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Table of Contents

TABLA DE CONTENIDOS

- 4 ON THE IMMIGRATION ISSUE, WE MUST MOVE FROM SYMBOLISM AND PROMISES TO ACTION
- 4 DEL SIMBOLISMO Y LAS PROMESAS HAY QUE PASAR A LA ACCIÓN EN EL TEMA MIGRATORIO
- 5 WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD SOMETHING STRONGER THAN ROE
- 5 WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE ABORTION CASE THAT COULD BAN MIFEPRISTONE
- 6 EXPANDING INDIGENOUS ACCESS TO THE BALLOT IS GOOD FOR DEMOCRACY
- 6 WORK CONTINUES TO PROTECT NATIVE AMERICAN CHILDREN
- 7 WORKERS DESERVE TO KNOW THEIR WORK SCHEDULES IN ADVANCE
- 8 NEW SCHOOL AIMS TO PRESERVE CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND SENSE OF COMMUNITY
- 9 UNA NUEVA ESCUELA BUSCA PRESERVAR LA CULTURA, EL IDIOMA Y UN SENTIDO DE COMUNIDAD
- 10 HEALTH AGENCIES TURN TO LOCALS TO EXTEND REACH INTO IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES
- 11 AGENCIAS UTILIZAN A LOCALES PARA LLEGAR A COMUNIDADES DE INMIGRANTES
- 12 FEDERAL COURT REJECTS EXTREMISTS' ATTEMPT TO DEFEAT VOTER INTIMIDATION LAWSUIT
- 12 UN TRIBUNAL FEDERAL RECHAZA EL INTENTO DE LOS EXTREMISTAS DE DERROTAR LA DEMANDA POR INTIMIDACIÓN DE VOTANTES
- 13 RETURN OF THE CORN MOTHERS EXHIBITION HOSTS FREE ARTIST TALKS
- 14 TRIBAL EDUCATION IS A MATTER OF CULTURAL SURVIVAL: 'WE NEED TO ACT NOW'
- 15 LA EDUCACIÓN TRIBAL ES UNA CUESTIÓN DE SUPERVIVENCIA CULTURAL



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Commentary/Comentario

On the Immigration Issue, We Must Move From Symbolism and Promises to Action

Maribel Hastings and David Torres

For years the issue of immigration reform has become nothing more than lip service in State of the Union speeches. On February 7, President Joe Biden, in his second address about the status of the country, asked Republicans to make the issue a bipartisan one, like it used to be. Foreshadowing that this will be an impossible task, he added: "If we don't pass my comprehensive immigration reform, at least pass

“It seems like division is their objective, not simply opposition.”

my plan to provide the equipment and officers to secure the border and a pathway to citizenship for 'Dreamers,' those on temporary status, farm workers, and essential workers." Still, the reference to the immigration issue was ex-

tremely brief and rather vacuous. Democrats continue to say that this reform is urgent, fair, and necessary; and Republicans continue to say that there will be no reform without border control. At the end of the day, nothing passes. But within this concept of "nothing passes" exist the lives of millions of people who, with the power of their work, are the motor of hundreds of communities around the country, keeping schools, businesses, and hospitals running, on top of guaranteeing the generational relief this aging nation of immigrants needs. Certainly, we must not ignore the reasons for this deadlock, nor that Republicans have been the main obstacle to advancing reform. But that does not justify the inaction or lack of will to invest political capital in some progress. As in previous occasions, the speech was not lacking in symbolism like Mitzi Colín López, the DACA beneficiary and activist from



Photo/Foto: America's Voice



Photo/Foto: America's Voice

West Chester, Pennsylvania, invited by First Lady Jill Biden. It's about U.S. citizens seeing the faces of those who would benefit from the elusive legalization. In prior opportunities Republicans have also made use of symbolism, but of the anti-immigrant variety, like inviting those who have lost a loved one at the hands of an undocumented immigrant, as if violence was exclusive to people without documents. Basically, at this point symbolism should have already turned into

concrete actions on the matter of immigration. We've seen this movie before, especially those who are directly impacted and need a response that allows them to benefit from the plenitude of this country that they have chosen to call home for themselves and their families. Unfortunately, the reality is not very encouraging. Republicans control the House of Representatives and their agenda is

See Hastings & Torres on page 16



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Del Simbolismo y las Promesas Hay Que Pasar a la Acción en el Tema Migratorio

Maribel Hastings y David Torres

Durante décadas pasadas y en años recientes el tema de la reforma migratoria se ha convertido en una especie de trámite en los discursos del Estado de la Unión. El martes en la noche el presidente Joe Biden, en su segundo discurso sobre la situación del país, pidió a los republicanos hacer del tema uno bipartidista como en el pasado.

Y presagiando que será una tarea imposible, agregó: "Si no aprueban mi reforma migratoria amplia, por lo menos aprueben mi plan para proveer el equipo y los agentes para asegurar la frontera. Y una vía a la ciudadanía para los Dreamers, quienes tienen estatus temporal, trabajadores agrícolas y trabajadores esenciales". Pero la referencia al tema migratorio fue brevísima y bastante desangelada.

Los demócratas siguen hablando de que dicha reforma es urgente, justa y necesaria; y los republicanos siguen diciendo que sin fronteras controladas no hay reforma. Y, al final, nada pasa.

Pero en ese "nada pasa" se encuentran estancadas las vidas de millones de personas que con su fuerza de trabajo son el motor de cientos de comunidades alrede-

dor del país, manteniendo a flote escuelas, comercios y hospitales, además de garantizar el relevo demográfico generacional que requiere este país de inmigrantes.

Ciertamente no hay que obviar las razones de ese estancamiento, ni de que han sido los republicanos el obstáculo central para el avance de dicha reforma. Pero eso tampoco justifica la inacción o la falta de voluntad para invertir capital político en algún progreso.

Como en ocasiones previas, en el discurso no faltaron los simbolismos como la beneficiaria de DACA y activista de West Chester, Pennsylvania, Mitzi Colín López, invitada por la primera dama, Jill Biden. Se trata de que los estadounidenses vean el rostro de quienes se beneficiarían de la escurridiza legalización. En oportunidades previas los republicanos también han echado mano de simbolismos, pero antiinmigrantes, como invitar a quienes han perdido un familiar a manos de algún indocumentado, como si la violencia fuera algo exclusivo de quienes no tienen documentos.

Es decir, a estas alturas los simbolismos ya deberían dar paso a acciones concretas en materia migratoria, pues esa película es bastante conocida, sobre todo por quienes están directamente afectados y necesitan una re-

puesta que les permita gozar a plenitud del país que han elegido como hogar, para ellos y para sus familias.

Lamentablemente, la realidad no es muy alentadora. Los republicanos controlan la Cámara Baja y su agenda se centra en propagar teorías conspirativas promovidas por nacionalistas blancos de que estamos siendo "invadidos" y que la frontera con México está "fuera de control", o de que los liberales quieren "reemplazar" a los anglosajones con minorías para acaparar el poder político.

“Tal parece que la división es su objetivo, no ser opositores simplemente.”

De hecho, uno de sus principales objetivos es destituir al Secretario de Seguridad Nacional (DHS), el cubanoamericano Alejandro Mayorkas. Y aunque sondeo tras sondeo, como el más reciente de NBC, concluyen que la mayoría de los estadounidenses apoyan la legalización de los indocumentados que viven entre nosotros y

Vea Hastings & Torres/Esp, página 7

We Have the Opportunity to Build Something Stronger Than Roe

Aurea Bolaños Perea and
Fawn Bolak

It's been seven months since the U.S. Supreme Court ruled to overturn Roe v. Wade, leaving roughly one-third of people across the country without access to safe, legal abortion care in their home states. While millions of patients and providers now live in places where abortion care is punishable by enormous fines and lengthy prison sentences, Colorado remains a safe haven and a beacon of hope for abortion access.

Since June of last year, Colorado abortion providers and independent abortion funds have cared for thousands of out-of-state patients, providing more than \$5 million in patient assistance. As the stories of people suffering from being denied abortion care in other states continue to pile up, we know these cruel, political attacks on our



Photo: COLLOR



Photo: Fawn Bolak

rights and our bodies are far from over.

Anti-abortion lawmakers across the country continue to advance a legislative agenda designed to further undermine our bodily autonomy, bar access to gender-affirming care, and block our ability to plan for our families and our futures. Coloradans have shown their firm support of reproductive health care access time and again. Voters struck down abortion bans at the ballot box three times over,

and most recently, in the November 2022 midterm elections, they voted in even more abortion access champions into our state Legislature.

Despite this clear mandate from the people, Colorado Republicans have introduced anti-abortion legislation every single year for almost a decade, including three bills rooted in misinformation and pseudo-science, introduced just last month. If they had their way, Coloradans would face the same egre-

gious obstacles as people in Texas and Oklahoma and be forced to travel hundreds of miles for essential health care.

Opponents of abortion and gender-affirming care are not letting up, and neither are we.

The work to secure true reproductive freedom and autonomy in Colorado is just beginning. Though the loss of Roe was devastating, our organizations have known for decades that the constitutional right granted by Roe was never truly enough to guarantee access to care for many of our communities.

“It seems like division is their objective, not simply opposition.”

Last year, lawmakers and advocates made history by passing the Reproductive Health Equity Act, enshrining the right for Coloradans to obtain reproductive health care, including abortion, into our state law.

See [Perea/Bolak](#) on page 17

What to Know About the Abortion Case That Could Ban Mifepristone

Jennifer Dalven

Access to abortion has been decimated in the United States since June when the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* and took away our right to control our own bodies. Laws banning abortion are now in effect in more than a dozen states, denying more than 20 million people of reproductive age access to essential health care. And as hideous as this is, we know that is only the latest step in their plan to ban abortion and other essential health care nationwide.

The next step in their plan is an attempt to impose a nationwide ban on mifepristone — one of two medications in a regimen that accounts for more than half the abortions in this country. This would be a ban in every state in the nation — even in states where abortion is legal and protected under state law.

Here is how they are trying to do it: Days after the midterms when voters came out overwhelmingly in support of abortion rights, anti-abortion extremists filed a baseless lawsuit seeking an emergency ruling ordering the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to withdraw the approval for mifepristone it issued more than 20 years ago. An adverse ruling here could take mifepristone off the shelves and

bar health care professionals from prescribing it in every state in the nation.

In any rational universe, this case would be laughed out of court on multiple grounds. Mifepristone was approved more than two decades ago and has been used by millions of people for early abortion care and to treat miscarriages. Study after study has confirmed its safety and efficacy, and its critical role in abortion and miscarriage care. The claims in this case have no basis in law and distort decades of scientific evidence.

“The claims in this case have no basis in law and distort decades of scientific evidence.”

The case was filed by an organization known as Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), which has been labeled a hate group, and helped write the Mississippi law which the Supreme Court used to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. They are going so far as to use a 150-year-old anti-obscenity law, the Comstock Act, to argue that it's illegal to send or receive mifepristone, and any other medication or device used

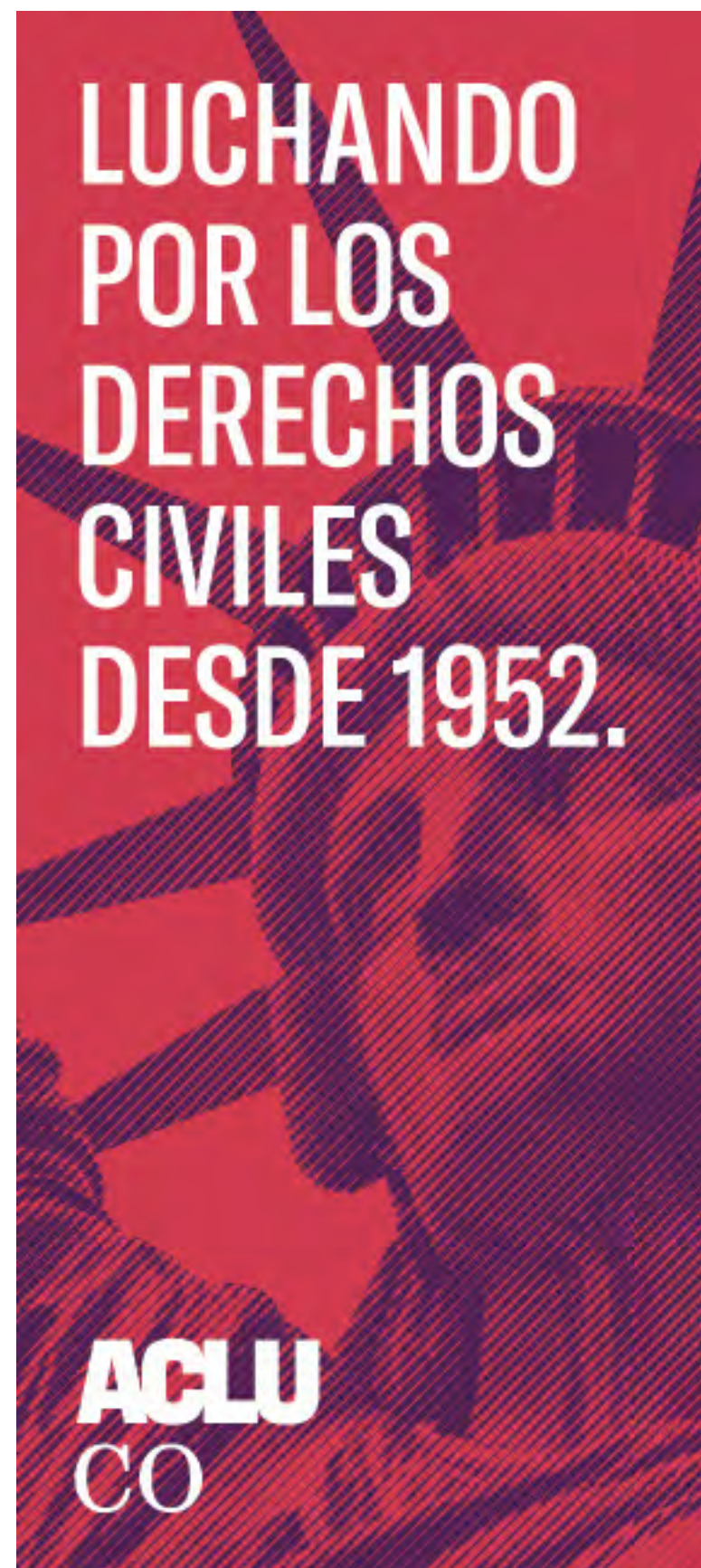
to provide an abortion, through the mail. That's a wild claim that has never been accepted.

