El Paso. [A traveling exhibit](#) of it set to tour the country in 2010.

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