

01 de Junio 2023

# THE WEEKLY ISSUE

# El Semanario

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**'Water Is Everything Here'** 8  
*'Aquí el Agua lo es Todo'*

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**Chris M. Fresquez**  
President / CEO - Publisher

**Toni C. Fresquez**  
Editor

**Juan Carlos Uribe**  
Spanish Editor

**Raya Tkachenko**  
Layout/Production

**THE WEEKLY ISSUE / El Semanario**

**Mailing Address:**  
P.O. Box 460428, Glendale CO 80246



800-886-4054  
303-672-0800  
720-368-5387 Fax



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# Anti-Immigrant Intolerance Doesn't Learn From Its Mistakes

Maribel Hastings and David Torres

Last week the governor of Florida, Ron DeSantis, announced his intention of seeking the Republican presidential nomination in 2024, and immigrants will once again become political conservatives' favorite scapegoat. This with the goal of feeding their extremism and that of their base, without offering real solutions to our decomposing migration system.

On June 16, 2015, Donald Trump descended the escalator of Trump Tower in New York to make his candidacy official, labeling Mexican immigrants as "criminals" and "rapists."

It's obvious that the rhetoric of both Republicans is united with a common

thread that increasingly solidifies the conservative forces on the extreme right, and is nothing other than the utilization of racism and xenophobia for mere political-electoral goals. So much so that when they are in power they even turn it into public policy, with a framework and media approach based in fear.

DeSantis is throwing his hat into the ring supported by none other than Elon Musk, the head of Twitter who is prone to disinformation and conspiracy theories, and with an anti-immigrant law in tow that goes live on July 1, and is already generating all kinds of concerns, from its economic to humanitarian and civil rights impacts.

The first can be measured in actual terms when the new law is in place,

although the news media has already been reporting the abandonment of Florida's fields and construction sites, especially where the workforce is predominantly immigrant. Discrimination and harassment, on the other hand, will also be constant, especially by those who have aligned themselves with one of the most anti-immigrant laws in the history of the United States.

And although the advantage DeSantis had over Trump among Republican voters' preferences has faded, the reality stays the same. The two figures that today are battling along the Republican Party road are proven anti-immigrant actors. One, Trump, used the presidency and the advice of extremist aides like Stephen Miller to lead one of the harshest and cruel-



est crusades against immigrants, even separating babies from their mothers, many of whom have still not been reunited.

DeSantis, a student of Trump who fell from his grace, is another anti-immigrant figure who has declared a culture war on a multicultural state, Florida, meddling even in which textbooks schools should assign, in women's reproductive rights, and the rights of the LGBTQ+ community.

Both Trump and DeSantis have shown themselves to be among the clearest examples of that profound division between the idea of the United States as an inclusive nation, multicultural and tolerant, and a racist, xenophobic, and anti-immigrant country. The two are betting on taking the U.S., at both the state and national levels, away from its core as the axis of liberties and towards the threshold of intolerance, as other characters in other latitudes have done, leading their societies and the world into a blind alley.

Moreover, in addition to his corporate war on Disney that is already costing the state millions of dollars, DeSan-

tis is repeating in Florida what other Republican-led states like Arizona in 2010 and Alabama in 2011 did with no success: try to become the epicenter of the war on undocumented immigration.



*To not see this now is to fall into that age-old trap of societies in decline: those who don't know their history are condemned to repeat it.*

What Arizona and Alabama immediately learned is that there is a huge gap between rhetoric and reality, and that as much as they want to make it appear, in their myopia, that they could rid themselves of undocumented immigrants with the snap of a finger, their states would be the ones suffering serious consequences, particularly in the economy.

See Hastings & Torres on page 27

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## La Intolerancia Antiinmigrante no Aprende de Sus Errores

Maribel Hastings y David Torres

Cuando el gobernador de Florida, Ron DeSantis, anuncie esta la semana pasada su intención de buscar la nominación presidencial republicana en 2024, los inmigrantes serán una vez más el chivo expiatorio predilecto de los políticos conservadores. Esto, en su afán de alimentar su extremismo y el de su base sin ofrecer soluciones reales a nuestro descompostado sistema migratorio.

El 16 de junio de 2015 Donald Trump descendió por las escaleras de la Torre Trump, de Nueva York, para oficializar su candidatura, tildando de "criminales" y "violadores" a los migrantes mexicanos.

Es obvio que el discurso de ambos republicanos está unido por el mismo hilo conductor que afianzan cada vez más las fuerzas conservadoras de extrema derecha, y que no es otra cosa que la utilización del racismo y la xenofobia con fines meramente político-electorales. Tan es así, que cuando están en el poder lo convierten incluso

en política pública, con rúbrica y protocolo mediático de por medio.



*No ver eso ahora es como caer en ese viejo adagio de las sociedades que declinan: quienes no conocen su historia están condenados a repetirla.*

En efecto, ahora DeSantis se lanza al ruedo apoyado nada menos que por Elon Musk, el dueño de Twitter propenso a la desinformación y las teorías conspirativas, y con una ley antiinmigrante bajo el brazo que entra en vigor el 1 de julio, y que ya está generando todo tipo de preocupaciones, desde su impacto económico hasta el humanitario y en los derechos civiles.

Lo primero se podrá medir con exactitud en cuanto entre en vigor la nueva normativa, aunque desde ya los

Veá Hastings & Torres/Esp, página 18

**"Our neighborhoods deserve more than developer crumbs. The people of District 9 need a leader who has the courage to demand more, every time."**

**"Nuestros barrios merecen más que migas de los desarrolladores. La gente del Distrito 9 necesita un líder que tiene el valor de exigir más, cada vez."**



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- ▶ Candi **VOTED YES** to preserve, finance, & create nearly 4,000 affordable units. Candi **VOTO SI** para preservar, financiar y crear casi 4,000 unidades asequibles.
- ▶ Candi catalyzed and **VOTED YES** on budget increases for motel vouchers, rental assistance & eviction defense \$\$\$. Candi catalizó los aumentos presupuestarios para vales de motel, asistencia para el alquiler y fondos de defensa contra desalojos.

### SAFETY

SEGURIDAD

- ▶ Candi catalyzed city funding for and **VOTED YES** to expand the STAR program. Candi catalizó el financiamiento de la ciudad y **VOTÓ SÍ** para ampliar el programa STAR.
- ▶ Candi **CONVENES** monthly Safety Solutions meetings with residents & city agencies to improve our neighborhoods. Candi **CONVINO** reuniones mensuales de soluciones de seguridad con residentes y agencias de la ciudad para mejorar nuestros vecindarios.

### CLIMATE

CLIMA

- ▶ Candi **PASSED** state-level air pollution protections with climate justice coalition. Candi **APROBÓ** las protecciones contra la contaminación del aire a nivel estatal con coalición.
- ▶ Candi has **BUILT** a climate justice coalition across counties to hold polluters like Suncor accountable to community. Candi ha **CONSTRUIDO** una coalición de justicia climática en varios condados para responsabilizar a los contaminadores como Suncor.

### Ballots mail out May 15. No ballot? Register & vote in person.

Las boletas se envían por correo el 15 de mayo. Si no llega su boleta o si no estas registrada, puedes ir a registrarse y votar en persona en los siguientes lugares:

- Hiawatha Davis Jr Rec Center
- Wellington Webb Muni Bdg
- Swansea Rec Center



# Get Out the Vote in Denver's Mayor and City Council Races—? or !

Luis Torres, Ph.D.

Notice the question mark “?” and exclamation point “!” at the end of this article's title. We at *The Weekly Issue/El Semanario* are usually more assertive than circumspect, but those two punctuation marks might reflect varying attitudes of some of our readers about this upcoming June 6 election next week in Denver for Mayor.

The two finalist Mayoral candidates, Mike Johnston and Kelly Brough, have been described as “centrists” by several sources, including by Ms. Lisa Calderón, the third-place general Mayoral election finisher. Quoted in the 9 News television report of May 16, “Lisa Calderón offers tepid endorsement of Johnston in Mayoral Race...,” Ms. Calderón so defined Johnston and Brough, while offering her support, albeit guardedly, to Mr. Mike Johnston for Mayor. As the article notes, Ms. Calderón sought out “extensive input from Latino leaders and trusted advisors” before endorsing Johnston. On which side will Denver Latina/o voters fall—“centrist,” “rightist,” or “leftist,”

and will they vote proportionate to their population?

We at *El Semanario* have not placed that question mark “?” at the end of our title to concede ambiguity about whether our readers should vote in this and all other elections. Instead, the exclamation mark “!” expresses our strong recommendation to urge our

“

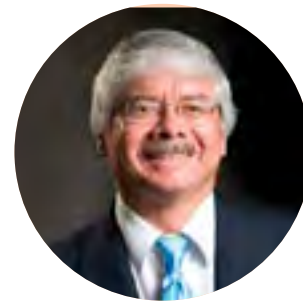
*Mr. Johnston's answers were more in line with Latino issues.*

readers to “Get Out the Vote!” as a pronouncement.