But if these claims are so wild and unprecedented, why are we concerned? Here's the thing: ADF was able to hand-select their judge and just happened to pick one who, before he was appointed to the bench by President Trump, worked for an organization that represents business owners who discriminate against LGBTQ people and public school employees who coerce students to pray on school grounds.

And since his appointment to the bench, he has issued a series of radical decisions on everything from immigrants' rights to trans justice to birth control. In fact, the judge has said it was an "open question" whether politicians could make it a crime to use contraception. That's right — whether states can outlaw birth control. This is the judge who will decide whether mifepristone can remain on the market.

We won't let this happen without a fight. We've been doing everything in our power to increase access to medication abortion and other essential reproductive health care. In recent years, we've filed two cases on behalf of leading medical

See [Dalven](#) on page 7



Commentary/Comentario

Expanding Indigenous Access to the Ballot is Good for Democracy

Ahtza D. Chavez

Indigenous communities across the U.S. are being denied the full measure of our civil rights, including the right to fully participate in the democratic process. Native Americans make up at least 12% of New Mexico's population, but you'd be hard-pressed to find that representation in any sector within the state — especially in the political arena.

In 1940s New Mexico, Isleta citizen Miguel Trujillo returned from WWII only to be considered an "Indian not taxed" by the state's constitution and was prohibited from voting. While Native Americans were granted U.S. citizenship and



Photo: NM Native Vote

suffrage by the federal government in 1924, New Mexico kept its prohibition towards our communities. Undeterred, Trujillo took Valencia

County to court on the grounds that just because he didn't pay property taxes on his traditional homelands, he still deserved to vote.

In 1948, he won his battle, and Native Americans were granted suffrage in New Mexico.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was another step toward strengthening the tenet that all citizens deserve equal access to the voting booth, especially for our Black relatives. They fought tooth and nail for the protections that came under that legislation and, in the wake of President Johnson's signature, over 250,000 new Black voters were registered *that year*.

However, with the Supreme Court's gutting of the Voting Rights

Act in 2013, our communities are far less protected. In Florida, the poll tax is back. Voter ID laws are on the books in states across the country.

Indigenous voters living on reservations often lack a traditional mailing address. We lack the infrastructure (paved roads, street names, and numbered homes) more common in cities that make registering to vote or receiving an absentee ballot easier. Many of our elders continue to exclusively speak their traditional languages, but resources to translate ballots are lacking. Both are barriers and increase the likelihood of disenfranchising Native voters.

The New Mexico Voting Rights Act currently making its way

“After centuries of colonization, genocide, and antagonism both *de jure* and *de facto*, the least we deserve is a voice in America's young democracy.”

through the Roundhouse has reforms that all New Mexicans can take advantage of: enfranchisement for former felons, automatic

See Chavez on page 14

Work Continues to Protect Native American Children

DeCora Hawk

As the Supreme Court considers whether to gut the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), two Native legislators in South Dakota are doing everything they can to preserve that critical law's protections for our children at the state level. Predictably, though, it's been a tough go. Just a week ago, the legislature failed to pass House Bills 1229 and

1168, both authored by Rep. Peri Pourier (from my home district of Oglala Lakota).

SB 1229 would have provided a set of instructions for placing any child, once removed from their home, within their community. SB 1168 would have increased the requirements for the state's Department of Social Services (DSS) to keep Native children with their families and tribes. Those losses are hard to swallow, but I am hap-

py to say that — thanks to another powerful, Native woman, State Sen. Red Dawn Foster — hope remains.

On Feb.15, South Dakota's Senate Health and Human Services Committee will hold a hearing on SB 191, a bill championed by Sen. Foster which would establish a task force to address the welfare of Indian children in South Dakota. It would require the DSS to act in culturally responsive and socially

supportive ways in cases of removal involving Native American children and make every effort to keep them with other relatives.

We're rooting for a better outcome this time! We also remain hopeful that the High Court will uphold all or a significant part of ICWA, but can we rely on justices who have already rolled back our civil rights in astonishing ways over the past year? The smart move is to ensure ICWA's mandates using all available methods, and that's why these efforts by Sen. Foster and Rep. Pourier matter. They're valiantly fighting an uphill — but essential — battle.

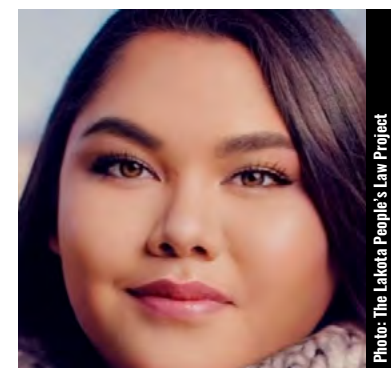


Photo: The Lakota People's Law Project

obligation to be well informed on all the issues that affect our children, and we must lead from the grassroots on their behalf. Our young ones deserve to be supported by the *Oyate* (people) and enveloped in their cultural identity through kinship care.

Please stay with us as we work to make that happen. With these rulings, it's time to raise another battle cry for our children. We offer gratitude to Rep. Pourier and Sen. Foster, and we pledge to keep working hard, every day, with the same goal of a better future for the next generations.

Wopila tanka — thank you for standing with us!

DeCora Hawk is a Field Organizer for The Lakota People's Law Project.

Read More Commentary: ElSemanarioOnline.com

February 2023

Upcoming Events

February 13
6:30 - [Alternative Voting Methods Task Force Meeting](#)

February 15
12:00 - [Elections Task Force Meeting](#)
5:30 - [Gun Violence Prevention Task Force Meeting](#)

February 16
5:30 - [COP27 Presentation with Toni Larson](#)

February 22
5:30 - [Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women Presentation](#)

NOTE: All times are Mountain. Are any events missing from this list? Please notify info@lwvcolorado.org to be included in our next email. Thank you!

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“Our young ones deserve to be supported by the *Oyate* (people) and enveloped in their cultural identity through kinship care.”

As you know, it's important that we augment their work in the Capitol with on-the-ground organizing in our communities to provide Indigenous-led programming centered around healing and restoration of family services. It's our

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Workers Deserve to Know Their Work Schedules in Advance

Kim Cordova and Debbie Medina

Labor unions organize to ensure that workers are treated fairly and with respect. That's why we wholeheartedly support [House Bill 23-1118](#) — the Fair Workweek Employment Standards Act.

We recognize it's a win-win for workers and companies alike when workers are happier, healthier and more productive. And one of the most effective ways of ensuring workers have security and feel valued is to provide predictable schedules in advance — and allow them enough rest time in between shifts — so they can manage their lives outside of work.

Corporate employers like Walmart and McDonald's use "just-in-time" scheduling software to minimize their costs at the expense of their low-wage, hourly workers, who are called into work at the last minute and sent home before the end of their shift. Many also work "clopening" shifts — a night shift followed by an opening shift in the morning, without enough time to rest. These practices place an unacceptable amount

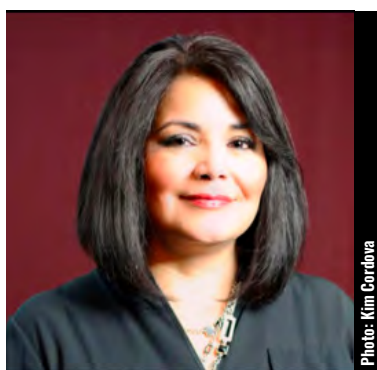


Photo: Kim Cordova

of burden onto employees, who are just barely getting by.

About 450,000 Coloradans in retail and food-service jobs — largely women and people of color — don't know in advance when they'll work, nor how many hours they'll work. Unpredictable schedules make workers less productive due to difficulty scheduling child care, school and other responsibilities. Workers face physical and emotional distress when they don't know their schedule, whether they'll work enough to pay their bills or whether they'll be able to pick up their children at school on time. Workers who have to report to work less than 12 hours after their last shift are more likely to be exhausted and more likely to make dangerous mistakes.

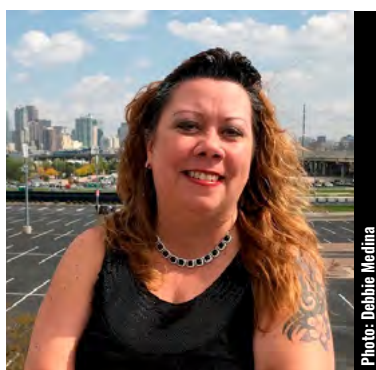


Photo: Debbie Medina

Providing predictable schedules strikes the balance of fairness for both workers and employers by working together to create schedules that meet everyone's needs, including adequate rest time. All workers deserve a stable schedule and to be treated with respect. This proposal ensures that a job is a source of opportunity instead of a source of stress.

Colorado unions know this, which is why we negotiate fair scheduling in our contracts for our members.

However, *all* workers deserve advance notice of schedules so they can manage their lives inside and outside the workplace, not just union members. Not only does worker solidarity compel us to stand with these workers, but

also we'd be delighted to no longer have to negotiate at the bargaining table a basic human right like the right to know your schedule with sufficient notice so we can focus more on advancing the lives of working families in other ways, like earning a living wage and better benefits.

Currently, the Colorado Legislature is considering HB-1118 — the Fair Workweek Employment Standards Act — which will give workers the right to advance scheduling so they can anticipate their hours and pay, know they can support themselves and their families, and contribute fully to their workplace.

Applying only to retail and food/beverage companies with 250 workers or more, some of the bill's key provisions will require employers to provide schedules 14 days in advance, ensure employees have at least 12 hours of rest time between shifts, and not retaliate against employees who request schedule changes or flexible work. Recent polling shows that 74% of Colorado voters support these common sense policies.

Given that the bill will increase their company's productivity and

profitability make it a no-brainer for businesses, too. We hope our state legislators will consider the struggles of Colorado's working

“

These practices place an unacceptable amount of burden onto employees, who are just barely getting by.

families when debating and voting on the Fair Workweek Employment Standards Act.

Kim Cordova is vice president of UFCW International and the president of UFCW Local 7. Debbie Medina is president of Communications Workers of America Local 7777. This commentary is republished from [Colorado Newswire](#) under a Creative Commons license.

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Hastings & Torres/Esp

que son parte intrínseca y vital de nuestra economía, los republicanos solamente quieren atizar a su base MAGA con peligrosas teorías de invasión y de reemplazo. Es decir, a Mayorkas lo quieren enjuiciar no por los problemas en la frontera —que han existido siempre—, sino porque el funcionario es un inmigrante, y en la cabeza de los republicanos más extremistas no cabe la idea de un inmigrante latinoamericano al frente de una de las instituciones oficiales más importantes de todo gabinete.

A eso hay que sumar que ya todos están en campaña con miras a las elecciones generales de 2024, y que hay temas que los políticos tildan de "incómodos". La inmigración no ha sido la excepción.

Biden está entre la espada y la pared. Por un lado, la mayor parte de los asuntos que intenta resolver mediante acciones administrativas y ejecutivas está trabada en los tribunales, como el caso del Título 42. Entretanto, las políticas que ha implementado no han caído bien entre muchos sectores pro inmigrantes por considerar que son una extensión de las nefastas políticas de su antiinmigrante antecesor, Donald

Trump. El recién anunciado programa de *parole* humanitario para ciudadanos de Cuba, Venezuela, Haití y Nicaragua y que pretende controlar el flujo de migrantes en busca de asilo, ha tenido el efecto de reducir los cruces sin documentos en 97%, pero ya 20 estados gobernados por republicanos quieren frenarlo en los tribunales.

