Work & Social Justice
The David Bacon Photography Archive at Stanford

Cover:
Farm workers and their supporters march to protest the death of a H-2A farm worker, Honesto Silva, on the anniversary of his death a year earlier. He died from excessive heat and pressure by the company, Sarbanand Farms, to keep working. The march was organized by Community2Community and the Familias Unidas por la Justicia union. Sumas, Washington, United States, 2018.

Inside front cover:
The loader in a crew of artichoke harvesters stands on a truck bed and empties bags of artichokes into bins. Castroville, California, United States, 2015.

Inside back cover:
The streets of Los Angeles were filled twice in one day—downtown and through the Wilshire District’s Miracle Mile—in two separate May Day marches. The marches were organized after the US House of Representatives passed the Sensenbrenner Bill, which would have made undocumented status a felony. Marchers are also protesting the continuing impact of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRA), which made hiring undocumented workers illegal, began militarizing the United States/Mexico border, and re-established guest worker programs. The SENSIT Act is organized by Community Union and the Neighborhoods United for Justice Union (NUJ). Washington, United States, 2006.

Activist, journalist, and documentary photographer David Bacon has dedicated his life to social activism. Mild-mannered and matter-of-fact, with a quiet sense of humor, Bacon has a way of putting people at ease—a skill that has no doubt served him well through many years of labor organizing and taking photographs to reveal and resolve inequities.

Bacon was born in New York City in 1948. His father, a printer and the head of the Graphic Artists Guild union, was blacklisted during the McCarthy era. Bacon grew up in Oakland, and his father and mother gave him a first-hand look at what it takes to organize a group of people behind a common cause.

“Organizing and printer’s ink both run in the blood,” he says, referring to the fact that his father, like his father before him, was a printer—a profession that Bacon too eventually pursued. Bacon worked on a factory floor for a time, leading a common cause, he landed a job at a factory and then as a union organizer. He has worked with the United Farm Workers, the International Ladies’ Garment Workers Union, and other labor organizations.

Bacon’s work as a union organizer extended into documentary photography and journalism in the mid-1980s. Today he documents the global economic, race, and immigration, and the struggles that result for human rights. For the past two decades, Bacon has been documenting the struggles of workers, farmers, and other laborers in Los Angeles, California, United States.

In the prologue to his most recent book, In the Fields of the North/En Los Campos del Norte (2017), Bacon states, “For three decades I’ve used a method that combines photographs with interviews and personal histories. The method works because it gives the subject the autonomy to decide how to live.”

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Bacon lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. His website is dbacon.igc.org.

—Meredith Blasingame

Photograph by Wayne Vanderklugt

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