During the few weeks between the general Mayoral election and the June 6 runoff election, this writer, Luis Torres, participated in in-person interviews with Mr. Johnston and Ms. Brough at a Latino Leaders session, with some 25 participants. The candidates were presented with an extensive questionnaire of 79 questions, focused on such areas as Economic Justice, Education Equity,

Public Safety, Immigration, and others, with a variety of sub-topics about each area. The two candidates were to answer at least with a “Yes” or “No” about agreement, with some dialogue. As the 9 News report states, “Out of 79 questions, Johnston scored 74 and Brough scored 66,” signaling that Mr. Johnston's answers were more in line with Latino issues from the group.

One of the major areas for the interview was education, paramount to the Latina/o community. There was and is some separation on these issues, including education, between Mr. Johnston and Ms. Brough, as the “74 to 66” score shows. As is well known, Johnston had a successful, albeit rather brief, career in education. He received a Master's degree in education policy at Harvard University and a law degree from Yale. He was one of the founders of the New Leaders for New Schools program. According to the *Colorado Independent*, on April 22, 2009, Johnston was one of the main founders of the Mapleton Expeditionary School of the Arts in Thornton and served as Principal, with successful results especially for graduating seniors. He has



also served on the boards of several significant education organizations in Colorado and on national boards.

Mr. Johnston's experience can be seen in his responses to a Denver Channel 7 Television News report, “Denver Mayoral Runoff Voter Guide” of May 25, on the two candidates' responses to a series of broad questions about several significant issues. These included, among others, Housing, including supportive and short-term housing; Homelessness in Denver, including affordable housing for low income Denverites; the “Migrant crisis”; and the Economy and Employment in Denver. When the issue of education and school safety was asked, Mr. Johnston replied,

“As a school principal, I've navigated this problem multiple times, which is you have young people that have different sets of needs. I ran alternative schools that serve kids with very serious criminal histories. And we were well-suited to support these young people.”

He added that such students could be recommended to smaller, alternative settings “where we can give that student a great public education...”

Importantly, Mr. Johnston voices support for relations with Denver Public Schools while potentially serving as Mayor as a “partner more directly with the school district. I would make sure we reinstitute the school district coordinating committee where you have city council people and school board members, Mayor and Superintendent” discussing and planning. For example, the committee could work on “after school and summer program” opportunities for students; “we want to start with partnership” (see Denver 7 News, “Denver Mayoral Runoff Voter Guide...” Johnston and Brough, May 25, 2023).

Kelly Brough likewise emphasizes strong support for working in a “partnership” with Denver Public Schools, drawing on her “experience as chief of staff” for then-Mayor John Hickenlooper. Among other positions, she also served as the Chief Executive Officer for the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce and as “the first female director of human resources for the City and County of Denver.”

Regarding Denver Public Schools, however, her answers appear to this writer as brief and sketchy. She noted in

See Torres on page 20

# One Colorado Calls on Business Community to Stand Up Against Coordinated Anti-LGBTQ+ Attacks

One Colorado, the state's leading advocacy organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) Coloradans and their families, is proud to join GLAAD, GLSEN, the Human Rights Campaign, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, the National LGBTQ Task Force, and the National Black Justice Coalition in calling on the business community

to stand up against anti-LGBTQ+ extremists and hate – and we're asking Target to take the lead.

Recent pushback against businesses such as Anheuser-Busch and Target, blatantly organized by extremist groups, serves as a wake up call for all businesses that support the LGBTQ+ community. We've seen this extremist playbook of attacks before. Their

goal is clear: to prevent LGBTQ+ inclusion and representation, silence our allies and make our community invisible. These attacks fuel hate against LGBTQ+ people, just as we've seen this year with more than 500 anti-LGBTQ+ bills that restrict basic freedoms and aim to erase LGBTQ+ people.

Extremist attacks and harassment of businesses for standing in solidari-

ty with the LGBTQ+ community and values of diversity, equity and inclusion have challenged Target, and businesses more broadly, to lead – to demonstrate they mean what they say when investing in and standing with LGBTQ+ people, creatives, and organizations. Businesses must continue to lead and respond with unwavering support for LGBTQ+ employees, shareholders, customers, allies – and the broader community. When values of diversity, equity and inclusion are tested, business must defend them unequivocally.

Doubling down on your values is not only the right thing to do, it's good for business. Research shows that if a brand publicly supports and demonstrates a commitment to expanding and protecting LGBTQ+ rights, Americans are 2x more likely to buy or use the brand. Americans ages 18-34 are 5.5x more likely to want to work at a company if it publicly supports and demonstrates a commitment to expanding and protecting LGBTQ+ rights.

It isn't just LGBTQ+ consumers and communities: 70% of non-LGBTQ+ people believe companies should publicly support and include the LGBTQ+ community through practices like hiring, advertising and sponsorships (Accelerating Acceptance, 2023).

At this moment, it's critical that Target champions equity and inclusion as it has for over a decade. Target consistently tops the list for brands that show genuine, authentic support of the LGBTQ+ community through outreach and policies. Target received recognition for outstanding commitment

to DEI from the Executive Leadership Council in 2022. It's time to prove the recognition was earned.

“

*When it comes to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion, there is no such thing as neutrality.*

When it comes to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion, there is no such thing as neutrality.

**On May 24th our national partners called on Target to:**

- Release a public statement in the next 24 hours reaffirming their commitment to the LGBTQ+ community
- Put Pride merchandise back on the sales floor and online in full
- Ensure safety of team members who are on the front lines

Target, and all businesses, can leverage the support of LGBTQ+ organizations to navigate this hate, so that together, we can let extremists know unequivocally that, just as with every other failed anti-LGBTQ+ campaign of the past, fear will not win.

*One Colorado is the state's leading advocacy organization dedicated to advancing equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) Coloradans and their families.*

For More Colorado News:  
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# Our Farmworkers Deserve Better

Tina Vasquez

Latine workers form the backbone of the American agricultural industry. Without them, we could not eat. Without them, our larger food systems would crumble.

But farmworkers earn “far less than even some of the lowest-paid workers in the U.S. labor force,” according to the Economic Policy Institute. And the overwhelming majority of farm laborers in the United States are Latine, while more than 40% are undocumented. Another 10% of the farm labor force working in crops comes to the U.S. as part of the H-2A Temporary Agricultural Program, a guest worker program overseen by the U.S. Department of Labor that allows American employers to temporarily hire migrant workers to perform agricultural work. Employers

can request workers from 86 eligible countries, though 90% hail from Mexico.

The World Bank has described agricultural development as “one of the most powerful tools to end extreme poverty.” Conservation organizations report that sustainable agricultural operations can help preserve and restore habitats, protect watersheds, and improve soil health and water quality. Experts suggest that expanding urban agriculture can even help fight racism and increase health equity.

If agricultural development is, indeed, the linchpin for a more just world, then realizing that world requires listening to and caring for the human beings whose labor facilitates that development. It also demands we reckon with how an industry built on exploitation can pave the road to justice.

“

*Until we truly reckon with the almighty agricultural industry that abuses our farmworkers with impunity, there can be no future where agriculture miraculously saves us from the damage already wrought on our agrifood systems.*

While working on a long-term investigation about wage theft and abuse in the H-2A program, I heard stories from farmworkers about their friends, colleagues, and family members who were worked to death or trafficked as part of the H-2A program, or raped in

the fields by an employer. Stories about injustices have become normalized in the industry, including those about dangerous housing conditions at labor camps and systemic wage theft. According to the Department of Labor, agriculture is the top low-wage, high-violation industry in the nation.

Sometimes stories of horrific abuse break through to the public. In 2021, the nation was shocked to learn details of “Operation Blooming Onion.” Trafficked migrant workers were ensnared in what U.S. government officials called “modern-day slavery” on southern Georgia farms, where victims were forced to dig for onions with their bare hands under the threat of gun violence. As appalling as the details were, crimes of labor trafficking, extreme wage theft, and passport confiscation all frequently occur as part of the agricultural guest worker program.

Decades of data from government agencies, advocacy organizations, and

academic institutions back up these stories from the field. Farmworkers suffer extreme health disparities due to the brutal, repetitive, fast-paced outdoor work they perform in extreme temperatures under harsh conditions that include pesticide exposure and high risk of heatstroke.

When I first started my investigation in fall 2021, well-meaning colleagues offered unsolicited advice about how difficult it would be to find farmworkers willing to go on the record. I was repeatedly told that farmworker communities are notoriously hard to build trust in. “They won’t speak to media,” one editor warned me. “They’re afraid of journalists,” a reporter friend said. I came to parrot these lines myself—and admittedly, the first several months of reporting *were* hard. I had particular trouble finding H-2A workers to speak to, but I soon learned

See Vasquez on page 21

# The SNAP Expansion Helped Me Lead a Dignified Life on Disability — Now It’s Gone

Joyce Kendrick

One thing I was grateful for during the pandemic was masks — and not just for safety reasons.