Eso demuestra, una vez más, que los republicanos no van a cesar en su esfuerzo de echar por tierra todo proyecto que beneficie a los inmigrantes, a pesar de que funcione. O quizá precisamente porque funcionan es que se oponen a ellos. Tal parece que la división es su objetivo, no ser opositores simplemente.

Biden no es un neófito en temas migratorios tras casi cuatro décadas en el Congreso y ocho años como vicepresidente de Barack Obama, quien prometió una reforma que tampoco se concretó; y aunque presionado creó DACA, al sol de hoy solo beneficia a unas 600 mil personas. Para tantos años que han pasado, el resultado ahora, con una nueva realidad y diferentes retos para los Dreamers, tiene sabor a poco.

Los simbolismos y las prome-

sas migratorias deben dar paso a acciones. Biden pide colaboración y bipartidismo a un Partido Republicano extremista que solo quiere hundirlo. Es mejor invertir capital político en lo que pueda lograrse a nivel legislativo, como la legalización de los Dreamers, o a nivel ejecutivo como el TPS para Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua y Guatemala. Acciones que vayan allanando el terreno para la esqui-va reforma.

Maribel Hastings es Asesora Ejecutiva y David Torres es Asesor en Español de [América's Voice](#).

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ElSemanaOnline.com

Dalven

associations, physicians, and reproductive justice advocates, aiming to get rid of the FDA's medically unnecessary restrictions on mifepristone. Our lawsuit prompted the FDA to remove some of those barriers and led to its finally permitting people to get the medication from a pharmacy, after consultation with their health care provider, rather than having to travel in person to an abortion clinic.

As this case develops, we'll continue working with government officials and our partners to respond to any ruling that takes away a safe, effective, and common method for medication abortion.

At the same, we continue to fight the state bans. We have blocked bans in Arizona, Indiana,

Iowa, Michigan, Ohio, and Utah. We are asking the state supreme courts in Kentucky, Georgia, and Florida to step in and block those states' bans. And earlier this month, we filed a new case in West Virginia challenging provisions of the state's total abortion ban.

We will not stop fighting until everyone can get the care they need, no matter who they are, where they live, or how much money they have.

Jennifer Dalven is the Director for the [Reproductive Freedom Project](#), [American Civil Liberties Union](#).

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PODCAST

New School Aims to Preserve Culture, Language and Sense of Community

By Mark Stevens

Twelve miles south of Cortez, in the southwest corner of Colorado, a right turn on Mike Wash Road leads three miles up to the town of Towaoc on the Ute Mountain Ute Reservation.

Towaoc is pronounced *toy-awk*. The town is due east of the cliffs that form the “toes” of the sacred Sleeping Ute Mountain, a 9,984-foot peak with a profile that is said to resemble a Ute Indian chief resting on his back with his arms folded. About 1,200 people live in Towaoc. It’s 22 miles as the crow flies to the Four Corners National Monument.

The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe manages a 7,700-acre farm and ranch. The tribe runs a casino, hotel, and a gas station and travel center along the highway. There are plans to build a tribe-owned grocery store. Towaoc has a 54-bed prison, run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and a U.S. Post Office.

And now, a school.

Kwiyaqat Community Academy (KCA), opened in September 2021, is Colorado’s first charter school located on a Native reservation. In the Ute language, *kwiyaqat* means “bear.” The hope is that the school

will keep the Ute language and culture alive and strengthen the Towaoc community, too. Towaoc is the poorest zip code in Colorado, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, with 37% of families living below the poverty line.

The first 16 months suggest the school is taking root, with enrollment and community-wide enthusiasm as the key measures of success. The school is a lively focal point of activity on the southern end of the small downtown square.

But challenges remain. There are complicated layers of governance—tribe, state, federal government, and the school’s authorizer, the Colorado Charter School Institute. There is the challenge of finding licensed, qualified teachers to work in this remote corner of Colorado. (Teachers need not be Native, nor speak the Ute language.)

And there is the task of lifting student achievement—a chronic statewide and national issue for Indigenous students. Improving results on statewide tests goes hand-in-hand with another long-term concern: attendance.

But the overall mood is optimism.



Kwiyaqat Community Academy teacher Nena López and her kindergarten students. / Maestra de Kwiyaqat Community Academy Nena López y sus estudiantes de kindergarten.

“Before the school opened, I do kind of feel like we were forgotten,” says kindergarten teacher Nena López, who lives in Towaoc. “And now, you know, with a charter school that brings a lot of state representatives here, it’s been really, really an eye opener. For not just

the state, but for the community, too.”

Beginning as a kindergartener and all the way through high school, Dyllon Mills, a member of the Ute Mountain Ute tribe, made a daily trek on a bus north to schools in Cortez. The distance wasn’t bad, he said, but it was a matter of preparing his mind each day to try and fit in.

When Towaoc youth climbed off the school bus, he says, “we knew we had to act a different way. There were different values and acceptable thoughts, which was not the same as where we grew up.”

Now, six months after graduating from Fort Lewis College in Durango, Mills is vice-chair of the KCA school board and working for the Southwest Area Health Education Center. The KCA school board includes three Ute tribal members and two members who are not Native but who have worked with Native students in the Cortez school system. The KCA school board was appointed by the Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Council.

Tina King-Washington, president of the KCA school board and a Ute tribal member, says that for students the daily trip to Cortez was “like going to a different country.”

Kwiyaqat Community Academy is small. During the 2022-23 school year, the school is serving 48 students from kindergarten through second grade. That’s three students above projections. School leadership views the added enrollment as a vote of confidence.

“If you look at the Montezuma County numbers, there’s been a dip in the school-age population,”

says KCA Principal Danny Porter. “So I think the word is spreading. I think people are seeing what’s going on and I think we are building that trust with the community.”

“Before the school opened, I do kind of feel like we were forgotten.”
Nena López, Teacher

Next year, KCA will add third grade. The school will grow, in the subsequent two years, to serve fourth- and fifth-grade students, too. The public school is open to tribal and non-tribal youngsters alike; at present, all students are Native, though not all are Ute—some are Navajo or members of other tribes.

KCA’s current building, a temporary modular building once owned by the U.S. Army, will be a tight fit for the projected student population over the coming years. There are plans to bring in an adjoining modular unit to house grades three through five. Discussions are underway with nonprofit organizations and architects about adding a middle school, but the main focus this year is to ensure that the elementary school thrives.

The school’s vision is straightforward. Kwiyaqat Community Academy wants its graduates to have a “strong grounding in Nuchi culture and language while incorporating modern perspectives as

Una Nueva Escuela Busca Preservar la Cultura, el Idioma y un Sentido de Comunidad



Foto/Photo: Shannon Millane / Special to The Colorado Trust

Danny Porter, director de la Academia Comunitaria Kwi-yagat, y estudiantes de primer grado disfrutan de tiempo libre casi al final del día escolar. / Kwi-yagat Community Academy Principal Danny Porter and first-grade students enjoy some free time as a school day comes to a close.

Por Mark Stevens

A doce millas al sur de Cortez, en el rincón sudoeste de Colorado, doblar a la derecha en Mike Wash Road significa continuar tres millas arriba al pueblo de Towaoc en la reserva Ute de la Montaña Ute.



“Antes que la escuela abriera, sí siento como que nos tenían olvidados”.

Nena. López, Maestra.

Towaoc se pronuncia *toi-ok*. El pueblo está ubicado al este de los barrancos que forman los “dedos de los pies” de la sagrada montaña Ute Dormida, un pico de 9,984 de altura con un perfil que se dice asemeja al jefe ute indio descansando en su espalda con sus brazos cruzados. Cerca de 1,200 personas viven en Towaoc. Está a 22 millas en línea recta del Monumento Nacional Cuatro Esquinas.

La tribu Ute de la Montaña Ute gestiona una granja y rancho de 7,700 acres. La tribu administra un casino, hotel y estación de gasolina y centro de servicios para el viajero junto a la carretera. Hay planes de construir un supermercado propiedad de la tribu. Towaoc tiene una prisión con 54 camas que la Oficina de Asuntos Indios gestiona, y una oficina del Correo Postal de EE. UU.

Y ahora, una escuela.

La Academia Comunitaria Kwi-yagat (KCA, por sus siglas en inglés) se inauguró en septiembre de 2021 y es la primera escuela *charter* de Colorado ubicada en una reserva indígena. En el idioma ute, *kwi-yagat* significa “oso”. La esperanza es que la escuela mantenga el idioma y la cultura ute vivos y que también fortalezca la comunidad de Towaoc. Towaoc está en el código postal más pobre en Colorado, según la [Oficina del Censo de EE. UU.](#); el 37 por ciento de las familias viven por debajo de la línea de pobreza.

Los primeros 16 meses sugieren que la escuela está sembrando raíces, con la cantidad de estudiantes inscritos y el entusiasmo en la comunidad usándose como indicadores claves del éxito. La escuela es un centro animado de actividad en el borde sur de la pequeña plaza del pueblo.

Pero sigue habiendo desafíos. Hay niveles complicados de gobernanza: tribal, estatal, federal y del autorizador de la escuela, el Instituto de Escuelas *Charter* de Colorado. Existe el desafío de encontrar maestros certificados y calificados para trabajar en este rincón remoto de Colorado. (No es necesario que los maestros sean indígenas ni que hablen el idioma ute.)

Y también está la tarea de aumentar el desempeño de los estudiantes, un problema crónico estatal y nacional entre los estudiantes indígenas. El desafío de mejorar los resultados de las pruebas

estatales viene acompañado por otra inquietud histórica: las ausencias.

Pero el estado de ánimo en general es optimista.

“Antes que la escuela abriera, sí siento como que nos tenían

olvidados”, dice Nena López, una maestra de kindergarten que vive Towaoc. “Y ahora, sabes, con una escuela *charter* que atrae a muchos representantes estatales aquí, ha sido realmente una revelación. No solo para el estado, sino también para la comunidad”.

A partir de kindergarten y hasta terminar *high school*, Dyllon Mills, un integrante de la tribu Ute de la Montaña Ute, realizó el traslado en autobús hacia el norte a las escuelas en Cortez. La distancia no era demasiado larga, dijo, pero tenía que preparar su mente todos los días para tratar de encajar.

Cuando los niños de Towaoc se bajaban del autobús escolar, dice, “sabíamos que teníamos que actuar de manera diferente. Había diferentes valores y pensamientos aceptables, los cuales no eran los mismos en donde vivíamos”.

Ahora, seis meses después de graduarse de Fort Lewis College en Durango, Mills es vicepresidente del consejo escolar de la KCA y está trabajando para el Centro de Educación de Salud en el Área del Sudoeste. El consejo escolar de la KCA incluye tres integrantes de la tribu Ute y dos integrantes que no son indígenas pero que han estado

trabajando con estudiantes nativos en el sistema escolar de Cortez. El Concejo Tribal Ute de la Montaña Ute nombró a los integrantes del consejo escolar de la KCA.

Tina King-Washington, presidenta del consejo escolar de la KCA e integrante de la tribu Ute, dice que para los estudiantes el traslado diario a Cortez era “como estar yendo a otro país”.

La Academia Comunitaria Kwi-yagat es pequeña. Durante el año escolar 2022-23, la escuela atendió a 48 estudiantes de kindergarten a segundo grado. Esa cantidad es tres estudiantes por encima de lo pronosticado. Los líderes de la escuela consideran esa cantidad mayor como un voto de confianza.

“Si examinas los números en el Condado de Montezuma, ha habido una reducción en la población en edad escolar”, dice Danny Porter, director de la KCA. “Así que creo que la voz se está corriendo. Creo que las personas están viendo lo que está pasando y creo que estamos aumentando la confianza con la comunidad”.

El próximo año, la KCA agregará el tercer grado. La escuela

Vea Idioma, página 18



State News / Noticias del Estado

Health Agencies Turn to Locals to Extend Reach Into Immigrant Communities

COLORADO

By Markian Hawryluk

When covid-19 vaccines became available, Colorado public health officials initially relied on mass vaccination events publicized through Facebook, email, and texts, and required Coloradans to book appointments online. But when that go-big strategy drove large disparities in who was getting vaccinated, public health departments in the Denver area decided to go small instead.

They provided "microgrants," small sums for one-time projects, to community organizations serving immigrants and minorities, and allowed those groups to determine how best to use the money.

Some used apps and social media, including WhatsApp, Nextdoor, and Facebook Live. Others chose to pound the pavement and knock on doors. Vaccine promotion events occurred at Saturday soccer games and at the Mile High Flea Market. Over time, the disparities in vaccine rates in and around Denver narrowed, although it's difficult to know how much to attri-

bute to the community ambassador program, as the initiative has come to be known.

