

Matthew Barragan
Fiat Lux Seminar Honors Collegium, Section 5
Esther Grassian, MLS
June 6, 2005

LitSearch Research Journal

Researching for my GE Cluster Interracial Dynamics: Race and Politics class has been a tremendous joy. This class in itself has taught me more about research than I ever thought possible. The resources we are provided with at UCLA boggle the mind. How we are able to freely access such vast amounts of the newest information out there always seems to shock me. In researching for my paper on the Mexican Bracero Program I utilized all of the tools learned in our honors seminar. First I followed the first steps to narrowing my search like we covered in class. Those steps helped me locate a plethora of online journals and articles. I was able to come up with most of the research through Expanded Academic ASAP, Cambridge Scientific Abstracts: internet database service, and even a few uc-elinks through Google Scholar. But, because I had taken this researching class I wasn't satisfied with only using online databases. The best research papers include diverse materials in the bibliography so I set off to try new things and utilize some new research materials.

This may sound crazy but since we have the easily assessable online resources I had never checked out a book from any of the UCLA Libraries. That's another thing I learned. I never knew UCLA had so many libraries. These libraries specialize in all sorts of things based on culture or area of study. I'm making it my goal to utilize them all before I graduate. At our one on one meeting I mentioned my fear of checking out a book and you pointed me in the right direction. I utilized the Hispanic encyclopedia and then set off to check out some books on the Bracero Program. It turns out that the College Library had loads of books on the Bracero Program. I sifted through most of them to narrow my search to five books. Out of the five I ended up truly utilizing three of them. These books helped me teach myself about a program I knew very little about. After reading the first few pages of these books I realized my close personal connection with the Bracero Program. I noticed that the books named my small farming town of Delano, California. I also noticed the names of some community officials who have had dealings in the past with The UFW (United Farm Workers). I was surprised by my close ties to the Bracero Program and it fueled my search for more information.

I then watched several films on Mexican Immigration to get an idea of how the public viewed immigration policies. The films *El Norte*, and *A Day without a Mexican* added an older and more contemporary view of how the public probably viewed immigration. It also fueled my interest on the matter.

Not long after watching the final movie I received a call from my father. He asked me what I've been up to in school. I mentioned I was doing a research paper on a program called the Bracero Program. My father then mentioned that my grandfather Luis Garay Barragan was a Mexican Bracero during the programs history. I was shocked and then set off the next weekend back home. While I was home I conducted interviews with my family about the Bracero Program. I even managed to rummage through my grandfathers paperwork and find the original Bracero contracts. I had a great feeling of

accomplishment. I had little knowledge about what this program was until I opened up a book, and here I was at full circle it seemed immersed in my family's past and having a great feeling that everything in this world is connect in some way. I then realized that I probably would have lived my whole life without truly knowing my past if I hadn't searched an online database, meet with a librarian, check a few books out of the library, and watch a few movies. I couldn't believe how valuable my efforts had been and how useful all of my research materials were to leading me here. At that moment I had an appreciation for all those who write and maintain this information, because at that moment I had a huge appreciation for history. My history, my family's history it's vital to understand where you came from to figure out where you're going in life. I finally figured it out. Now my research paper has the personality and emotion that was absent before this.

Just looking at my grandfather's signature on an old document that changed his life was momentous. I realized what the Bracero Program was and then after interviews was angry that my grandfather was exploited for cheap labor. But my grandfather made it and had a wonderful life after his time as a Bracero. I can't help but wish that he's still alive today so I can ask him about his experiences first hand. This researching journey truly changed the way I view my past. I'm the grandson of a Mexican Bracero now attending one of the most prestigious universities in the country. I must remember where I've come from so I can truly appreciate what gift I have been given. I have learned most importantly to value the past because we can learn a lot from it.

Finally the most valuable researching tool at UCLA has been..... The librarians! It's very true. The UCLA librarians have been so helpful in guiding me through the steps to research. The online Road to Research tutorials have helped me understand how to appropriately navigate through information. And our honors seminar truly gave me skills I will utilize throughout my college career and my entire life.