I’m on Medicare for disability, which unfortunately doesn’t cover dental care. At 60 years old, I’ve lost many of my teeth. It was nice hiding behind a mask for a while.

But I was grateful for another reason, too: for once, Congress actually expanded the social safety net.

With stimulus payments and extra SNAP benefits, it was so much easier to survive. Before, I had to supplement my tiny benefits at food pantries, where choices are limited. It was a challenge

to get food that I could eat without my teeth.

These are things about being poor that people don’t understand until it happens to them.

“

*When it comes to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion, there is no such thing as neutrality.*

I was raised in a loving family in a middle-class neighborhood. But as a child I suffered over a decade of trau-

matic sexual abuse by a neighbor who kept me quiet with violent threats.

I’ve struggled with my physical and mental health ever since. It was especially hard to get a correct mental health diagnosis in the years before people understood the trauma that comes from the kind of abuse I experienced.

It was difficult to hold down a job. After two failed back surgeries and with my mental health struggles, I was forced to rely on disability. With just \$700 a month of benefits, I moved into a motel room.

That’s the life I was living before lawmakers expanded services during the pandemic.

After the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, my SNAP benefits mercifully increased to \$284 per month. The stimulus payments allowed me to get back on my feet again. And at around the same time, I learned about Medicare’s Extra Help program, which got my monthly \$165 Medicare premium covered by Medicaid.

At last, I could focus on more than just trying to survive.

I found housing through a family member. I received some proper mental health treatment and was finally diagnosed with Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I got nutritious food that I was able to eat.



But now all that’s gone. Lawmakers let the SNAP expansion and other pandemic programs expire, and I’ve been told I’m no longer eligible for Medicare’s Extra Help program. So I’m in survival mode again.

My story is hardly unique.

The expanded SNAP benefits kept 4.2 million people out of poverty during 2021, including 14 percent of children out of poverty, while the expanded

See Kendrick on page 21



LEADER of DEMOCRACY  
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**JUNE 3, 5:30PM**  
At History Colorado



On June 3, 2021, the League of Women Voters of Colorado celebrates the winner of the 2023 Leaders of Democracy Award –

**REPRESENTATIVE JASON CROW**  
of Colorado’s 6th Congressional District for his heroism and defending our democratic process after January 6th, 2021.



# As Water Levels Drop, the Risk of Arsenic Rises

By Melissa Bailey

When John Mestas' ancestors moved to Colorado over 100 years ago to raise sheep in the San Luis Valley, they "hit paradise," he said.

"There was so much water, they thought it would never end," Mestas said of the agricultural region at the headwaters of the Rio Grande.

Now decades of climate change-driven drought, combined with the overpumping of aquifers, is making the valley desperately dry — and appears to be intensifying the levels of heavy metals in drinking water.

Like a third of people who live in this high alpine desert, Mestas relies on a private well that draws from an aquifer for drinking water. And, like many farmers there, he taps an aquifer to water the alfalfa that feeds his 550 cows.

"Water is everything here," he said.

Mestas, 71, is now one of the hundreds of well owners participating in a study that tackles the question: How does drought affect not just the quantity, but the quality, of water?

The study, led by Kathy James, an

associate professor at the Colorado School of Public Health, focuses on arsenic in private drinking wells. Arsenic, a carcinogen that occurs naturally in soil, has been appearing in rising levels in drinking water in the valley, she said. In California, Mexico, and Vietnam, research has linked rising arsenic levels in groundwater to drought and the overpumping of aquifers.

As the West grapples with a megadrought that has lasted more than two decades, and states risk cutbacks in water from the shrinking Colorado River, the San Luis Valley offers clues to what the future may hold.

Nationwide, about 40 million people rely on domestic wells, estimated Melissa Lombard, a research hydrologist for the U.S. Geological Survey. Nevada, Arizona, and Maine have the highest percentage of domestic well users — ranging from about a quarter to a fifth of well users — using water with elevated arsenic levels, she found in a separate study.

During drought, the number of people in the contiguous U.S. exposed to elevated arsenic from domestic wells may rise from about 2.7 million to 4.1



Angie Mestas, a schoolteacher, used a lifetime of savings to drill a drinking well on her land in Los Sauces, Colorado. But she won't drink from it until she tests for arsenic and E. coli, which are common in the area. / Angie Mestas, maestra de escuela, utilizó los ahorros de toda una vida para perforar un pozo potable en su finca de Los Sauces (Colorado). Pero no beberá de él hasta que se hagan pruebas de arsénico y E. coli, que son comunes en la zona. (Photo/Foto: Melissa Bailey for KFF Health News)

million, Lombard estimated, using statistical models.

Arsenic has been shown to affect health across the human life span, beginning with sperm and eggs, James said. Even a small exposure, added up over the course of a person's life, is enough to cause health problems, she said.

In a previous study in the valley, James found that lifetime exposure to low levels of inorganic arsenic in drinking water, between 10 and 100 micrograms per liter, or  $\mu\text{g/L}$ , was linked to a higher risk of coronary heart disease. Other research has tied chronic exposure to low-level arsenic to hypertension, diabetes, and cancer. Pregnant women and children are at greater risk for harm.

The World Health Organization sets the recommended limit on arsenic in drinking water at 10  $\mu\text{g/L}$ , which is also the U.S. standard for public water supplies. But research has shown that, even at 5  $\mu\text{g/L}$ , arsenic is linked to higher rates of skin lesions.

"I think it's a problem that a lot of people are not aware of," Lombard said. "Climate change is probably going to impact water quality," she said, but more research is needed to understand how and why.

## A Hotbed of Hope

The San Luis Valley, which has hosted a wealth of research and innovation, is the ideal place to explore those questions — and potential solutions.

Known for its stunning mountain views and the nearby Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, the valley spans a region roughly the size of Massachusetts, making it North America's largest alpine valley. Rich in Indigenous, Mexican, and Spanish heritage, the valley contains 500,000 acres of irrigated land producing potatoes, alfalfa for hay, and beer barley for Coors. It's home to nearly 50,000 people, many of them farmworkers

and about half of them Hispanic. It's also a challenging place to live: Counties here rank among the poorest in the state, and rates of diabetes, kidney disease, and depression run high.

Since it rains very little, about 7 inches a year on average, farmers rely on two large aquifers and the headwaters of the Rio Grande, which continues on to México. Snowmelt from the looming Sangre de Cristo and San Juan mountain ranges recharges the supply each spring. But as the climate warms, there's less snow, and water evaporates more quickly than usual from the ground and crops.

"This entire community, this culture, was built around irrigated agriculture," said state Sen. Cleave Simpson of Alamosa, a Republican and a fourth-generation farmer. But since 2002, the valley's unconfined aquifer has lost 1 million acre-feet of water — or enough to cover 1 million acres of land in water 1 foot deep — due to persistent drought and overuse. Now the communities in the valley face a deadline to replenish the aquifer, or face a state shutdown of hundreds of irrigation wells.

"We're a decade ahead of what's happening in the rest of Colorado" because of the intensity of water scarcity, said Simpson, who manages the Rio Grande Water Conservation District.

"This is not drought anymore — this is truly the aridification of the West," Simpson said. That's how scientists are describing a long-term trend toward persistent dryness that can be stopped only by addressing human-caused climate change.

James, who is an epidemiologist and engineer, has been studying links between climate and health in the valley for the past 15 years. She found that during dust storms in the San Luis Valley, which have been growing more frequent, more people visit the hospital for asthma attacks. And she has surveyed farmworkers on

how drought is affecting their mental health.

In the domestic well study, James is focusing on arsenic, which she said has been gradually increasing in valley drinking wells over the past 50 years. Arsenic levels in San Luis Valley groundwater are "markedly higher than [in] many other areas of the U.S.," according to James. She is also investigating ethnic disparities, as one study there showed Hispanic adults had higher levels of arsenic in their urine than non-Hispanic white adults did. (Hispanic people can be of any race or combination of races.)

“

*"It's colorless, it's odorless. Most families don't know if they're drinking arsenic."*  
Julie Zahringer, SDC  
Laboratory

James now aims to test 1,000 private wells in the valley to explore the connections between drought, water quality, and health. So far, she said, a small proportion of wells show elevated levels of heavy metals, including arsenic, uranium, tungsten, and manganese, which occur naturally in the soil. Unlike public water supplies, private domestic wells are not regulated, and they may go untested for years. James is offering participants free water testing and consultation on the results.

In Conejos County, John Mestas' daughter, Angie Mestas, jumped at the chance for a free test, which would cost \$195 at a local lab. Angie, a 35-year-old schoolteacher, said she used a lifetime of savings to drill a drinking well on her plot of land, a wide-open field of chamisa with sweeping views of the San Luis Hills. But she won't drink

See Arsenic on page 22

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# A Medida que Bajan los Niveles de Agua, Suben los de Arsénico

Por Melissa Bailey

Cuando los antepasados de John Mestas se mudaron a Colorado hace más de 100 años para criar ovejas en el Valle de San Luis, “llegaron al paraíso”, contó.