“People feel like, ‘OK, this is someone that went through the exact same thing as I did’. They feel much more willing to share.”
 Carlos Herrera, Colorado Changemakers Collective

The microgrant approach could well be the future of public health messaging for diverse populations and a way to combat the erosion of trust that came with the pandemic's politicization of public health. By setting public health goals but letting trusted sources within communities deliver them, health departments are rebuilding their capacity to disseminate science-based messages and engage communities at a granular level.

"I do think that community engagement is a road map for improving public health emergency work in these communities," said

Dr. Ned Colange, associate dean for public health practice at the Colorado School of Public Health.

The success of the vaccine outreach program, a collaboration between Denver-area public health departments and the nonprofit Colorado Health Institute, has led to a second round of grants to address the stigma against mental illness. And with the impending end of the covid public health emergency, which prevented states from dropping people from Medicaid coverage, officials plan to use a similar approach to encourage people to update their information so the state can determine who is still eligible for benefits.

The ambassador program was launched in 2020 as health officials prepared for the covid vaccine rollout, with a pilot campaign to encourage flu shots. Once covid vaccines became available, [heat maps](#) showing vaccination rates down to census tracts identified neighborhoods with low uptake. The partners could then reach out to community organizations with boots on the ground in those areas to tailor their outreach.

Many of the groups invited to apply had minimal staffing —



Promotoras live in the communities they serve and they can quickly identify barriers and suggest strategies to overcome them.

sometimes a single person — and often limited English-language skills. That would make writing grant proposals difficult. Instead, organizations applied through 30-minute interviews with program leaders.

Each of the funded organizations was required to participate in biweekly calls with the Colorado Health Institute, which handled the grants, and public health departments. Larger community groups served as mentors for smaller ones.

On those calls, health officials provided the latest updates on covid and vaccines, while the community organizations relayed what they were hearing on the street.

"I would hear about the covid vaccine concerns from our ambassadors before I would ever hear them in the media, really, because they had that immediate connection to the community," said Nicole Weber, senior program manager at the Colorado Health Institute.

The immunization program operates with a budget of \$300,000 a year, funding 17 community organizations, while the mental health program has a \$465,000 budget, funding 15 groups. They are among the more than 40 organizations that have been funded with grants of up to \$30,000 since the ambassador programs launched in 2020.

"It's allowing a real lovely deepening of trust between the community-based organizations and public health," said Wendy Nading, a nurse manager with the Arapahoe County Public Health Department.

Colorado Changemakers Collective was one of those funded groups. It was launched in 2017 by a small group of residents in the Montbello neighborhood of Denver to link the primarily Hispanic

population there with rent or utility assistance programs and health services. Using *promotoras* (Spanish for "promoters") — health workers who are members of the target population and share many of the same social, cultural, and economic characteristics — the collective has built deep roots in the community. It expanded its work to the entire Denver region, and soon to Grand Junction and Colorado Springs.

Because *promotoras* live in the communities they serve, they can quickly identify barriers and suggest strategies to overcome them. The collective, for example, persuaded health officials to shift the schedule for mobile vaccine clinics from daytime hours during the week to Friday from 5 p.m. until midnight. The shift allowed residents working hourly jobs with no time off to get their shots after work and have the weekend to recover from side effects.

The collective communicates through Facebook and other social media, including WhatsApp, a messaging app used globally and popular among immigrants. Through the app, the collective provides information on services and resources.

The collective is also participating in the mental illness stigma ambassador program, hosting community circles, both in person and online, in which *promotoras* lead discussions on topics such as getting enough sleep or communicating with your teen.

Funding from the program allows the collective to hire a licensed therapist to hold one-on-one sessions with residents who need help and to work with the *promotoras* on their own mental health issues that may develop in their stressful jobs.

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State News / Noticias del Estado

Agencias Utilizan a Locales para Llegar a Comunidades de Inmigrantes



Foto: Adobe Stock

Las promotoras viven en las comunidades a las que sirven y pueden identificar rápidamente las barreras y sugerir estrategias para superarlas.

COLORADO

Por Markian Hawryluk

Cuando las vacunas contra covid-19 estuvieron disponibles por primera vez, oficiales de salud de Colorado las promovieron en eventos masivos de difusión, Facebook, por correos electrónicos y mensajes de texto, y exigieron que las citas para administrarlas se hicieran por internet.

Con el tiempo, las disparidades en las tasas de vacunación en el área de Denver se redujeron, aunque es difícil saber cuánto atribuir al programa de embajadores de la comunidad, como se conoce a la iniciativa.

El enfoque de micro subvenciones bien podría ser el futuro de los mensajes de salud pública para poblaciones diversas, y una forma de combatir la erosión de la confianza que se produjo con la politización de la salud pública por la pandemia.

Estableciendo objetivos de salud pública, pero permitiendo que fuentes confiables dentro de las comunidades los cumplan, los departamentos de salud están reconstruyendo su capacidad para difundir mensajes basados en la ciencia e involucrar a las comunidades desde sus raíces.

"Creo que la participación de la comunidad es una hoja de ruta para mejorar el trabajo de emergencia de salud pública en estas comunidades", dijo el doctor Ned Colange, decano asociado de práctica de salud pública en la Escuela de Salud Pública de Colorado.

El éxito del programa de alcance de vacunas, una colaboración entre las áreas de salud pública de los departamentos de salud y la entidad sin fines de lucro Colorado Health Institute ahora comienza una segunda ronda de subvenciones para abordar el estigma de la salud mental.

Y con el final inminente de la emergencia de salud pública por covid, que impidió que los estados retiraran a las personas de la cobertura de Medicaid, los funcionarios planean usar un enfoque similar para alentar a las personas



"La gente piensa, 'Está bien, esta persona es alguien que pasó exactamente por lo mismo que yo'. Se sienten mucho más dispuestos a compartir".

Carlos Herrera, Colorado Changemakers Collective

Pero cuando la mega estrategia mostró enormes disparidades entre los que se vacunaban y los que no, los departamentos de salud pública en el área de Denver, decidieron usar estrategias más focalizadas.

Otorgaron micro subvenciones para proyectos unitarios a organizaciones comunitarias, y permitieron a estos grupos decidir la mejor manera de utilizar el dinero para impulsar las tasas de vacunación entre las comunidades inmigrantes y las minorías.

Algunos utilizaron aplicaciones y redes sociales, como WhatsApp, Nextdoor y Facebook Live. Otros optaron por tocar puertas. Los eventos de promoción de vacunas se hicieron en los juegos de fútbol de los sábados y en el Mile High Flea Market.

Vea **Inmigrantes**, página 21

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The cast of Laughs in Spanish. Photo by Jamie Kraus Photography

State News / Noticias del Estado

Federal Court Rejects Extremists' Attempt to Defeat Voter Intimidation Lawsuit

COLORADO

A federal judge in Colorado has rejected efforts by individuals involved with the United States Election Integrity Plan (USEIP), an extremist organization with ties to QAnon and the January 6 insurrection, to defeat a lawsuit seeking to stop their illegal voter intimidation campaign in Colorado.

On January 23, 2023, the court dismissed the defendants' defamation and abuse of process counterclaims against the voting rights organizations that filed the lawsuit. Then on January 31, the court denied the defendants' motion for judgment on the pleadings and (with one exception) motion for summary judgment. (The defendants only prevailed on one point: that, while the claims may proceed against the individual defendants,

as an unincorporated association USEIP itself is not amenable to suit.) With the counterclaims dismissed and the court agreeing that the core voter intimidation claims may proceed, the case may now proceed to trial.

“This is nothing short of textbook voter intimidation intended to harass voters of color and prevent them from participating in the elections process.”
Beth Hendrix, League of Women Voters of Colorado

The lawsuit filed by the League of Women Voters of Colorado, Mi

Familia Vota, and Colorado-Montana-Wyoming State Area Conference of the NAACP, alleges that USEIP and three of its key organizers (Shawn Smith, Ashley Epp, and Holly Kasun) are violating the *Voting Rights Act* and the *Ku Klux Klan Act* through their campaign of visiting voters' homes and intimidating voters on their own doorsteps for having voted in the 2020 election.

“This is nothing short of textbook voter intimidation intended to harass voters of color and prevent them from participating in the elections process,” said Beth Hendrix, Executive Director for the League of Women Voters of Colorado. “All voters should have the freedom to exercise their right to vote, free from fear and intimidation, and make our voices heard in our democracy.”

USEIP's “County & Local Organizing Playbook” (the “Playbook”), which sets forth USEIP's principles



Voting rights organizations lawsuit moves forward to end voter intimidation and suppression efforts.

and goals, makes clear that USEIP's tactics include engaging in violent and intimidating behavior, and threatening and intimidating voters purportedly in order to support debunked claims of election fraud. The Colorado-based organization

expanded its operations to Arizona, Georgia, and New Hampshire ahead of the 2022 election.

“Defendants' objectives are clear. By planning to, threatening

See [Voter](#) on page 20

Un Tribunal Federal Rechaza el Intento de los Extremistas de Derrotar la Demanda por Intimidación de Votantes

COLORADO

Un juez federal en Colorado ha rechazado los esfuerzos de los individuos involucrados con el Plan de Integridad Electoral de Estados Unidos (USEIP), una organización extremista con vínculos con QAnon y la insurrección del 6 de enero, para derrotar una demanda que busca detener su campaña ilegal de intimidación de votantes en Colorado.

El 23 de enero de 2023, el tribunal desestimó las contrademandas de difamación y abuso de proceso de los demandados contra las or-

ganizaciones de derechos electorales que presentaron la demanda. Posteriormente, el 31 de enero, el tribunal denegó la petición de los demandados de que se dictara sentencia sobre los alegatos y (con una excepción) la petición de sentencia sumaria. (Los demandados sólo prevalecieron en un punto: que, si bien las demandas pueden proceder contra los demandados individuales, como asociación no constituida en sociedad la propia USEIP no es susceptible de demanda).

Con la desestimación de las reconveniones y el acuerdo del tribunal de que las principales

demandas de intimidación de votantes pueden proceder, el caso puede ahora ir a juicio.

La demanda presentada por la Liga de Mujeres Votantes de Colorado, Mi Familia Vota, y Colorado-Montana-Wyoming State Area Conference of the NAACP, alega que USEIP y tres de sus principales organizadores (Shawn Smith, Ashley Epp, y Holly Kasun) están violando la Ley de Derecho al Voto y la Ley del Ku Klux Klan a través de su campaña de visitar los hogares de los votantes e intimidar a los votantes en sus propias puertas por haber votado en las elecciones de 2020.

“Esto no es nada menos que intimidación electoral de libro de texto destinada a acosar a los votantes de color y evitar que participen en el proceso electoral”, dijo Beth Hendrix, Directora Ejecutiva de la Liga de Mujeres Votantes de Colorado. “Todos los votantes deben tener la libertad de ejercer su derecho al voto, libres de miedo e intimidación, y hacer oír nuestras voces en nuestra democracia”.

El “County & Local Organizing Playbook” (el “Playbook”) de USEIP, que establece los principios y objetivos de USEIP, deja claro que las tácticas de USEIP incluyen participar en comportamientos violentos e intimidatorios, y amenazar e intimidar a los votantes supuestamente con el fin de apoyar las afirmaciones desacreditadas de fraude electoral. La organización, con sede en Colorado, amplió sus operaciones a Arizona, Georgia y New Hampshire antes de las elecciones de 2022.

“Los objetivos de los acusados son claros. Al planear, amenazar y, de hecho, desplegar agentes armados para llamar a las puertas en todo el estado de Colorado, USEIP se dedica a la intimidación de los votantes”, argumentan los demandantes. “Las acciones públicas de USEIP son una clara señal a los votantes de Colorado, especialmente a los votantes de color, de que votar en las próxi-

mas elecciones significa enfrentarse a un interrogatorio por parte de agentes de USEIP potencialmente armados y amenazantes en la puerta de su casa”.

Los esfuerzos de intimidación de USEIP afectan especialmente a las comunidades de color, que históricamente se han enfrentado a barreras institucionalizadas, amenazas violentas e intimidación por ejercer su derecho al voto. Los ataques de los justicieros, así como las redadas policiales y de inmigración, agravan la intimidación que USEIP ejerce sobre los votantes negros y latinos. Los encuestadores suelen dirigirse a zonas de alta densidad de viviendas y a comunidades en las que crece el número de votantes pertenecientes a minorías.

Las organizaciones de defensa del derecho al voto que han

Ve [Votantes](#), página 21



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Return of the Corn Mothers Exhibition Hosts Free Artist Talks

COLORADO

The Return of the Corn Mothers 2022 at History Colorado has been hailed photographic love letter to the women of the Southwest. A multi-generational and multi-cultural celebration of women whose lives and work embody the spirit of community, this award-winning traveling photographic extravaganza features photos and stories of 70 women. Photographer Todd Pierson has spent 15 years traversing the vast landscape of Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and Wyoming to preserve their legacy. In honor of the Month of Photography and Women's History Month, Pierson will host two free guided talks about the exhibition on Sat. March 4th and Sat. March 18th.

