



Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiatives

Office of the Director

October 18, 2001

Mr. John David Arnold, Ph. D.
Curator, PPEP Farmworker Hall of Fame
802 E. 46th Street
Tucson, Arizona 85713

Re: Collaboration with the Smithsonian Hispanic Acquisition Section

Dear Dr. Arnold:

Greetings. I am in receipt of the written and video taped information on the PPEP Farmworker Hall of Fame, located in Tucson, Arizona. The Smithsonian is always interested in collaborating with such efforts to honor those who have made important contributions to our society.

The migrant and seasonal farmworker population in America is one of the most often forgotten, yet a major contributor to the food we put on our tables. They toil long hours with low wages, poor safety conditions, and often no health benefits. Therefore, the Farmworker Hall of Fame, perhaps the nation's first, will make a positive step to giving recognition to these unsung heroes. Notwithstanding other groups, including the Indian American, African American, Asian and Anglo populations, have been also contributors to making America's food production the greatest in the history of man. I am heartened to see that the great leader of the farmworkers, César Chávez, is a part of your Hall of Fame. He was born in Arizona and died there, near his place of birth.

Also housed in the museum is "La Tortuga", the 1957 Chevy School Bus that first served the Bracero workers in 1967 with a practical education to prepare them for coping in our workforce. La Tortuga has become perhaps the most written about school bus in America from which tens of thousands of farmworkers have benefited from programs designed towards their self-sufficiency.

Finally, I look forward to visiting the Hall of Fame in the near future. In the meantime, consider me an active supporter. You are well on your way towards a worthwhile effort to recognize America's greatest heroes of our agriculture, the farmworkers.

Best wishes,

Refugio I. Rochin
Director