Introduction to *Lunar Braceros*

Historical Background

A “bracero” is a Mexican manual laborer legally recruited to the US from the early 1940s until 1964 for a limited time as a seasonal agricultural worker for growers and corporations. The program was started during the labor shortages of WWII and ended under Johnson. Reception centers were set up in Mexico and at the border, where workers were inspected by health departments, sprayed with DDT and sent to contractors looking for workers. The program eventually included 5 million workers.

Despite promises of good working conditions, Mexican workers were often discriminated against, husbands and wives separated, segregated into labor camps, wages withheld, shorted food, poor living conditions, and otherwise taken advantage of. They were prohibited from striking or renegotiating wages, yet there were many organized strikes.

According to Wikipedia, “A 2018 study published in the *American Economic Review* found that the Bracero program did not have any adverse impact on the labor market outcomes of American-born farm workers. The end of the Bracero program did not raise wages or employment for American-born farm workers.” [More on the Bracero Program](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bracero_program).

The Novel

Set in 2125, the Earth is environmentally devastated, social inequality and the power of corporations, agribusiness and biotechs (the New Imperial Order) both increased.

The United States has become divided into two parts, the East united with Europe, and the West, called Cali-Texas, is united with Mexico, Central America, and China.

Efforts to bury nuclear waste on the moon by robots are inadequate, so workers from Earth are needed. Massive unemployment and migration lead (in 2090) to the creation of “Reservations” where workers are treated like slaves unless they can get a job outside.

Our main character, Lydia and her brother, Frank, are taken from a Reservation to work as Lunar “Braceros” where they are under constant surveillance. The story is told in fragments, by excerpts from letters, transcripts, etc. mainly directed to Lydia’s son, Pedro, left behind on earth.

Once on the moon they stumble on the terrible truth of what is really happening to the braceros, and join the resistance.