Sign up for the Saturday, March 4th, 11 am -12 noon, [here](#). And for the Saturday, March 18th, 11 am to 12 noon [here](#).

Through the lens of his camera, Pierson said, "I have endeavored to celebrate the many contributions these women have made to society. The women in the exhibition embody the spirit of community giving. Each and every one of these women has had a huge impact in creating a kinder, better, more just world." Pierson added, "I hope this exhibition will inspire us all."

"What is most unique about this massive collection of portraits," said Brenda Gurule, Chicano Humanities Arts Council executive director, "is that every photograph represents countless hours of research, interviews, location scouting and planning even before the portraits were taken. Each woman was interviewed extensively and asked to write about a woman that inspired her." Pierson then matched each woman's photo shoot to her story. "So, what you are experiencing is an intimate view into the lives of the women captured in environments that directly influenced them."

Case in point is the mesmerizing portrait of La Sierra Land Rights activist Shirley Romero Otero, shot on location in the La Vega of San Luis Colorado. There is Carrie Howell, of the Denver American Indian Festival, dressed in full regalia amidst the background of downtown Denver, representing her tireless efforts to bring a sense of pride to tribal people living in urban centers. The portrait of Baja Batochir, founder of the Mongolian Culture and Heritage Center of Colorado, is a lush visual journey into



Portrait of La Sierra Land Rights activist Shirley Romero Otero, shot on location in the La Vega of San Luis Colorado. She is featured in the Return of the Corn Mothers 2022.

the culture of her homeland. African American poet and play write Norma Johnson's portrait embodies her passion as a healer and proponent of community healing.

The Return of the Corn Mothers 2022 at History Colorado which opened in Sept. of 2022 is showing through Oct. 1st, 2023. Serendipitously the exhibition coincides with the biennial celebration (every other March) Month of Photography Denver, presented by the Colorado Photographic Arts Center (CPAC), a nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering the understanding and appreciation of excellent photography through year-round exhibitions, education, and community outreach. In addition March is designated Women's History Month by presidential proclamation. The month is set aside to honor women's contributions in American history.

History of the Corn Mothers Exhibition

The indigenous peoples of southern Mexico began domesticating maize (corn) over 9,000 years ago. As cultivation of the once-wild grass spread throughout the "Americas" and globally, the significance of this life-giving food was immortalized in legend and story. Among the Southwest Pueblo peoples, the iconic Corn Mother deity became the embodiment of growth, life, creativity, community, and creation. The Return of the Corn Mothers project is an anthology and photographic/written history exhibition of multi-generational/multi-cultural women from the Southwest who exemplify the essence of Corn Mother. Photographer Todd Pierson, editor Ed Winograd, graphic designer Toinette Brown, and curator Renee Fajardo, in conjunction with MSU Denver Chicana/o Studies, the Colorado Folks Arts Council, and the Chicano Humanities Arts Council, have spent 15 years documenting the

stories and photographs of these women, who were nominated by their communities for their selfless contributions and creative endeavors to better the lives of others.

This nationally recognized exhibit has traveled to numerous universities and museums in Arizona (ASU Museum of Anthropology and Pima Community College), Colorado (CU Boulder Museum of Nature and Science, CHAC Art Gallery, and others), and New Mexico (New Mexico Highlands University). It began in 2007 with a small grant from the Rocky Mountain Women's Institute, featuring photos/stories of 17 women who helped form the foundation of their communities. The goal was to ensure that the history and stories of these women would not be forgotten.

By 2009 the exhibition expanded to 24 women after receiving a grant from Colorado Humanities for a symposium at MSU Denver. In 2012/13, another 9 women were added for an exhibition at the MSU Denver Center for the Visual Arts. In 2016, another 7 women from Colorado's San Luis Valley were included in an exhibition at Adams State University in Alamosa. The Pueblo

(Colorado) City Library District exhibition in 2019 saw the addition of another 8 women from Pueblo.



"What is most unique about this massive collection of portraits, is that every photograph represents countless hours of research, interviews, location scouting and planning even before the portraits were taken."

Brenda Gurule, Chicano Humanities Arts Council

Return of the Corn Mothers 2022 marked a three-year effort to initiate and honor 22 new women. The exhibition now boasts photographic portraits of 70 women, and two printed anthologies (one for women inducted before 2022 and one for the 2022 inductees), which include the women's photos, biographies, philosophies, and life sayings, as well as a story by each honoree about their own Corn Mother or Corn Mothers (women

who influenced/mentored them).

The twenty-two new women who were new honorees at the History Colorado opening reception on Fri. Oct. 21, 2022 included: Ellen Alires-Trujillo (founder of Colorado Legal Aid), Batkhishig Batochir(founder of Mongolian Culture & Heritage Center of Colorado), Shirley Romero Otero(Sangre de Cristo Land Grant activist), Norma Johnson(Social Justice Storyteller/Poet), Marge Taniwaki(Japanese Internment Camp Activist), Adriene Norris(Social Justice Muralist).

Other new inductees included: Authors; Juliana Aragon Fatula, Karen D. Gonzales, Jo Elizabeth Pinto, and Deborah Martinez Martinez, all known for their preservation of Chicana/o- Latinx culture- Educators; Genevieve Canales, Connie Margaret Coca, & Evangeline Sena- KUVU Public Radio Executive; Tina Cartagena- Anthropologist; Lucha Martinez- Indigenous Rights Activist; Laura Naranjo, Elena Holly Klaver & Erica Padilla- Organic Farmer; Sandra Ortega- Ballet Folkloric Director; Jeanette Trujillo and Grief Counselor; Jennifer McBride.

See [Corn Mothers](#) on page 20

FEB 21
6:00 pm

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Tribal Education Is A Matter Of Cultural Survival: 'We Need To Act Now'

NEW MÉXICO

By Austin Fisher

There is plenty of history between the state of New Mexico and Native nations, and it hasn't always been very pleasant, said Mark Mitchell, former governor of Tesuque Pueblo.

"There are still some seeds of doubt, distrust, lingering feelings of suspicion, resentment, and still layers of misunderstanding and misinformation about tribes," said Mitchell, chairman of the All Pueblo Council of Governors. "Who are we? What are we about? And why are we considered sovereign?"

In a statehouse built on the ancestral homelands of the Tesuque Pueblo people, Mitchell and Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren told New Mexico lawmakers that education should be at the forefront of this year's legislative session.

In their State of Tribal Nations address, Mitchell and Nygren asked New Mexico senators and representatives "to invest in our children today."

"Today, I propose a new beginning for all of us," Mitchell said, "a different approach to the ways the tribes and the state Legislature have treated one another in the past."

Twenty-four tribal nations were represented inside the Roundhouse on Friday. They included Navajo Nation, Fort Sill Apache, Mes-calero Apache, Jicarilla Apache, 19 Pueblos, and Ysleta del Sur Pueblo in El Paso.

The relationship between the state government and Native nations has greatly evolved over the decades in many profound and productive ways, Mitchell said, listing agreements governing taxes, the environment, water, social welfare, health, law enforcement, and human services.

"No one party, Democrats or Republicans, in the Legislature or the executive, can lay claim to have been the sole architects behind these developments," Mitchell said. The truth of the matter, he added, is that it happened as a result of bipartisan efforts in collaboration with tribal leaders.

He called for the state and tribes to develop a new set of standards for how they treat one another, to revive and resurrect time-tested traditional values of respect, trust and common courtesy.

"We have come a long way, but our work is far from over," Mitchell said. "I would like to have us treat one another as equals, recognizing our sovereignty, seeing our values in one another, building on the strengths, and fulfilling the purpose of government: namely, that we can and should be forced to improve the quality of people's lives. That we should create an opportunity for those who have none. And, we should protect the most vulnerable in our communities."

Newly elected President Nygren thanked the Legislature for previous investments in education, for passing a state law last year

that mimics — and some say even improves upon — the federal Indian Child Welfare Act.

Nygren said the gathering on Feb. 3 was meant for Indigenous people to celebrate where they've come from and how they continue to protect their languages, cultures and ways of life passed down through grandmothers, grandfathers, and traditional healers.

"Let's continue to hold onto it so that our generations ahead of us can enjoy the language and culture that really encompass what it means to be Indian, to be Pueblo, to be Zuni, to be Apache, to be Navajo," he said.

The Pueblos have some of the most ancient and distinct languages in America, Mitchell said.

"Pueblo worldview is contained in our languages," he said. "Some Pueblo languages are so unique, they are not spoken anywhere in the world."

But unfortunately, language loss has reached a critical stage, he said.

"Whether our culture, our traditions, will survive will depend on whether our children can speak our language," Mitchell said.

Students who speak a language other than English demonstrate a sustainable improvement in their academic performance and testing, Mitchell pointed out. Native languages offer a unique thought process, he emphasized, and a tribal way of interpreting the world that can't be lost.

"We could use the state's help by increasing funding for our tribal



Photo/Foto: Sharon Chischilly for Source NM

Mark Mitchell, former governor of Tesuque Pueblo and chairman of the All Pueblo Council of Governors, greets New Mexico senators on Feb. 3, 2023. / Mark Mitchell, ex gobernador de Tesuque Pueblo y presidente del Consejo de Gobernadores de Todos los Pueblos, saluda a los senadores de Nuevo México el 3 de febrero de 2023.

education departments," Mitchell said. "We do have language programs and preservation programs and efforts in place. However, the issue always is funding."

New Mexico is benefitting from the leases and extractive activities that pay into the Land Grant Permanent Fund, which was created with 13.5 million acres of Indigenous lands taken by the United States government, Mitchell said.

The Pueblos are asking the Legislature to provide tribes with a greater share of funding under the state Indian Education Act.

The state has a responsibility outlined in the historic Yazzie-Martinez ruling issued more than four years ago.

Passage of House Bill 140, he said, would "ensure tribes that the

state of New Mexico Legislature is willing to invest in the hopes and dreams of Native children, that it's willing to do more than just talk about low proficiency scores or low graduation rates."

"We need to act now," Mitchell said. "We know our children can and will exceed academically, and we know they can and will achieve great things. We ask you to share their dreams, and make them a reality."

Austin Fisher is a reporter with Source New Mexico. This article is republished from Source New Mexico under a Creative Commons license.

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Chavez

voter registration, making permanent the option to vote by mail, and preventing the release of private voter data. In addition, a provision within the bill is titled the Native American Voting Rights Act, which provides solutions for many of the issues listed above.

Voters living on reservations without a traditional mailing address could instead register using the address of official tribal buildings. Language translation services would be strengthened. Access to the early vote would be expanded substantially. Requests from Tribes to upgrade their election infrastructure would be considered and funded. Notably, county commissioners would also be required to consult with Tribes in drawing political boundaries instead of drawing arbitrary

lines that violate community consensus.

We're citizens of our Tribal nations, the state we reside in, and of the United States. After centuries of colonization, genocide, and antagonism both *de jure* and *de facto*, the least we deserve is a voice in America's young democracy.

Ahtza Chavez is executive director of NM Native Vote, a 501(c)4 Indigenous-led organization working on policy and increasing the voting bloc for Native Americans in New Mexico. This commentary article is republished from Source New Mexico under a Creative Commons license.

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La Educación Tribal es Una Cuestión de Supervivencia Cultural

NEW MÉXICO

Por Austin Fisher

Hay mucha historia entre el estado de Nuevo México y las naciones nativas, y no siempre ha sido muy agradable, dijo Mark Mitchell, ex gobernador de Tesuque Pueblo.

"Todavía hay algunas semillas de duda, desconfianza, sentimientos persistentes de sospecha, resentimiento, y todavía capas de malentendidos y desinformación sobre las tribus", dijo Mitchell, presidente del Consejo de Gobernadores de Todos los Pueblos. "¿Quiénes somos? ¿Qué somos? ¿Y por qué se nos considera soberanos?".

En una sede estatal construida en las tierras ancestrales del pueblo tesuque, Mitchell y el Presidente de la Nación Navajo, Buu Nygren, dijeron a los legisladores de Nuevo México que la educación debe estar en el primer plano de la sesión legislativa de este año.

En su discurso sobre el Estado de las Naciones Tribales, Mitchell y Nygren pidieron a los senadores y representantes de Nuevo México "que inviertan hoy en nuestros niños".

"Hoy propongo un nuevo comienzo para todos nosotros", dijo Mitchell, "un enfoque diferente a las formas en que las tribus y la Legislatura estatal se han tratado en el pasado".

Veinticuatro naciones tribales estuvieron representadas dentro de la Roundhouse el viernes. Entre ellas se encontraban la Nación

Navajo, Fort Sill Apache, Mescale-ro Apache, Jicarilla Apache, 19 Pueblos y Ysleta del Sur Pueblo en El Paso.