“Había tanta agua que pensaron que nunca se acabaría”, dijo Mestas refiriéndose a la región agrícola en la cabecera del río Grande.

Ahora, décadas de sequía impulsada por el cambio climático, combinada con la sobreexplotación de los acuíferos, están dejando al valle desesperadamente seco, y parece estar intensificando los niveles de metales pesados en el agua potable.

Al igual que un tercio de las personas que viven en este desierto alpino de gran altitud, Mestas depende de un pozo privado que extrae agua de un acuífero para beber. Y, al igual que muchos agricultores de la zona, usa la misma fuente para regar la alfalfa que alimenta a sus 550 vacas.

“Aquí, el agua lo es todo”, dijo.

Mestas, de 71 años, ahora es uno de los cientos de propietarios de pozos que participan en un estudio que aborda la pregunta: ¿Cómo afecta la sequía no solo a la cantidad, sino también a la calidad del agua?

El estudio, dirigido por Kathy James, profesora asociada en la Escuela de Salud Pública de Colorado, se centra en el arsénico en los pozos privados de agua potable. El arsénico, un carcinógeno que se encuentra naturalmente en el suelo, ha estado apareciendo en niveles crecientes en el agua potable del valle, según James.

“

*“Es incoloro, es inodoro. La mayoría de las familias no saben si están bebiendo arsénico”.*

*Julie Zahringer, SDC Laboratory*

En California, México y Vietnam, las investigaciones han relacionado el aumento de los niveles de arsénico en el agua subterránea con la sequía y la sobreexplotación de los acuíferos.

A medida que el oeste lucha contra una mega sequía que ha durado más de dos décadas y los estados corren el riesgo de recortes en el agua del manguante río Colorado, el Valle de San Luis ofrece pistas sobre lo que el futuro puede deparar.

A nivel nacional, alrededor de 40 millones de personas dependen de pozos domésticos, estimó Melissa Lombard, investigadora en hidráulica del U.S. Geological Survey. Nevada, Arizo-

na y Maine tienen el mayor porcentaje de usuarios de pozos domésticos —que oscilan entre aproximadamente un cuarto y una quinta parte de estos usuarios—, que utilizan agua con niveles elevados de arsénico, según encontró en un otro estudio.

Durante la sequía, el número de personas en los Estados Unidos continental expuestas a niveles elevados de arsénico en pozos domésticos podría aumentar de aproximadamente 2,7 millones a 4,1 millones, estimó Lombard utilizando modelos estadísticos.

Se ha comprobado que el arsénico afecta la salud a lo largo de la vida, comenzando con los espermatozoides y los óvulos, explicó James. Incluso una pequeña exposición, acumulada a lo largo de la vida de una persona, es suficiente para causar problemas de salud, agregó.

En un estudio anterior en el valle, James encontró que la exposición de por vida a niveles bajos de arsénico inorgánico en el agua potable, entre 10 y 100 microgramos por litro ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{L}$ ), estuvo relacionada con un mayor riesgo de enfermedad coronaria. Otras investigaciones han vinculado la exposición crónica a niveles bajos de arsénico con hipertensión, diabetes y cáncer.

Las mujeres embarazadas y los niños corren un mayor riesgo de sufrir daños.

La Organización Mundial de la Salud establece el límite recomendado de arsénico en el agua potable en  $10 \mu\text{g}/\text{L}$ , que también es el estándar de los Estados Unidos para los suministros públicos de agua. Pero las investigaciones han demostrado que, incluso a  $5 \mu\text{g}/\text{L}$ , el arsénico está relacionado con tasas más altas de lesiones en la piel.

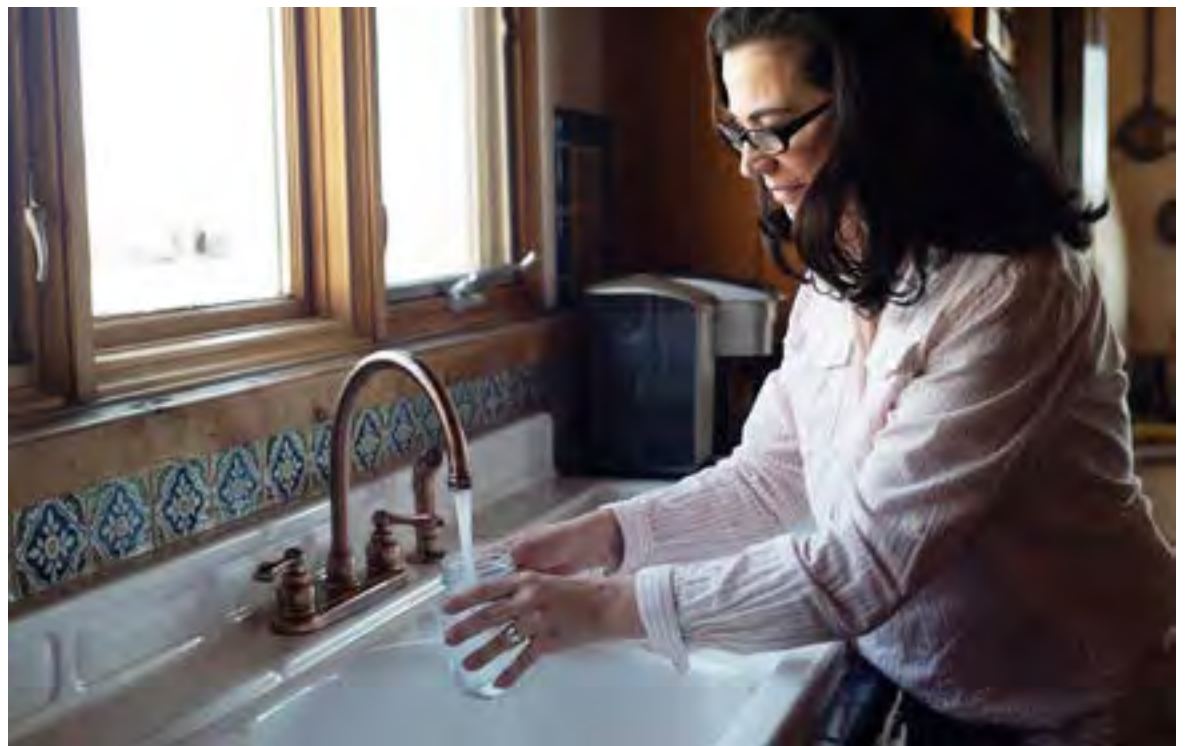
“Creo que es un problema del que mucha gente no está consciente”, dijo Lombard. “El cambio climático probablemente afectará la calidad del agua”, dijo, pero se necesita más investigación para comprender cómo y por qué.

## Un foco de esperanza

El Valle de San Luis, que ha sido sede de una gran cantidad de investigación e innovación, es el lugar ideal para explorar esas preguntas, y posibles soluciones.

Conocido por sus impresionantes vistas montañosas y la cercanía al Parque y Reserva Nacional Great Sand Dunes, el valle abarca una región aproximadamente del tamaño de Massachusetts, convirtiéndolo en el valle alpino más grande de América del Norte.

Rico en herencia indígena, mexicana y española, contiene 500,000 acres de tierra de riego que producen papas, alfalfa para forraje y cebada para la cerveza de Coors. Es hogar de casi 50,000 personas, muchas de ellas trabajadores



Julie Zahringer, directora de laboratorio en SDC Laboratory, dice que aproximadamente una cuarta parte de los pozos privados analizados por su laboratorio en el Valle de San Luis, en Colorado, han dado positivo para arsénico. En su hogar en el condado de Alamosa, ella misma utiliza ósmosis inversa para filtrar el agua en su pozo de agua potable, donde dice que el nivel de arsénico aumentó de 13 a 20 microgramos por litro este año. / Julie Zahringer, laboratory director at SDC Laboratory, says about a quarter of the private wells that her lab has tested in Colorado's San Luis Valley have tested positive for arsenic. At her home in Alamosa County, she uses reverse osmosis to filter the water in her drinking well, where she said the arsenic level jumped from 13 to 20 micrograms per liter this year. (Foto/ Photo: Melissa Bailey for KFF Health News)

agrícolas y aproximadamente la mitad de ellas hispanas.

También es un lugar desafiante para vivir: los condados aquí se encuentran entre los más pobres del estado, y las tasas de diabetes, enfermedad renal y de presión son altas.

Dado que llueve muy poco, aproximadamente 7 pulgadas al año en pro-

medio, los agricultores dependen de dos grandes acuíferos y de las cabeceras del río Grande, que continúa hacia México. El deshielo de las imponentes cordilleras de Sangre de Cristo y San Juan recarga el suministro cada primavera.

Sin embargo, a medida que el clima se calienta, hay menos nieve y el agua se

evapora más rápidamente de lo normal tanto del suelo como de los cultivos. “Esta comunidad entera, esta cultura, se construyó en torno a la agricultura de riego”, dijo Cleave Simpson, senador estatal de Alamosa, republicano y agricultor de cuarta generación.

