Guide to the Leonard Nadel Photographs and Scrapbooks

NMAH.AC.1313

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2013

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Collection Overview

Repository: Archives Center, National Museum of American History

Creator: Nadel, Leonard

Title: Leonard Nadel Photographs and Scrapbooks

Dates: 1950-2006

Bulk Dates: 1956-1960

Quantity: 3 cubic feet, 10 boxes

Abstract: Photographer Leonard Nadel's supplemental material relating to and photographs of the Mexican braceros (manual laborers). They were photographed in California, Texas, and Mexico for the Ford Foundation's Fund for the Republic during the late 1950s and early 1960s in support of a report entitled Strangers in Our Fields by Dr. Ernesto Galarza.

Language: Collection text is in English.

Language: Some materials in Spanish.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The collection was purchased with funds from the Jackson Fund in 2000. All rights were transferred to the National Museum of American History in 2000-2001.

Provenance Information

This collection was transferred from the Division of Work and Industry, National Museum of American History to the Archives Center, National Museum of American History in 2012.

Related Material

Materials in Other Organizations

The collections of the Los Angeles Public Library and the Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research each contain photographic images made by Leonard Nadel during the time he worked for The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA). The Photo Collection of the Los Angeles Public Library contains approximately 290 copy negatives and corresponding black-and-white copy prints made from original materials held by HACLA. The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles Photograph Collection, held at the Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, contains 225 black-and-white photographs produced by HACLA, forty-two of which were taken by Nadel.

The Getty Research Institute, Special Collections, Los Angeles, California, contain 8.75 linear feet (14 boxes) of Leonard Nadel photographs and other material relating to housing and
urban redevelopment in Los Angeles, 1947-1998. The collection is described as, "Consisting primarily of photographic material by Leonard Nadel from 1947 to 1957, the collection records early efforts by the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) to promote integrated public housing for the city's growing multi-ethnic population, and also documents several areas of the city that the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) had targeted for commercial revitalization. Nadel's black-and-white negatives, contact prints and two unpublished photographic books form the bulk of the collection, supplemented by handwritten notes and related documents."

Available Formats
Digital reproductions of the Leonard Nadel photographs are available electronically for viewing at the Archives Center.

Processing Information
Initially processed by the Division of Work and Industry. Processed by Vanessa Broussard-Simmons, archivist and Franklin A. Robinson, Jr., archives specialist, September 2013; supervised by Vanessa Broussard-Simmons, archivist.

Preferred Citation

Restrictions on Access
This collection is open for research use. Photographic negatives are not available for research at the donor's request, but contact sheets of the negatives are available in the collection. Some images are restricted for publication, but may be viewed in the Archives Center's reading room.

Gloves must be worn when handling unprotected photographs, negatives, and slides.

Ownership & Literary Rights
Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

Biographical Note
Primarily known as a freelance photographer and photojournalist, Leonard Nadel (1916-1990) was born in Harlem, New York to Austro-Hungarian immigrant parents. He attended the City College of New York. Entering the Army during World War II, he trained at the Army Signal Corps Photographic Center. During the war he served in Australia, New Guinea, and the Philippines. After the war he returned to New York and received his master's degree in education from Teachers College, Columbia University. He moved to Los Angeles, California and studied at the Art Center College of Design.

In Los Angeles, Nadel photographed both the Pueblo del Río and Aliso Village housing projects. He was also hired by the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) to document living conditions in the city's slums and their new post-World War II housing projects. Nadel continued his employment with
HACLA until 1953, when he resigned because his HACLA colleague, Frank Wilkinson, was blacklisted by the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) and forced to resign.

Between 1953 and 1980 Nadel worked as a freelance photographer for such publications as the Los Angeles Times, Harvester News, Life, Business Week, and other major publications. His work with the Ford Foundation's Fund for the Republic resulted in his work documenting the bracero program. These photographs were taken by Leonard Nadel in connection with a survey of braceros done by Ernesto Galarza for the Fund for the Republic in 1956 in support of the publication, Strangers in Our Fields. During World War II, the United States and Mexico entered an agreement to alleviate the US labor shortage created by the war by importing Mexican workers. This arrangement outlasted the end of the war and by the time of Nadel's photographs nearly half a million Mexican contract workers, in the common vernacular of the time known as "drybacks," were legally imported to the United States annually working on short term labor contracts predominately in agriculture. These workers were also known as braceros, in Spanish translated as "manual laborer".

Nadel wrote of his work with the braceros, "I covered 5,000 miles during a circuit that took me from California to Mexico to Texas. It would have been easy enough just to turn over to the Fund the finished collection of photographs from the 2,000 images I took in attempting to accurately document the story of Strangers in Our Fields. But the conditions I had witnessed stirred me deeply. I felt that it was as much my responsibility to help 'sell' the picture story."

Nadel's photographs were the subject of the National Museum of American History (NMAH) exhibition, "Bittersweet Harvest: The Bracero Program, 1942-1964" in 2009-2010. Nadel's photographs are featured in NMAH's "America on the Move" exhibit. This quote from the "America on the Move" exhibition website gives the history of the photographs as well as the bracero program.

"In 1956, Leonard Nadel was hired by the Fund for the Republic, an anti-McCarthy liberal spin off of the Ford Foundation, to document the Bracero Program. In the 1990s, the Smithsonian Institution acquired the Nadel images. The collection contains 64 captioned photographic prints and 1730 original 35mm negatives (with corresponding contact sheets). The images document life in Mexico, men's experiences of crossing the border, and work and life in the US.