La relación entre el gobierno estatal y las naciones nativas ha evolucionado enormemente a lo largo de las décadas de muchas maneras profundas y productivas, dijo Mitchell, enumerando los acuerdos que rigen los impuestos, el medio ambiente, el agua, el bienestar social, la salud, la aplicación de la ley y los servicios humanos.

"Ningún partido, demócrata o republicano, en el poder legislativo o ejecutivo, puede pretender haber sido el único artífice de estos avances", afirmó Mitchell. La verdad del asunto, añadió, es que se produjo como resultado de los esfuerzos bipartidistas en colaboración con los líderes tribales.

Hizo un llamamiento para que el Estado y las tribus desarrollen un nuevo conjunto de normas para el trato mutuo, para revivir y resucitar los valores tradicionales de respeto, confianza y cortesía.

"Hemos recorrido un largo camino, pero nuestro trabajo dista mucho de haber terminado", dijo Mitchell. "Me gustaría que nos tratáramos como iguales, reconociendo nuestra soberanía, viendo nuestros valores en los demás, aprovechando los puntos fuertes y cumpliendo el propósito del gobierno: a saber, que podemos y debemos vernos obligados a mejorar la calidad de vida de las personas. Que debemos crear oportunidades para quienes no las tienen. Y que debemos proteger a los más vul-

nerables de nuestras comunidades".

El recién elegido Presidente Nygren dio las gracias a la Legislatura por las anteriores inversiones en educación, por aprobar el año pasado una ley estatal que imita -y algunos dicen que incluso mejora- la Ley federal de Bienestar del Niño Indígena.

Nygren dijo que la reunión del 3 de febrero estaba pensada para que los indígenas celebraran de dónde vienen y cómo siguen protegiendo sus lenguas, culturas y formas de vida transmitidas a través de abuelas, abuelos y curanderos tradicionales.

"Sigamos aferrándonos a ello para que las generaciones venideras puedan disfrutar de la lengua y la cultura que realmente engloban lo que significa ser indio, ser Pueblo, ser Zuni, ser Apache, ser Navajo", afirmó.

Los Pueblo tienen algunas de las lenguas más antiguas y distintas de América, dijo Mitchell.

"La cosmovisión Pueblo está contenida en nuestras lenguas", dijo. "Algunas lenguas Pueblo son tan singulares que no se hablan en ningún lugar del mundo".

Pero, por desgracia, la pérdida de lenguas ha llegado a una fase crítica, dijo.

"Que nuestra cultura, nuestras tradiciones, sobrevivan dependerá de que nuestros hijos puedan hablar nuestra lengua", dijo Mitchell.

Los estudiantes que hablan una lengua distinta del inglés demuestran una mejora sostenible en su rendimiento académico y en los exámenes, señaló Mitchell. Las lenguas nativas ofrecen un proceso de pensamiento único, subrayó, y una forma tribal de interpretar el mundo que no puede perderse.



Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren addresses a joint session of the New Mexico Senate and House of Representatives on Feb. 3, 2023. / El presidente de la Nación Navajo, Buu Nygren, se dirige a una sesión conjunta del Senado y la Cámara de Representantes de Nuevo México el 3 de febrero de 2023.

"Nos vendría bien la ayuda del Estado aumentando la financiación de nuestros departamentos de educación tribales", dijo Mitchell. "Tenemos programas lingüísticos y programas y esfuerzos de preservación. Sin embargo, el problema siempre es la financiación".

Nuevo México se beneficia de los arrendamientos y actividades extractivas que pagan al Fondo Permanente de Concesión de Tierras, que fue creado con 13,5 millones de acres de tierras indígenas tomadas por el gobierno de Estados Unidos, dijo Mitchell.

Los Pueblo piden a la Legislatura que proporcione a las tribus una mayor parte de los fondos de la Ley estatal de Educación Indígena.

El estado tiene una responsabilidad esbozada en la histórica sentencia Yazzie-Martínez dictada hace más de cuatro años.

La aprobación del proyecto de ley 140 de la Cámara de Representantes, dijo, "garantizaría a

las tribus que la Legislatura del estado de Nuevo México está dispuesta a invertir en las esperanzas y los sueños de los niños indígenas, que está dispuesta a hacer algo más que limitarse a hablar de las bajas puntuaciones de competencia o las bajas tasas de graduación".

"Tenemos que actuar ahora", dijo Mitchell. "Sabemos que nuestros niños pueden y van a superar académicamente, y sabemos que pueden y van a lograr grandes cosas. Les pedimos que compartan sus sueños y los hagan realidad".

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focused on propagating conspiracy theories, promoted by white nationalists that say we are being "invaded" and that the border with Mexico is "out of control," or that liberals want to "replace" Anglo-Saxon people with minorities in order to hoard political power. In fact, one of their principal objectives is to impeach the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Cuban-American Alejandro Mayorkas. And although survey after survey, such as the most recent NBC poll, show that most U.S. citizens support legalization of undocumented people who live among us and are an intrinsic and vital part of our economy, Republicans only want to rile up their MAGA base with dangerous invasion and replacement theories. That is, they want to impeach Mayorkas not because of the border problems—which have always existed—but because the leader is an immigrant, and the idea of a Latin American immigrant heading up one of the most important official institutions in the entire Cabinet simply does not fit inside the heads of the most extreme Republicans. To that we have to add the fact that everyone is already in campaign mode, with eyes to the

general elections in 2024, and there are issues that politicians deem "uncomfortable." Immigration is no exception. Biden is between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, most of the matters he is trying to resolve through administrative and executive actions are tied up in the courts, as is the case with Title 42. Meanwhile, the policies he has implemented have not gone over well among many pro-immigrant sectors, who consider them to be an extension of the nefarious policies of his anti-immigrant predecessor, Donald Trump. The recently-announced humanitarian parole program for citizens of Cuba, Venezuela, Haiti, and Nicaragua, which is supposed to control the flow of migrants seeking asylum, has reduced unauthorized crossings by 97% (according to the President). Yet, twenty states governed by Republicans want to block it in the courts. This shows, once again, that Republicans will not cease their efforts to throw out any program or policy that benefits immigrants, despite the fact that it might work. Or, perhaps, the reason they oppose it is precisely because it works. It seems like division is their objective, not simply opposition.

Biden is not a neophyte on immigration issues, after spending nearly four decades in Congress and eight years as Vice President to Barack Obama, who promoted a reform that never became reality. And although he was pressured to create DACA, to this day only 600,000 people have benefited. With so many years having passed, with a new reality and different challenges for the Dreamers, the current situation seems like weak tea. Symbolism and immigration promises must turn into action. Biden is asking for collaboration and bipartisanship from an extremist Republican Party that wants to bury him. It's better to invest political capital in what can be achieved at the legislative level, such as the legalization of Dreamers, or the executive level like TPS for Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. Actions that pave the way for that elusive reform.

Maribel Hastings is a Senior Advisor and David Torres is a Spanish-language Advisor for América's Voice.

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RHEA served as an important step in safeguarding our rights here in Colorado — but simply having a right can be hollow without access. Too many people in our state still face systemic and institutional barriers to accessing the care they need, a weight that falls hardest on Black, Latine, Indigenous, and other people of color.

Right now, those seeking reproductive health services in Colorado, including abortion, are tasked with navigating a complex access landscape, even though this care is protected. No one in our state should have to circumvent high costs for care due to lack of insurance coverage, face political threats and intimidation, or be duped by the deceptive practices of anti-abortion counseling centers when trying to obtain health care that is their right.

That's why this year, we are focusing our efforts on chipping away at these barriers, so people in our state can more freely access the reproductive and gender-affirming health care they need. Our organizations, COLOR, New Era Colorado, Cobalt and Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains, are proud to be working side-by-side with abortion access champions in the Legislature to introduce the Safe

Access to Protected Health Care package.

This package, designed in concert with providers, patients and community members, will go even further to protect the rights of patients and providers to receive and provide abortion and gender-affirming care, tackle misinformation in our communities, and make care more affordable for everyone.

Threats to safe and accessible reproductive health care are clear and present. This year we have the opportunity and responsibility to create a future where a person's right to access essential and affirming reproductive healthcare is protected, no matter what.

Aurea Bolaños Perea is the strategic communications director at the Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR). Fawn Bolak is the regional director of communications for Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains. This commentary is republished from Colorado Newswire under a Creative Commons license.

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contributing members of the Ute Mountain Ute community."

KCA, in essence, is taking the precise opposite approach of the infamous American Indian boarding schools that, under the federal government's auspices from 1819 until the 1970s, sought to assimilate Native children. At those boarding schools, Indigenous names were replaced with western names. Cultural signifiers were disallowed. Native languages were forbidden. Many church-run schools, operated within the federal system, were found to have looked the other way rather than confront physical and sexual abuse. Some students died.

Instead, KCA intends to reinforce cultural attributes. Students participate in 40 minutes of cultural lessons daily, whether learning words or studying plants that are integral to Native culture. The existence of the school in the community and on tribal property means it's much easier to invite community members to talk with students about their work or their role in the tribe.

Not one student at KCA would qualify for English Language Learner services because English is the primary language at home, says Porter. So the school is working to keep the Ute language alive while also making sure that English skills advance.

"I was subbing for kindergarten not too long ago and I said, 'okay, let's start counting,'" says King-Washington, the board president, a longtime teacher. "And they started counting in Ute and I said, 'that's good, but you need to count in English, too.'"

The school is not intended to "shield" students from the outside world, says Porter: "The students are going to have to be able to flourish outside the tribe." He has held a variety of principalships and other education-related jobs in southwestern Colorado, and worked for years in the Montezuma-Cortez School District. His assignments included time as the district's expulsion officer and as district liaison to Native parents. During his work with Cortez schools, he developed friendships with many students and families from the Ute Mountain Ute Reservation.

The cultural divide from Towaoc to Cortez, said Porter, is real. As an example, Porter cites cases when tribal students attending Cortez schools were teased for the tribal tradition of cutting their long hair (both boys and girls) following a death in the family. At KCA, newly shorn locks might simply prompt a respectful question of, *who passed?*

"We don't want to let this community down," said Porter, who is white. "And that's why everybody is working so hard. I think a lot of people realize the injustice that has been done. There's a real danger of an 'equity trap,' of thinking we're going to be the great white hope—that we're going to save everything. That's not what this is about. But most people can solve their problems if you give them the tools to do it, I really believe that."



"We don't want to let this community down. And that's why everybody is working so hard. I think a lot of people realize the injustice that has been done."

Danny Porter, Principal,
Kwiyagat Community
Academy

Kwiyagat Community Academy is authorized by the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI). The Montezuma-Cortez School District agreed to waive its own authority to approve charter schools within its boundaries in order to allow the school to work with CSI.

CSI Executive Director Terry Croy Lewis, PhD believes that teaching Ute culture can work hand in hand with academics.

"I don't think they are mutually exclusive," said Lewis. "I think you can have academic success that meets state standards and in addition meets their mission, which is to ensure that they come through school knowledgeable about the [Ute] culture and that they can speak the [Ute] language."

Lewis embraces the state's multipronged accountability system, but she also believes that a new tool is needed to measure "mission-specific" goals such as those at KCA.

Test scores among Native students, and Ute Mountain Ute students in particular, indicate that their educational needs historically haven't been met. From its own "Report on the Progress of American Indian Students," the Cortez school district reported in October 2021 that 12% of Indigenous students in grades three through five met or exceeded state standards in language arts. That compared with 41% among students not affiliated with a tribe. In mathematics (using data from the 2018-19 school year; the 2019-20 Ute student population was too small to disaggregate), 3% of students met or exceed state

standards compared to 23% of non-tribal students.

To Porter, good teaching starts with providing the right environment. The school opened in one room (kindergarten and first grade) in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. That configuration was not a recipe for calm. First-grade students had little experience with coming to school, because the pandemic had kept them at home for online learning during kindergarten.

This year, the school has individual classrooms for kindergarten, first grade and second grade. Behavior has improved and Porter says students demonstrated "solid" academic growth within the 2021-22 school year.

Porter also cites more subjective data, such as the "relationship capital" that the school is building by becoming a resource to the community. "We are being approached from people who want things done. The school is developing 'street cred' by becoming an ally for those trying to build up the community," says Porter.

López, the kindergarten teacher, has a daughter who is too old for KCA and goes to school in Cortez. But a son is in second grade and attends the school, and uses Ute languages and phrases. López says she has good relationships with all the parents of her students, a fact that is possible with the close proximity and regular presence of those parents. "That's what makes our bond stronger," she says.

But student absenteeism is a chronic issue—something Porter calls their "biggest challenge." The school mailed out letters to 32 students and their families who had missed more than five days of classes so far this year. (That's two-thirds of the student body.) One reason why: When there is a death or an illness in a Ute family, school takes a backseat to family relationships.

"We can't teach kids when they're not here," says Porter.

Staffing is also a challenge. Porter wants a mix of Ute and non-Ute teachers on staff. Ideally, tribal members or other Indigenous teachers would be the majority of faculty; currently, one of the three full-time KCA teachers is Native, as are all of the substitute teachers and half of the paraprofessionals.