Vea **Arsénico**, página 24

GRATIS PARA NIÑOS DE HASTA LOS 18

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DENVER art MUSEUM

# Deadly Animals and Cartel Members: Migrants in Denver Describe Their Journey

COLORADO

By Andrew Fraieli

The Darién Gap is a 60-mile-wide no-man's-land of dense, mountainous jungle that swallows the border of Panama and Colombia. There is no road, only a muddy path rife with hundreds of thousands of migrants, and cartel members charging a fee to cross it.

The Gap is a common route for migrants trying to reach the United States from South America, including some of the hundreds who have entered Denver in the past few weeks.

The city first experienced an influx of migrants in December, when Denver Mayor Michael Hancock issued an emergency declaration and the city set up emergency shelters. The migrants came from Central and South America, particularly Venezuela. A new influx of migrants began in Denver, as in other American communities, around the beginning of May as Title 42, a pandemic-era federal immigration policy that allowed border authorities to quickly expel migrants from the U.S.,

came to an end.

Colorado Newslines spoke with a few of the recent migrants who have arrived at Denver's processing center, with Martín Pérez — a Denver Human Services emergency service worker — translating.

## Jaguar sighting

The time needed to cross the Gap, repeatedly called one of the most difficult parts of the migrants' journey to the U.S., varied person to person. For Shelby Monsalve, a father and food truck owner passing through Denver to New York, it took almost nine days. He slept in a tent, had only small snacks for the trip, and said he was alongside burglars and drug traffickers on the trail. One night he saw a jaguar outside his tent.

Monsalve's seven-month journey, and counting, from his home country of Colombia to Denver saw him pass out of the jungle into Panamá City, then through Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and México. Each country he's traversed has had people helping migrants, he said, but he felt they were mostly trying to move them onwards, putting him on a bus to

be shipped out of the country within five days.

He still feels that way.

Besides the Gap, México was the most difficult place to cross for Monsalve, but the difficulty in México was due to bureaucracy and bribes, not jaguars and mud. He said he was detained by Mexican immigration police, whom he had to pay to release him. Even crossing the border into Texas, which alone took two months, he felt kidnapped, as he said he was held in a detention center in Texas for 12 days with only two meals a day. Forced to sign papers in English he didn't understand, he said he felt duped as well.

When asked what he left behind, Monsalve said, "Mi vida" — my life. Tearing up, he explained that he left not for a better life for himself, but for his family, his brother, his 9-year-old daughter he left with her mother. He said he'd watched friends die during protests in 2019 in Colombia and his mother die from a lack of access to medical care in 2014. He said he's tired of living that way, and wants to live in a free country and free world.

He wants his own business, a food



Eduardo Caripa fled his home of Venezuela to Colombia before continuing to the U.S. on a three-month journey involving homelessness and violence for a better standard of life. Photographed on May 22, 2023, in Denver. / Eduardo Caripa huyó de su Venezuela natal a Colombia antes de continuar hacia Estados Unidos en un viaje de tres meses en el que tuvo que enfrentarse a la violencia y a la falta de hogar para conseguir un mejor nivel de vida. Fotografiado el 22 de mayo de 2023 en Denver. (Photo/Foto: Andrew Fraieli for Colorado Newslines)

truck in New York selling Latin food, and to earn enough to properly bring his family to the U.S.

## The train doesn't stop

While crossing the Darién Gap presents the dangers of disease, deadly animals, cartel members, and the environment itself of mud, rain, and mountains, another major route for migrants can bring extreme cold and heat, and even death: train hopping across México.

Liliana Pérez, with her husband, first hopped a train northward to Texas in December after traveling much the same path as Monsalve, but from Venezuela. She explained that the train doesn't stop, so she had to run and jump onto it. She jumped off outside Texas, turning herself over to U.S. immigration officials in February, but was sent back to México, forcing her to hop the same train again and start the process all over.

A nine-month trip in total — taking two to get to México from Venezuela, and almost five days to cross the Gap — she didn't enter the U.S. to arrive in Denver until last month.

Working at a government ration manufacturing plant, Pérez said she, her husband, and their three children were relatively well-off back home. They owned their own house. But after voicing dissent against the Nicolás Maduro regime, she began receiving death threats and being harassed. Her family was afraid of being persecuted, so she moved her three children to her mother's place — far away from their hometown, she said — and began the trip to the U.S.

Even then, the harassment did not stop. Pérez described her journey as full of tears and suffering, surviving sickness, hunger, sleeping on the streets and attempted sexual violence. She described one man in Mexico who was known for housing migrants on their journey, but also for assaulting some. She didn't believe it until it happened to her: sexual assault, the man trying to watch her in the bathroom, and trying to assault her with a knife before she fled.

She still feels persecuted, even stalked, by this man, as well as her government. She's heading to Chicago

partially because she feels more secure the farther she is from her home, hoping she and her husband can establish themselves and bring their kids over as well.

When asked if the journey was worth it, she said yes. She believes they would be dead otherwise.

## Faced with assault rifles

While train hopping and crossing treacherous jungles were large physical impediments, the U.S. border can be a large bureaucratic one. It was at the border that Eduardo Caripa, after 15 days lost in Colombia, three days waiting to enter the Darién Gap — guarded by men with guns demanding an entry fee — five days traversing it, four trains and a three-month total journey, lost track of his girlfriend he'd traveled with all that way.

The two were detained by U.S. immigration officials on May 12, with Caripa and friends of his girlfriend all being released soon after. But none have heard from his girlfriend.

He faced the same challenges as other migrants, train hopping and crossing the jungle, as well as being robbed of everything — even his clothes and shoes. He was sick, had no food, slept on the streets, and had to panhandle in every country he passed through to have the money to travel, and bribe. Entering México he was faced by five men with assault rifles, he said.

Caripa said he fled his home of Venezuela earlier than most, heading to Colombia after he had to stop his studies due to the pandemic and due to pay not being enough for expenses. He got paid \$10 a week, and a bag of rice was \$1, he said.

Ultimately, his goal is to provide for his family back home. Both his brother and mother are sick, and the family doesn't have the money to treat them. Caripa said he knows someone in Chicago, where he hopes to get a job and meet his girlfriend there.

Caripa arrived at the processing center only that morning, and was off to catch a bus to a job, and possibly his girlfriend, by the afternoon.

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# Animales Mortales y Miembros de Cárteles: Migrantes en Denver Describen Su Viaje

## COLORADO

Por Andrew Fraieli

La Brecha del Darién es una tierra de nadie de 100 km de ancho, de selva densa y montañosa, que se traga la frontera entre Panamá y Colombia. No hay carretera, sólo un camino fangoso plagado de cientos de miles de migrantes y miembros de cárteles que cobran una tasa por cruzarlo.

La Brecha es una ruta habitual para los migrantes que intentan llegar a Estados Unidos desde Sudamérica, incluidos algunos de los cientos que han entrado en Denver en las últimas semanas.

La ciudad experimentó por primera vez una afluencia de migrantes en diciembre, cuando el alcalde Michael Hancock emitió una declaración de emergencia y la ciudad habilitó refugios de emergencia. Los inmigrantes procedían de Centroamérica y Sudamérica, especialmente de Venezuela. Una nueva afluencia de migrantes comenzó en Denver, como en otras comunidades estadounidenses, a principios de mayo, cuando el Título 42, una política federal de inmigración de la era de la pandemia que permitía a las autoridades fronterizas expulsar rápidamente a los migrantes de Estados Unidos, llegó a su fin.

Colorado Newline habló con algunos de los migrantes que han llegado recientemente al centro de procesamiento de Denver, con Martín Pérez -un trabajador de los servicios de emergencia de Denver Human Services- como traductor.

### Avistamiento de jaguares

El tiempo necesario para cruzar el Gap, repetidamente llamado una de las partes más difíciles del viaje de los migrantes a los EE.UU., varía de persona a persona. A Shelby Monsalve, padre de familia y propietario de un camión de comida de paso por Denver hacia Nueva York, le llevó casi nueve días. Durmió en una tienda de campaña, sólo tenía pequeños tentempiés para el viaje, y dijo que estuvo junto a ladrones y narcotraficantes en el camino. Una noche vio un jaguar fuera de su tienda.

En sus siete meses de viaje, y contando, desde Colombia, su país natal, hasta Denver, Monsalve salió de la selva para llegar a Ciudad de Panamá, y luego pasó por Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala y México. En todos los países que ha atravesado había gente ayudando a los emigrantes, dice, pero él tenía la sensación de que en la mayoría de los casos intentaban hacerles avanzar, metiéndole a él en un autobús para sacarlo del país en cinco días.

Aún lo siente así.

Además de la Brecha, México fue el

lugar más difícil de cruzar para Monsalve, pero la dificultad en México se debió a la burocracia y los sobornos, no a los jaguares y el barro. Dice que fue detenido por la policía de inmigración mexicana, a la que tuvo que pagar para que lo soltaran. Incluso al cruzar la frontera con Texas, lo que sólo le llevó dos meses, se sintió secuestrado, ya que, según dijo, estuvo retenido en un centro de detención de Texas durante 12 días con sólo dos comidas al día. Obligado a firmar papeles en inglés que no entendía, dijo que también se sintió engañado.