"The Bracero Program came into existence in 1942. Growers argued that labor shortages in the United States resulting from World War II required the recruitment of Mexican nationals. Mexico saw the program as a contribution to the war effort. Although the program began as a temporary war measure, it became a fixture of agricultural work landscape until it was finally terminated in 1964.

"Over the course of its lifetime, the Bracero Program became the largest and most significant U.S. labor guest worker program of the 20th century. In all, over 4.5 million contracts were awarded through the twenty-two years of the program. Despite the well-intentioned contracts, the program did not escape controversy. Some point out the widespread abuses of many of the contract's protective provisions and the violation of the legal rights and civil liberties of the braceros while others describe the program as an opportunity for Mexican nationals to make a living and improve the conditions of their families. Regardless of one's opinion of the program, it had a profound effect on Mexican American settlement patterns in the U.S. and numerous Latino families have ancestors who were involved in the Bracero Program."

Nadel married Los Angeles Times staff writer Evelyn De Wolfe in August 1961. She was Brazilian by birth and after their marriage she resigned from the Times and collaborated with Nadel on many projects that covered both national and international subjects. Nadel died in 1990.

Scope and Content Note

The collection is divided into three series. Each series is arranged chronologically.
**Series 1: Scrapbooks, 1950-1968**, contains scrapbooks of clippings of magazine articles and newspaper stories written by Nadel and others as well as magazines and newspaper articles making use of his photographs. The material is from a variety of specialty and mainstream publications and varies in subject matter. The scrapbooks are not only focused on Nadel's work for the Ford Foundation's Fund for the Republic but also offer a broad sampling of his work throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Material in the scrapbooks are arranged in rough chronological order. There is also a sample custom cover from one of the scrapbooks.

**Series 2: Photographs, 1956-1960, undated**, contains photographs printed from his negatives of the braceros. This series also contains a complete run of 8” x 10” contact sheets from his negatives of the bracero. The negatives themselves are in this series but not available for research per donor request. There are photographs ranging in size from 8” x 10” to large format photographs (10 1/2” x 13 1/2”) that are keyed to frames on the contact sheets for easy reference. Negatives are arranged chronologically and captions are keyed to the negative numbers. These images have been digitized and may be found by searching "Nadel" on the collections section of the National Museum of American History website or by contacting the Archives Center.

**Series 3: Publications and Supplemental Materials, 1956-2006, undated**, contains correspondence, copies of *Strangers in Our Fields*, the publication making use of Nadel's bracero photographs, and other publications citing Nadel's work or based on it. This series also contains correspondence and written material from Evelyn De Wolfe Nadel, wife of Leonard Nadel; material relating to Nadel's photographic archive and captions for a selection of the bracero photographs. There is a selection of assorted loose news clippings.

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**Arrangement**

This collection is divided into three series:

**Series 1: Scrapbooks, 1950-1968**

**Series 2: Photographs, 1956-1960, undated**

**Series 3: Publications and Supplemental Materials, 1956-2006, undated**

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**Names and Subject Terms**

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Agricultural laborers
- Agriculture--Photographs--20th century
- Agriculture--Research
- Bracero Program
- Documentary photography -- United States
- Farmers--Mexico
- Labor
- Labor and laboring classes--Photographs
- Photographers--1950-1980
Types of Materials:

- Black-and-white photographs
- Photographic prints.
- Photographs -- 1950-1960 -- Black-and-white photoprints -- Silver gelatin
- Scrapbooks--20th century

Names:

- Galarza, Ernesto, Dr.

Geographic Names:

- California
- Mexico
- Texas
- Texas--20th century
Container Listing

Series 1: Scrapbooks, 1950-1968

Box 1        Scrapbook, 1950-1960
Box 2        Scrapbook, 1956-1960
Box 3        Scrapbook, 1957-1963
Box 4        Scrapbook, 1962-1968
Box 5        Scrapbook, cover sample, undated
Series 2: Photographs, 1956-1960

Box 6  Photographic prints, 1956-1960, undated
Box 7  Photographic contact sheets, 1956-1960, undated
Box 8  Photographic negatives, 1956-1960, undated
Box 9  Photographic negatives, 1956-1960, undated

Box 10, Folder 1  Correspondence, 1956-1959, undated
Box 10, Folder 2-3  Galarza, Ernesto, *Strangers in Our Fields*, 1956
Box 10, Folder 4  *Strangers in Our Fields*, synopsis, undated
Box 10, Folder 5  Newspaper clippings, 1956-1983, undated
Box 10, Folder 6  Nadel, Leonard, biographical information, 1957, undated
Box 10, Folder 7  The Fund for the Republic, 1957
Box 10, Folder 8  Nadel, Evelyn De Wolfe, *The Bracero*, motion picture script concept, 1994
Box 10, Folder 9  Nadel Photo Archives, 1995
Box 10, Folder 10  Nadel, Evelyn De Wolfe correspondence with Street, Richard S., 1995
Box 10, Folder 11  Bracero History Project Style Guide, 2006
Box 10, Folder 12  Herrera-Sobek, Maria, *The Bracero Experience*, undated
Box 10, Folder 13  Nadel, Leonard, "New Role for the Photographer" undated
Box 10, Folder 14  Captions for Bracero Photos, undated
Box 10, Folder 15  "Braceros" captions, undated
Box 10, Folder 16  Captions, undated
Box 10, Folder 17  Paper copies of photographic contact sheets, undated
Box 5, Folder 1  *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, article, 1978