López needed an emergency authorization from the Colorado Department of Education and is pursuing her teaching degree online through Western Governors University. Porter approached López, who is Native, with the idea that she consider teaching. Get-

ting her hired took three months to navigate both the state's emergency authorization licensing process and the tribe's paper-based workflow and procedures. "It's quite a struggle," says Porter.

The long-term challenges of stable, consistent staffing at the school are concerning to Mark Wing, a program manager for the tribe's behavioral health office. Wing, a Ute tribal member who grew up in Towaoc and graduated from high school in Cortez, supports KCA and the fact that it eliminates the time-consuming commute to Cortez. But he is nervous that the remote location, combined with the modest teacher salaries that the school can afford, won't be enough to attract the necessary talent.

"The teachers that are working here now—how long are they committed to be here? Do we have a backup plan to replace these individuals in case something happens?" said Wing. "Are we going to find staff to staff these buildings and these classrooms? Because, you know, you're going to have to pay high dollar to get these people—teachers, counselors, therapists, you know, to serve all these kids' needs."

Wing would like the community to develop plans to train its

own teachers and other necessary staff, especially as the school adds grades or expands to middle and high school.

At this stage, in its infancy, KCA purchases a variety of support services through its contract with CSI. In addition, consultants are helping KCA with financial management, applying for grants and planning.

For Classia Hammond, a tribal member who lives in Towaoc, the ease of visiting with teachers is critical. Hammond has older children in Cortez schools and also has custody of two nephews, one in kindergarten and one in first grade at KCA.

"The teachers are very nice and I can meet with them one on one," she said.

Hammond said she has been impressed with the efforts of KCA teachers to connect with her nephews and she likes the school "because they get to know their own heritage, their language and their history."

To Porter, that's key.

"I want students to be able to stand up in front of a crowd and say, 'here's who I am, here's what I believe, and here's why I believe it'—and to be able to do it in writing or through the spoken word," he says.

See [Language1](#) on page 20

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crecerá, en los dos años siguientes, para también ofrecerles servicios a estudiantes de cuarto y quinto grado. La escuela pública está abierta tanto para los niños que pertenecen a la tribu como a los que no; en este momento, todos los estudiantes son indígenas, aunque no todos son ute. Algunos de los estudiantes son navajo o integrantes de otras tribus.

El edificio actual de la KCA, un edificio prefabricado temporal que en su momento le perteneciera al ejército de EE. UU., será demasiado pequeño para la cantidad de estudiantes que se pronostica en los próximos años. Hay planes de traer una unidad prefabricada adjunta para albergar a los estudiantes de tercer a quinto grado. Ya hay pláticas con organizaciones sin fines de lucro y arquitectos para agregar una escuela media, pero el enfoque principal este año es asegurar que la escuela primaria prospere.

La visión de la escuela es simple. La Academia Comunitaria Kwiyagat quiere que sus graduados tengan una "base sólida de la cultura y el lenguaje nuchiu a la vez que incorporan perspectivas modernas como integrantes contribuidores de la comunidad ute de la Montaña Ute".

En esencia, la KCA está usando un método opuesto al de los infames internados escolares indoamericanos que, bajo el auspicio del gobierno federal entre 1819 y la década de 1970, buscaron que los niños indígenas se asimilaran. En esos internados escolares, los nombres indígenas se reemplazaron con nombres occidentales. Se prohibieron los símbolos culturales. Se descubrió que muchas escuelas administradas por iglesias, gestionadas dentro del sistema federal, ignoraron el abuso físico y sexual en lugar de confrontarlo. Algunos estudiantes murieron.

En lugar de eso, la KCA se propone reafirmar los atributos culturales. Los estudiantes participan en 40 minutos de lecciones culturales al día, ya sea aprendiendo palabras o estudiando plantas esenciales en la cultura indígena. La existencia de la escuela en la comunidad y en propiedad tribal significa que es mucho más fácil invitar a integrantes de la comunidad para que hablen con los estudiantes sobre su trabajo o el papel que desempeñan en la tribu.

Ninguno de los estudiantes en la KCA cumpliría con los requisitos para recibir servicios como Estudiante del Idioma Inglés porque el inglés es el idioma principal en su hogar, Porter dice. Así que la escuela está trabajando para mantener vivo el idioma ute a la vez que

asegura que las habilidades en inglés avancen.

"Estaba haciendo de [maestra] sustituta hace no tanto tiempo y dije: 'bueno, empecemos a contar'", dice King-Washington, la presidenta del consejo escolar y maestra por años. "Y [los estudiantes] empezaron a contar en ute y dije: 'eso es bueno, pero también tienen que contar en inglés'".

La escuela no tiene la intención de "proteger" a los estudiantes del mundo externo, Porter dice: "Los estudiantes tendrán que prosperar afuera de la tribu". Porter ha ocupado varias puestos de director y otros trabajos relacionados con la educación en el sudoeste de Colorado. También trabajó por años en el Distrito Escolar de Montezuma-Cortez. Sus responsabilidades incluyeron un tiempo como oficial de expulsiones en el distrito y como lazo entre el distrito y los padres indígenas. Durante su trabajo con las escuelas de Cortez, estableció amistades con muchos estudiantes y familias de la reserva Ute de la Montaña Ute.

La división cultural entre Towaoc y Cortez, Porter dijo, es real. Como ejemplo, Porter menciona casos en los que a estudiantes tribales que asistían a escuelas en Cortez les hacían burla por la tradición tribal de cortarse el cabello (tanto a los niños como a las niñas) después de una muerte en la familia. En la KCA, el cabello recién cortado quizás solo produzca una pregunta respetuosa como: "¿quién falleció?"

"No queremos decepcionar a esta comunidad", Porter dijo, quien es blanco. "Y por eso todos estamos trabajando tan duro. Creo que mucha gente se da cuenta de la injusticia que se hizo. Hay un peligro real de una 'trampa de equidad', de pensar que vamos a ser la gran esperanza blanca—que vamos a salvar todo. Esto no tiene que ver con eso. Pero la mayoría de las personas pueden resolver sus problemas si les das las herramientas para hacerlo, realmente creo eso".

La Academia Comunitaria Kwiyagat está autorizada por el Instituto de Escuelas Charter (CSI, por sus siglas en inglés) de Colorado. El Distrito Escolar de Montezuma-Cortez aceptó ceder su propia autoridad para aprobar escuelas *charter* adentro de sus límites y así permitir que la escuela trabajara con el CSI.

Terry Croy Lewis, PhD, directora ejecutiva del CSI, cree que enseñar la cultura ute puede funcionar como un complemento de la educación.

"No creo que sean mutuamente excluyentes", Lewis dijo. "Creo que

puedes tener éxito académico que cumple los requisitos estatales y además cumple su misión, la cual es asegurar que pasen por la escuela sabiendo sobre la cultura [ute] y que puedan hablar el idioma".

Lewis acepta el variado sistema estatal de rendición de cuentas, pero también cree que se necesita una nueva herramienta para evaluar los objetivos "específicos de una misión" como los de la KCA.



"No queremos decepcionar a esta comunidad. Y por eso todos estamos trabajando tan duro. Creo que mucha gente se da cuenta de la injusticia que se hizo".

Danny Porter, Director, Academia Comunitaria, Kwiyagat

Los resultados de las pruebas de estudiantes indígenas, y en particular de los estudiantes ute de la Montaña de Ute, indican que sus necesidades educativas históricamente no se han cubierto. De su propio "Informe sobre el progreso de estudiantes indoamericanos", el distrito escolar de Cortez reportó en octubre de 2021 que el 12 por ciento de los estudiantes indígenas de tercer a quinto grado cumplen o superan los estándares estatales en artes del lenguaje. Eso se compara con el 41 por ciento de los estudiantes no afiliados a una tribu. En matemáticas (usando datos del año escolar 2018-19; la población estudiantil ute en 2019-20 era demasiado pequeña para separarla), el 3 por ciento de los estudiantes cumplieron o superaron los estándares estatales, comparado con el 23 por ciento de los estudiantes no afiliados a una tribu.

Para Porter, la buena enseñanza empieza con proporcionar el entorno correcto. La escuela abrió con un salón (kindergarten y primer grado) en medio de la pandemia de COVID-19. Esa configuración no fue buena para mantener un ambiente calmado. Los estudiantes de primer grado tenían muy poca experiencia yendo a la escuela, porque la pandemia los había mantenido en casa con aprendizaje virtual durante kindergarten.

Este año, la escuela cuenta con salones individuales para kindergarten, primer grado y segundo grado. El comportamiento ha mejorado y Porter dice que los es-

tudiantes demostraron un "sólido" crecimiento académico durante el año escolar 2021-22.

Porter también menciona datos más subjetivos, como el "capital relacional" que la escuela está aumentando al convertirse en un recurso para la comunidad. "Se están acercando a nosotros personas que quieren que las cosas se realicen. Esta escuela está desarrollando 'credibilidad en las calles' al convertirse en aliada de quienes están tratando de fortalecer la comunidad", Porter dice.

López, la maestra de kindergarten, tiene una hija demasiado grande para la KCA y por eso va a las escuelas en Cortez. Pero su hijo está en segundo grado y asiste a la academia, y usa el idioma y frases ute. Lopez dice que tiene una buena relación con todos los padres de sus estudiantes, un hecho que es posible gracias a la proximidad y presencia regular de esos padres. "Eso es lo que fortalece más nuestros lazos", dice.

Pero los estudiantes ausentes es un problema crónico, algo que Porter dice que es su "desafío más grande". La escuela envió cartas a 32 estudiantes y sus familias que habían faltado más de cinco días de clase hasta la fecha este año. (Eso significa dos tercios de los estudiantes en total.) Una de las razones: cuando alguien en una familia ute muere o está enfermo, la escuela pasa a segundo plano detrás de las relaciones familiares.

"No podemos enseñarles a los niños cuando no están aquí", Porter dice.

Mantener suficiente personal también es un desafío. Porter quiere una combinación de maestros ute y no ute en la escuela. Idealmente, el personal docente sería en su mayoría integrante de la tribu o de otra comunidad indígena; en la actualidad, uno de los tres maestros de tiempo completo en la KCA es nativo, como lo son los asistentes de maestros.

Lopez necesita una autorización de emergencia del Departamento de Educación de Colorado y está estudiando un título de enseñanza por internet a través de Western Governors University. Porter se comunicó con López, quien es indígena, con la idea de que pensara en enseñar. Poder contratarla tardó tres meses para navegar por el proceso de autorización de emergencia de la licencia estatal y el proceso de documentación de la tribu. "Es bastante desafiante", Porter dice.

Los desafíos a largo plazo de colocar personal estable y continuo en la escuela son preocupantes

para Mark Wing, un gerente de programas en la oficina de salud conductual de la tribu. Wing, integrante de la tribu Ute que se crio en Towaoc y se graduó de *high school* en Cortez, apoya a la KCA y el hecho de que elimina el largo traslado a Cortez. Pero está nervioso de que la ubicación remota, además de los salarios módicos para los maestros que la escuela puede pagar, no será suficiente para atraer al talento necesario.

"Los maestros que están trabajando aquí ahora... ¿Cuánto tiempo se comprometen a estar aquí? ¿Tenemos un plan de respaldo para reemplazar a estas personas en caso de que algo suceda?" Wing dijo. "¿Encontraremos personal para cubrir estos edificios y estos salones? Porque, sabes, tendrás que pagar grandes sumas para conseguir a estas personas: maestros, consejeros, terapeutas, sabes, para atender las necesidades de todos estos niños".

A Wing le gustaría que la comunidad desarrollara planes para capacitar a sus propios maestros y otro personal necesario, especialmente conforme la escuela vaya agregando grados o ampliándose para incluir una escuela media y *high school*.

A esta altura, en sus inicios, la KCA compra una variedad de servicios de apoyo a través de su contrato con el CSI. Además, consultores están ayudando a la KCA con gestión financiera, solicitando subsidios y planeación.

Para Classia Hammond, una integrante de la tribu que vive en Towaoc, la facilidad de reunirse con los maestros es crucial. Hammond tiene hijos mayores en las escuelas de Cortez y también tiene la custodia de dos sobrinos, uno en kindergarten y otro en primer grado en la KCA.

"Los maestros son muy amables y puedo reunirme con ellos individualmente", dijo.

Hammond dijo que está impresionada con los esfuerzos de los maestros de la KCA para conectar con sus sobrinos y que le gusta la escuela "porque pueden aprender sobre sus propias tradiciones, su idioma y su historia".

Para Porter, eso es clave. "Quiero que los estudiantes pueden pararse enfrente de una multitud y decir: 'este soy quien soy, esto es lo que creo, y esta es [la razón] por la que lo creo'—y que puedan hacerlo por escrito o a través de la palabra hablada", dice.