Cuando le preguntaron qué dejaba atrás, Monsalve respondió: "Mi vida". Con lágrimas en los ojos, explicó que se marchó no por una vida mejor para él, sino para su familia, su hermano, su hija de 9 años a la que dejó con su madre. Dijo que había visto morir a amigos durante las protestas de 2019 en Colombia y a su madre por falta de acceso a atención médica en 2014. Dijo que está cansado de vivir así y que quiere vivir en un país y un mundo libres.

Quiere tener su propio negocio, un camión de comida en Nueva York que venda comida latina, y ganar lo suficiente para traer a su familia a Estados Unidos como es debido.

### El tren no se detiene

Mientras que cruzar la Brecha del Darién presenta los peligros de enfermedades, animales mortales, miembros de cárteles y el propio entorno de barro, lluvia y montañas, otra ruta importante para los migrantes puede traer frío y calor extremos, e incluso la muerte: cruzar México en tren.

Liliana Pérez y su marido tomaron por primera vez un tren hacia Texas en diciembre, después de recorrer un trayecto muy similar al de Monsalve, pero desde Venezuela. Explicó que el tren no se detiene, por lo que tuvo que correr y saltar a él. Se bajó a las afueras de Texas y se entregó a los funcionarios de inmigración estadounidenses en febrero, pero la devolvieron a México, lo que la obligó a subir de nuevo al mismo tren y empezar de nuevo el proceso.

Un viaje de nueve meses en total -tardó dos en llegar a México desde Venezuela, y casi cinco días en cruzar el Gap-, y no entró en Estados Unidos para llegar a Denver hasta el mes pasado.

Trabajando en una planta de fabricación de raciones del gobierno, Pérez dijo que ella, su marido y sus tres hijos eran relativamente acomodados en su país. Tenían casa propia. Pero tras expresar su desacuerdo con el régimen de Nicolás Maduro, empezó a recibir amenazas de muerte y a sufrir acoso. Su familia temía ser perseguida, así que trasladó a sus tres hijos a casa de su madre -lejos de su ciudad natal, según

ella- y emprendió el viaje a Estados Unidos.

Ni siquiera entonces cesó el acoso. Pérez describió su viaje lleno de lágrimas y sufrimiento, sobreviviendo a enfermedades, hambre, durmiendo en la calle e intentos de violencia sexual. Describió a un hombre en México que era conocido por alojar a migrantes en su viaje, pero también por agredir a algunos. No lo creyó hasta que le ocurrió a ella: agresión sexual, el hombre intentando vigilarla en el baño e intentando agredirla con un cuchillo antes de huir.

Todavía se siente perseguida, incluso acosada, por este hombre, así como por su gobierno. Se dirige a Chicago en parte porque se siente más segura cuanto más lejos está de su hogar, con la esperanza de que ella y su marido puedan establecerse y traer también a sus hijos.

A la pregunta de si el viaje merece la pena, responde que sí. Cree que de lo contrario estarían muertos.

### Enfrentados a fusiles de asalto

Mientras que el salto de trenes y el cruce de selvas traicioneras eran grandes ob-



Shelby Monsalve tenía su propio camión de comida en Colombia antes de marcharse a Estados Unidos, con la esperanza de ganar más dinero para mantener a su familia desde lejos. Fotografiado el 22 de mayo de 2023, en Denver. / Shelby Monsalve owned his own food truck back home in Colombia before he left the country for the U.S., hopeful he'd earn more money in America to support his family from afar. Photographed on May 22, 2023, in Denver. (Foto/Photo: Andrew Fraieli for Colorado Newline)

stáculos físicos, la frontera estadounidense puede ser un gran obstáculo burocrático. Fue en la frontera donde Eduardo Caripa, después de 15 días esperando para entrar en el paso del Darién -vigilado por hombres armados que exigían el pago de una entrada-, cinco días atravesándolo, cuatro trenes y un viaje total de tres meses, perdió la pista de su novia con la que había viajado durante todo ese trayecto.

Los dos fueron detenidos por funcionarios de inmigración estadounidenses el 12 de mayo, y Caripa y los amigos de su novia fueron puestos en libertad poco después. Pero ninguno ha sabido nada de su novia.

Tuvo que enfrentarse a los mismos retos que otros emigrantes, saltar de tren y cruzar la selva, además de que le robaran todo, incluso la ropa y los zapatos. Estaba enfermo, no tenía comida, dormía en la calle y tenía que mendigar en todos los países por los que pasaba para tener dinero para viajar y sobornar. Al entrar en México se enfrentó a cinco hombres con fusiles de asalto, según dijo.

Caripa dijo que huyó de su Venezuela natal antes que la mayoría y se dirigió a Colombia después de tener que interrumpir sus estudios debido a la pandemia y a que la paga no le alcanzaba

Vea **Migrantes**, página 25



# 'Change Nothing, Improve Everything' — Casa Bonita Reimagined

**COLORADO**

By Danny Gonzales-Hyde

As you drive along West Colfax, you may notice a tall pink palace towering over the rest of the buildings in the area. This building was once the beloved restaurant Casa Bonita. Casa Bonita was no ordinary restaurant, as it featured a variety of entertainment options that included cliff divers, live mariachis, and an immersive environment.

The restaurant first opened in 1974 and was a popular destination for families who wanted top-of-the-line entertainment and a dine-in experience all in one. Unfortunately, like many other restaurants in Denver and around the world, Casa Bonita closed amid the Covid-19 pandemic and their bankruptcy hearing back in March 2020. The previous owner was then forced to sell, and once it hit the market, Matt Stone and Trey Parker purchased Casa Bonita with the intention of re-introducing the once-beloved landmark of Colorado. Stone and Parker are most notably known for their creation of the popular animated satire "South Park."

Amid the transfer of ownership, Stone and Parker have spent millions to restore the building. In doing so, their team has used the motto



Colorado's iconic Casa Bonita is gearing up to welcome back guests. (Photo: Danny Gonzales-Hyde for El Semanario)

of "change nothing, improve everything" in an effort to preserve the distinguished character that has always set the restaurant apart. The unique-



Casa Bonita's legendary cliff divers add excitement to the restaurants' experience. (Photo: Danny Gonzales-Hyde for El Semanario)



The chef-inspired menu at Casa Bonita will offer savory meals and continue the tradition of fresh sopaipillas. (Photo: Danny Gonzales-Hyde for El Semanario)

ness of Casa Bonita earned it a spot in the hearts of many Coloradans, as

they have had many fond memories with both family and friends associated with the restaurant. This has rung true for my family, as we all have fond memories of going to this restaurant together for birthdays and other special occasions, and the memories of shared laughter still stick with us today. This nostalgic aspect of the reopening is what will bring my family and many other families back to Casa Bonita upon its reopening.

Most importantly, the renovations made by the new owners and laborers aim to make the restaurant more efficient in its operation, with a focus on hygiene. They also hired a renowned Chef, Dana Rodríguez, to boost its culinary reputation. She and her team said that the quality of the food will make a huge leap, as everything will be made from scratch. This is on top of the complete remodeling of the kitchen, which is now decked out with all the latest culinary technology. Further, there will now be an admission ticket which will cover both food and entertainment.

So far there has been no announcement in regard to an official opening date, but the restaurant will start to have limited hours. In order to get one of these limited spots, guests will have to sign up for [Casa Bonita's email list](#) and from there will be chosen at random.

Danny Gonzales-Hyde is an Independent Reporter for The Weekly Issue/El Semanario.

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**Mujeres de COLOR**

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El Semanario

# Build a Longer Table, Not a Higher Wall



Community action demonstrating welcome and support for immigrants, refugees and newcomers. / Acción comunitaria demuestra la bienvenida y el apoyo a los inmigrantes, refugiados y recién llegados. (Photo/Foto: American Friends Service Committee of Denver)

## COLORADO

Dozens of community members launched a month of public actions across Colorado to call on the United States to be a leader in respecting the human rights of all people migrating around the world. The group calls on all levels of government and the public to meet this moment of mass migration due to climate change, military and economic violence with vision, dignity, welcome and respect for basic human rights.

Jordan García of the American Friends Service Committee's Colorado office states, "Fundamentally, safety

starts with us, at the interpersonal and community level – we keep each other safe by opening our arms, our pantries, gardens and homes. A government's policies can make migration safer and more humane or deadly and traumatic. While corporations and governments focus on walls and weapons, our response focuses on welcome. The Biden Administration's asylum ban and higher walls violate human rights and are deadly. We must do better"

The organizations involved call on the City of Denver to continue to offer shelter and partner with nonprof-

See **Build** on page 21

# Construya Una Mesa Más Larga, No Un Muro Más Alto

## COLORADO

Docenas de miembros de la comunidad lanzaron de acciones públicas en todo Colorado para pedir a los Estados Unidos que sean líderes en respetar a los derechos humanos de todas las personas que migran. El grupo hará un llamado a todos los niveles de gobierno y al público que enfrente a este momento de migración masiva - debido al cambio climático, la violencia militar y económica - con visión, dignidad, acogida y respeto por los derechos humanos básicos.

Jordan García de la oficina de Colorado del Comité de Servicio de los Amigos Estadounidenses afirma: "Fundamentalmente, la seguridad comienza con nosotros, a nivel interpersonal y comunitario: nos mantenemos seguros unos a otros al abrir nuestros brazos, nuestras despensas, jardines y hogares. Las políticas de un gobierno

pueden hacer que la migración sea más segura y humana o mortal y traumática. Mientras que las corporaciones y los gobiernos se centran en los muros y la militarización, nuestra respuesta se centra en la bienvenida. La prohibición de asilo de la Administración Biden y los muros más altos violan los derechos humanos y son mortales. La deportación de Coloradenses de largo plazo, nuestros seres queridos, sin ofrecer ningún camino a la residencia, es cruel e inhumano. Debemos hacerlo mejor."

Las organizaciones involucradas hacen un llamado a la ciudad de Denver para que continúe ofreciendo refugio y coordinación con organizaciones sin fines de lucro para integrar a las personas recién llegadas. Piden a los legisladores estatales y al gobernador que prioricen políticas efectivas como el arrendamiento maestro y el control de

Vea **Construya**, página 21



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# Early Childhood Workers and Parents Advocate for Better Pay and Affordable Child Care

## NEW MÉXICO

By Megan Gleason and Danielle Prokop

As toddlers ran around a temporarily closed daycare center in Albuquerque, adults chanted “sí se puede, sí se puede” in a small, colorfully decorated room where workers normally watch over young children.

In Las Cruces, tucked away in a mobile home on the East Mesa, a dozen workers and parents touted signs

emblazoned with “New Mexico trabaja porque nosotros trabajamos,” (New Mexico works, because we work).

Kelly’s Learning Academy in Las Cruces joined the Albuquerque-based Avengers Learning Center, as well as four other day cares in the central city, in a closure in May as part of the national Day Without Child Care. Non-profit OLÉ organized New Mexico’s demonstrations.

Education workers and parents gathered behind the closed doors to illustrate the need for early childhood workers and day care centers. This

comes after the COVID-19 pandemic intensified a shortage of child care workers and facilities.

Even as the state committed last month to maintain affordable child care programs and provider wages, advocates gathered to call for higher and more equitable wages.

Ivydel Natachu works at ChildCo Day School in Albuquerque. She said \$15 per hour is a good starting point, but workers should really be getting at least \$18 per hour.

Natachu makes \$20 per hour herself as a teacher at the school. That’s a bump



Ivydel Natachu speaks at Avengers Learning Center LLC during a protest to demand higher wages for educators on Monday, May 8, 2023, in Albuquerque, N.M. / Ivydel Natachu habla en el Centro de Aprendizaje Avengers LLC durante una protesta para exigir salarios más altos para educadores el lunes 8 de mayo de 2023, en Albuquerque, N.M. (Foto/Photo: Liam DeBonis for Source NM)

up from \$17 per hour after last year’s state-promised \$3 pay raise kicked in.

See **Workers** on page 23

# Trabajadores de la Primera Infancia y Padres Abogan por Mejores Salarios y Cuidado Infantil Asequible

## NEW MÉXICO

Por Megan Gleason and Danielle Prokop

Mientras niños pequeños corrían alrededor de una guardería temporalmente cerrada en Albuquerque, los adultos coreaban “sí se puede, sí se puede” en una pequeña habitación decorada con colores donde los trabajadores normalmente cuidan a los niños pequeños.

En Las Cruces, escondidos en una casa rodante en la Mesa Este, una docena de trabajadores y padres exhibían carteles adornados con “New Mexico trabaja porque nosotros trabajamos”.

Kelly’s Learning Academy (Academia de Aprendizaje) en Las Cruces se unió al Centro de Aprendizaje Avengers con sede en Albuquerque, al igual que otras cuatro guarderías en la ciudad central, en un cierre en mayo como parte del Día Nacional sin Cuidado Infantil. La organización sin fines de lu-

cro OLÉ organizó las manifestaciones de New Mexico.

Trabajadores educacionales y padres se reunieron a puerta cerrada para ilustrar la necesidad de trabajadores de la primera infancia y guarderías. Esto ocurre después de que la pandemia de COVID-19 intensificara la escasez de trabajadores y centros de cuidado infantil.

Aunque el estado se comprometió la semana pasada a mantener los programas de cuidado infantil asequibles y los salarios de los proveedores, los de-



La propietaria del Centro de Aprendizaje Avengers LLC, Karen Mejia, habla en el centro durante una protesta para exigir salarios más altos para educadores el lunes 8 de mayo de 2023, en Albuquerque, N.M. / The owner of Avengers Learning Center LLC, Karen Mejia, speaks at the center during a protest to demand higher wages for educators on Monday, May 8, 2023, in Albuquerque, N.M. (Foto/Photo: Liam DeBonis for Source NM)

fensores se reunieron para pedir salarios más altos y más equitativos.

Ivydel Natachu trabaja en ChildCo Day School en Albuquerque. Ella dijo

que \$15 por hora es un buen punto de partida, pero los trabajadores realmente deberían estar recibiendo por lo menos \$18 por hora.

Natachu gana \$20 dólares por hora como maestra en la escuela. Eso es un aumento de los \$17 dólares por hora después de que se hizo efectivo el aumento salarial de \$3 dólares prometido por el estado el año pasado. Incluso con \$20 dólares la hora, dice que la mayor parte de su sueldo se destina al arriendo, por lo que le queda poco para cubrir otras necesidades.

Además de necesitar más para pagar los gastos básicos, Natachu dijo que los proveedores deben recibir una remuneración adecuada por la experiencia que aportan al campo.

“Realmente queremos que el público sepa que no somos niñeras”, afirma. “Tenemos la educación para enseñar a niños, a los niños más pequeños de New México, a convertirse en independientes, para ayudarles con sus logros”.

Natachu dijo que una escala salarial y profesional ayudaría a los trabajadores a ser mejor pagados. Se trataría de un sistema para compensar más a los maestros en función de los años adicionales de experiencia, educación o por hablar múltiples idiomas.

Vea **Trabajadores**, página 18

**WEEKEND FIELD TRIPS**

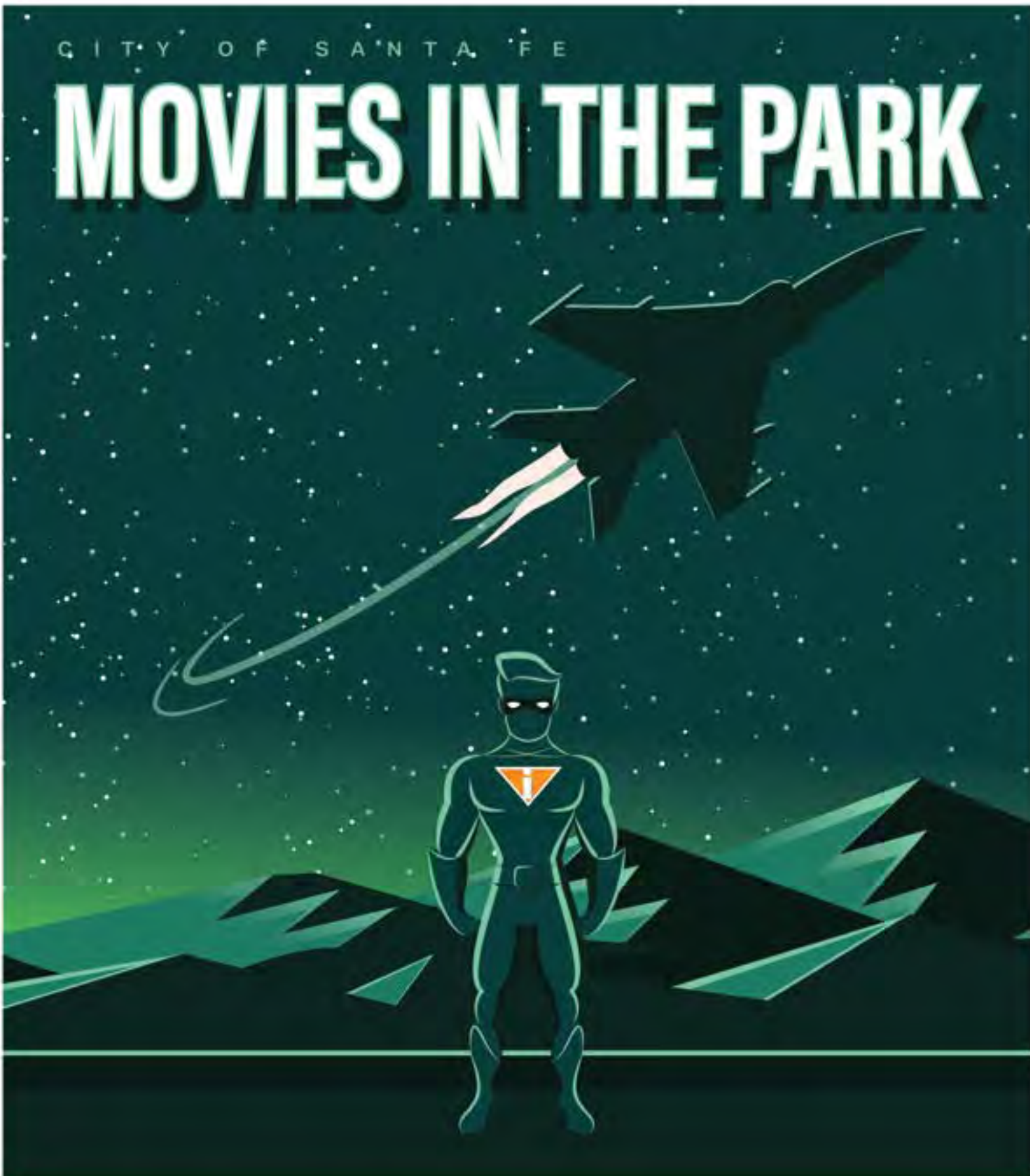
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# Advocates Demand 'Phasing Out Fossil Fuels' as Part of Proposed BLM Public Lands Rule