King-Washington, la presidenta del consejo, dice que simplemente que la KCA exista "cambia



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Carlos Herrera, a project manager with the collective, said the model helps overcome immigrants' mistrust of government agencies by partnering with organizations that know the specific needs of those communities.

"When community members are approached by either city officials or somebody that seems too professional, they'll just turn away," Herrera said. "They'll practically give you the Heisman pose: 'No, get away from me.'"

It helps migrant workers to hear from a therapist about her own experiences traveling from one country to another, and her culture shock when she arrived in the U.S.

"People feel like, 'OK, this is someone that went through the exact same thing as I did,'" Herrera said. "They feel much more willing to share."

Last year, during one of the collective's mental health circles, a woman who had joined the call anonymously revealed she was a victim of domestic violence. A *promotora* followed up with her and connected her with a therapist. The woman, who might never have sought help through traditional public health channels, has moved out of her home and is no longer in danger, Herrera said.

Lori Freeman, CEO of the National Association of County and City Health Officials, said community organizations can act as a natural extension of the work of short-staffed health departments serving vulnerable communities that may distrust government.



"The people who know how to make sure that messages and interventions are culturally relevant to the populations we serve, are those who work all the time in the community."

Nicole Weber, Colorado Health Institute

"The pandemic further heightened the importance of work with community-based organizations when governmental entities and their associated messages became hyperpoliticized, and less about health messaging and more about impact of health measures to individual rights and freedoms," she said.

The covid vaccine program has now expanded to include all routine adult vaccinations and is funded through April. The program to address the stigma against mental illness is funded through the end of the year. The partners are now considering programs to promote routine vaccinations for children, as well.

The goal, Weber said, is to build capacity for community leaders to make and implement decisions.

"The people who know how to make sure that messages and interventions are culturally relevant to the populations we serve," Weber said, "are those who work all the time in the community."

Markian Hawryluk Senior Colorado Correspondent for Kaiser Health News (KHN), is based in Denver, Colorado. KHN (Kaiser Health News) is the newsroom of KFF (Kaiser Family Foundation), which produces in-depth journalism on health. It is one of the three main programs of KFF, a non-profit organization that analyzes the problems of health and public health in the nation.

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Language 1

The simple existence of KCA, says board president King-Washington, "changes the dynamics, changes the focus" of the community.

Parents "are there every day. They're bringing their kids and we hear parents talking to other parents," she says. "The school and the community, now they're interwoven."

Cover photo: First-grade student RedSky Lang draws on the whiteboard during a Ute language vocabulary game led by Betty Howe, a Ute Mountain Ute tribal elder and Ute language teacher.

Mark Stevens is a Freelance Writer in Mancos, Colorado. This article is produced by Collective Colorado, an initiative of The Colorado Trust. Reproduced with permission by The Colorado Trust.

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Idioma 1

la dinámica, cambia el enfoque" de la comunidad.

Los padres "están ahí todos los días. Traen a sus hijos y vemos a los padres hablar con otros padres", dice. "La escuela y la comunidad, ahora están entrelazadas".

Foto en la portada: RedSky Lang, una estudiante de primer grado, dibuja en el pizarrón durante un juego de vocabulario en el idioma ute liderado por Betty Howe, una anciana de la tribu Ute de la Montaña Ute y maestra del idioma ute.

Mark Stevens es Escritor independiente en Mancos, Colorado. Este artículo ha sido elaborado por Collective Colorado, una iniciativa de The Colorado Trust. Reproducido con permiso de The Colorado Trust.

Traducido por Alejandra X. Castañeda

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Voter

to, and actually deploying armed agents to knock on doors throughout the state of Colorado, USEIP is engaged in voter intimidation," the plaintiffs argue. "USEIP's public-facing actions are a clear signal to Colorado voters—especially voters of color—that to vote in an upcoming election means facing interrogation by potentially armed and threatening USEIP agents at their doorstep thereafter."

USEIP's intimidation efforts particularly impact communities of color, which have historically faced institutionalized barriers, violent threats, and intimidation for exercising their right to vote. Vigilante attacks, as well as police and immigration raids, compound the intimidation posed by USEIP to Black

and Latino voters. Canvassers often target high-density housing areas and communities experiencing growth among minority voters.

The voting rights organizations bringing this lawsuit are asking the federal court for relief, declaring that USEIP's voter intimidation campaign is unlawful under the *Voting Rights Act of 1965* and the *Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871*, and ordering USEIP's leaders to cease and desist their intimidation campaign. Plaintiffs are represented by Free Speech for People and Lathrop GPM LLP.

Read the court's January 31 decision. [Read more about the case.](#)

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Corn Mothers

Posthumously honored was Alicia Cardenas, iconic tattoo/muralist, who was a staunch supporter of indigenous and LGBT rights. Cardenas was gunned down along with 4 others in a mass shooting on Dec. 27, 2021. Prior to her death, she had been selected as a 2022 Corn Mother. "She was very excited to be part of the Corn Mothers 2022," said Brenda Gurule, Chicano Humanities Arts Council executive director, "Our entire community mourns Alicia. To honor her memory and celebrate her vibrant life, her story and painting are included in the exhibition, she is a Corn Mother. Her spirit lives on in our hearts."

Cardenas portrait for the exhibition was painted by her mentor, artist Emmanuel Martinez.

Sponsored by Colorado Folks Arts Council, Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver), MSU Denver Department of Chicana/o Studies, CHAC Gallery with support from AARP, US Bank, and Denver City Council Jamie Torres.

For more information on the Corn Mothers project including featured stories and portraits, visit [cornmothers.com](https://www.cornmothers.com).

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a actualizar su información para que el estado pueda determinar a los que todavía son elegibles para estos beneficios.

El programa embajadores en la comunidad se lanzó en 2020 cuando los oficiales de salud se preparaban para promover la vacunación contra la gripe. Una vez que las vacunas contra covid estuvieron disponibles, mapas identificaron vecindarios particulares en los que tenían baja aceptación.

Fue entonces cuando entraron en acción las organizaciones comunitarias para personalizar la llegada a esas comunidades, implementando la estrategia con los subsidios oficiales.

Muchos de los grupos comunitarios a los que invitaron a aplicar tenían personal mínimo, a veces solo una persona, y a menudo con limitaciones de idioma. Eso haría difícil escribir propuestas. Por eso, las organizaciones pudieron aplicar a través de una entrevista de 30 minutos con líderes de los programas, para determinar si lo que proponían se ajustaba a las metas de la iniciativa.

A cada una de las organizaciones que consiguieron subsidios se les requirió que participaran en una llamada cada dos semanas con el Colorado Health Institute y los departamentos de salud pública. Las organizaciones más grandes fueron mentoras de las más pequeñas.

En esas llamadas, funcionarios de salud pública brindaban las últimas actualizaciones sobre covid y las vacunas, mientras que las organizaciones comunitarias transmitían lo que escuchaban en la calle.

"Escuchaba las preocupaciones sobre la vacuna contra covid de nuestros embajadores antes que por los medios de comunicación, porque tenían esa conexión inmediata con la comunidad", dijo Nicole Weber, gerente sénior de programas en el Colorado Health Institute.

El programa de inmunización opera con un presupuesto de \$300,000 por año, financiando a 17 organizaciones comunitarias, mientras que el programa de salud mental tiene un presupuesto de \$465,000, financiando a 15 grupos.

Desde el inicio de los programas de embajadores, más de 40 organizaciones han sido financiadas con subvenciones de hasta \$30,000.

"Está permitiendo una profundización realmente encantadora de la confianza entre las organizaciones comunitarias y la salud pública", dijo Wendy Nading, ge-

rente de enfermería del Departamento de Salud Pública del condado de Arapahoe.

Colorado Changemakers Collective fue una de ellas. Comenzó en 2017 con un pequeño grupo de residentes en el vecindario de Montbello, en el noreste de Denver para vincular a la población principalmente hispana que vive allí con programas de asistencia de alquiler, o servicios públicos o de salud.

“

Las personas que saben cómo asegurarse de que los mensajes y las intervenciones sean culturalmente relevantes para las poblaciones a las que servimos son aquellas que trabajan todo el tiempo en la comunidad”.

Nicole Weber, Colorado Health Institute

Utilizando el modelo de promotoras, en el que los trabajadores comunitarios de salud son miembros de la población objeto y comparten muchas de las mismas características sociales, culturales y económicas, este colectivo ha construido raíces profundas dentro de la comunidad.

También ha ampliado su trabajo a toda la región metropolitana de Denver y pronto a Grand Junction y Colorado Springs. Debido a que las promotoras viven en las comunidades a las que sirven, pueden identificar rápidamente las barreras y sugerir estrategias para superarlas.

El grupo, por ejemplo, convenció a los funcionarios de salud locales para que cambiaran el horario de sus clínicas móviles de vacunas del horario diurno durante la semana a los viernes de 5pm hasta la medianoche. Eso permitió que los residentes que trabajaban varios turnos sin tiempo libre recibieran sus vacunas después del trabajo, y que tuvieran el fin de semana para recuperarse de cualquier efecto secundario.

El colectivo se comunica a través de Facebook y otras redes sociales, pero también hace un uso extensivo de WhatsApp, una aplicación de mensajería utilizada a nivel mundial y popular entre los inmigrantes en los Estados Unidos. A través de la aplicación, diseminan información sobre los

servicios y recursos disponibles para los miembros de la comunidad.

También participa en el programa de embajadores sobre el estigma mental, organizando círculos comunitarios, tanto en persona como en línea, donde las promotoras dirigen debates sobre temas como dormir lo suficiente o comunicarse con un hijo adolescente.

Los fondos del programa permiten que se contrate a un terapeuta para realizar sesiones individuales con los residentes que necesitan ayuda, y trabajar con las promotoras en sus propios problemas de salud mental.

Carlos Herrera, gerente de proyectos del grupo, dijo que el modelo ayuda a superar la desconfianza de los inmigrantes hacia las agencias gubernamentales al asociarse con organizaciones que conocen las necesidades específicas de sus comunidades.

"Cuando los funcionarios de la ciudad o alguien que parece demasiado profesional se acercan a los miembros de la comunidad, simplemente se alejan", dijo Herrera.

Pero ayuda cuando los inmigrantes escuchan que el terapeuta vivió la misma experiencia que ellos, al llegar a los Estados Unidos, y el choque cultural. "La gente piensa, 'Está bien, esta persona es alguien que pasó exactamente por lo mismo que yo'", dijo Herrera. "Se sienten mucho más dispuestos a compartir".

El año pasado, durante uno de los círculos de salud mental, una mujer que se unió a la llamada de forma anónima, reveló que era víctima de violencia doméstica. Una promotora pudo hacer seguimiento y programar una sesión con el terapeuta. La mujer, que tal

Votantes

presentado esta demanda solicitó al tribunal federal que declare que la campaña de intimidación de votantes de USEIP es ilegal en virtud de la Ley del Derecho al Voto de 1965 y la Ley del Ku Klux Klan de 1871, y que ordene a los líderes de USEIP que cesen y dejen de su campaña de intimidación. Los demandantes están representados por Free Speech for People y Lathrop GPM LLP.

Traducido por Juan Carlos Uribe-The Weekly Issue/El Semanario.

Para Noticias de Colorado: ElSemanarioOnline.com

vez nunca hubiera buscado ayuda a través de los canales tradicionales de salud pública, se ha mudado y ya no está en peligro, según Herrera.

Lori Freeman, directora ejecutiva de la Asociación Nacional de Funcionarios de Salud de Condados y Ciudades, dijo que las organizaciones comunitarias pueden actuar como una extensión natural del trabajo de los departamentos de salud con poco personal que atienden a comunidades vulnerables que pueden desconfiar del gobierno.

"La pandemia aumentó aún más la importancia del trabajo con organizaciones comunitarias cuando las entidades gubernamentales y sus mensajes asociados se hiperpolitizaron, se enfocaron menos en el mensaje de salud y más en el impacto de las medidas de salud en los derechos y libertades individuales", dijo.

El programa de vacunas contra covid ahora se ha ampliado para incluir todas las vacunas de rutina para adultos y está financiado hasta abril. El programa de estigma de la salud mental está financiado hasta fines de 2023.

Los socios ahora están buscando programas para impulsar las vacunas de rutina tanto para adultos como para niños. El objetivo, dijo Weber, es desarrollar la capacidad de los líderes locales para que tomar decisiones e implementarlas.

"Las personas que saben cómo asegurarse de que los mensajes y las intervenciones sean culturalmente relevantes para las poblaciones a las que servimos son aquellas que trabajan todo el tiempo en la comunidad", opinó Weber.

Markian Hawryluk, corresponsal en jefe en Colorado de Kaiser Health News (KHN), reside en Denver, Colorado. KHN (Kaiser Health News) es la redacción de KFF (Kaiser Family Foundation), que produce periodismo en profundidad sobre salud. Es uno de los tres principales programas de KFF, una organización sin fines de lucro que analiza la problemática de salud y salud pública de la nación.

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