## NEW MÉXICO

As the Bureau of Land Management holds its second of three in-person public meetings to promote the Department of Interior's proposed Public Lands Rule, New Mexicans rallied in front of the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque to unfurl a 20-foot banner reading "Phase Out Federal Fossil Fuels: Biden Keep Your Promise on Public Lands and Waters" highlighting the mounting demands to address the legacy of fossil fuel sacrifice zones in New Mexico as a result of the continued fossil fuel leasing and drilling across public and ancestral tribal lands.

While the rule proposed to place conservation on the same level as other uses of public lands, which tend to favor resource extraction like drilling and mining, it fails to limit or address the impacts of continued fossil fuel leasing and drilling on public lands.

"Each new acre sacrificed to fossil fuels is a failure of Biden's climate leadership that promises more heat, drought, fires and floods for New Mexico," said Soni Grant, New Mexico Campaigner for the Center for Biological Diversity. "Biden has the authority and a moral duty to phase out oil and gas extraction on public lands. We stand with frontline communities here in New Mexico and all over the country to demand an end to sacrifice zones."

Last Thursday, over fifty advocates rallied at the Bureau of Land Management New Mexico state office to deliver a letter signed by 272 local and national groups, unions, businesses and institutions urging the agency to cancel its plans to auction off over more acres of public lands for fracking. Across the country, advocates are rallying for the Biden Administration to phase out oil and gas production on public lands.

"Despite our continued protests, the Bureau of Land Management

seems poised to prioritize oil and gas above all other uses of public lands," said Miya King-Flaherty, Organizing Representative for the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter. "Climate disasters are intensifying, public health impacts are increasing, and our environment is suffering from continued fossil fuel development. Now is the time for the Bureau of Land Management to fulfill its mission to restore the balance of our public lands and to phase out and end new oil and gas drilling."

New Mexico has been ground zero for expansion of federal fossil fuel leasing and drilling and related impacts. Federal data shows that of the 6,430 oil and gas drilling permits that the Biden administration approved in its first two years - outpacing the number of permits granted by the Trump administration - more than half were in New Mexico's Permian Basin, where oil production increased nearly 10-fold since 2010, leading to a surge of devas-



Photo: WildEarth Guardians. Over fifty advocates rallied at the Bureau of Land Management New Mexico state office to deliver a letter signed by 272 local and national groups, unions, businesses and institutions urging the agency to cancel its plans to auction off over more acres of public lands for fracking.

tating air, water and climate pollution. Nearly 25% of U.S. climate pollution comes from fossil fuel production on federal public lands, with oil and gas drilling in New Mexico contributing significantly to the "Permian Climate Bomb." Recent research shows that developed countries must end oil, gas and coal extraction by about 2030 to avoid the harms of warming 1.5 degrees Celsius.

"Not only does oil and gas production in the Permian have a profound impact on the climate, but it

also greatly affects public and environmental health in the region," said Kayley Shoup, community organizer with Citizens Caring for the Future. "I fear we have no idea just how contaminated our water, land and therefore our bodies may be by these highly toxic and health harming fracking chemicals. It's shameful that our health and well-being are up for sale."

"Many Indigenous nations in New Mexico have cultural connections and

See **Fossil Fuels** on page 21

# Albuquerque Housing Authority Providing Assistance to Households in Search of Rental Housing

## NEW MÉXICO

As Albuquerque residents struggle to find safe and affordable housing in the current competitive housing market, the Albuquerque Housing Authority (AHA) is taking steps to help.

Combined the AHA Public Housing and Section 8 Programs support over 4000 low income and very low-income households each year to obtain and maintain safe, decent and affordable housing opportunities. As part of ongoing efforts to tackle the current housing crisis in Albuquerque, AHA

opened the Public Housing pre-application process in April and will continue to take applications through July 31, 2023. Pre-applications will also be taken for the AHA Section 8 Program beginning June 1 through June 30, 2023. For more information on how to apply for affordable housing opportunities,

households are encouraged to visit the AHA website at [www.abqaha.org](http://www.abqaha.org). Households requiring support to access and complete online applications should contact the AHA office 505-764-3953 for more information.

Additionally, through partnerships with the City of Albuquerque and the

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), AHA also provides housing search assistance for AHA voucher holders to pay for application fees, security deposits, and holding fees. With the addition of housing search assistance funds from the City and HUD, AHA has been able to support more than 60 households to be competitive in this tough housing market to date and has available funding to help more. Without these funds, vulnerable low-income households would remain shut out from the current housing market. "It's partnerships and programs like these that make affordable safe housing a reality for so many vulnerable Albuquerque households", said Linda Bridge, Executive Director, AHA.

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## Trabajadores

Micah McCoy, portavoz del Departamento estatal, dijo que la creación de este sistema es el primer objetivo de su plan estratégico de cinco años.

Dijo que la agencia también tiene una escala salarial en su plan financiero de cuatro años y el modelo de costos, que reembolsaría a los proveedores de la primera infancia basados en “asumidos aumentos en los salarios por mayores niveles de cualificaciones.”

Karen Mejía es dueña del Centro de Aprendizaje Avengers con su marido. Ella paga a su docena de empleados el mínimo de \$15 dólares por hora porque no puede pagar más que eso. Dijo que sus trabajadores solían recibir incluso menos, antes del aumento estatal de \$3 dólares.

Debido a los bajos salarios, dijo Mejía, ha sido difícil encontrar personas que quieran trabajar en guarderías. Dijo que los distritos escolares públicos o incluso las cadenas de tiendas como Walmart o Costco pagan más.

“Necesito más dinero para mis maestros, trabajadores”, dijo ella.

El aumento salarial será un alivio para los empleados, dijo Merline Gallegos, directora de Kelly’s Learning Academy (Academia de Aprendizaje Kelly)

“Apenas nos estamos recuperando, estamos flotando, lo suficiente para pagar las cuentas, pagar a los trabajadores, pero no somos capaces de obtener ganancias”, dijo Gallegos en español.

Gallegos y su personal pueden atender a 12 niños, pero hay otros 14 en lista de espera.

Mientras que los bajos salarios y la alta rotación plagaron el cuidado infantil temprano antes de la pandemia, COVID-19 causó una crisis, ya que la escasez de instalaciones y trabajadores se agudizó, dijo Alicia Borrego, directora ejecutiva de la Asociación para la Educación de Niños Pequeños de New Mexico.

“De repente hubo una escasez aún peor de guarderías, la gente no tenía dónde llevar a sus hijos”, dijo Borrego. “Conozco varios centros de cuidado infantil a lo largo de todo el estado que tienen una lista de espera de más de 1,000 niños tratando de entrar al cuidado infantil”.

### New Mexico mantiene los programas de asequibilidad de cuidado infantil y los salarios para los proveedores

El financiamiento para la exención estatal y el salario mínimo de \$15 por hora no está totalmente prometido más allá de 2023.

McCoy dijo que la agencia tiene fondos federales por una única vez para eximir el copago y el salario mínimo de \$15 por hora para este año fiscal. Dijo que espera que el estado mantenga los fondos en los próximos años.

“Tenemos la esperanza de que podamos trabajar con la Legislatura en

los próximos años para asegurar que la asistencia de cuidado infantil esté totalmente financiada para que las familias puedan disfrutar de una mayor estabilidad financiera y los niños puedan seguir creciendo y desarrollándose en entornos de aprendizaje temprano de alta calidad”, dijo.

Dijo que “salvo imprevistos”, el Departamento debe tener fondos suficientes para continuar la asistencia de cuidado infantil y eximir copagos hasta junio de 2024.

Si esa exención de copago desaparece, Diana Gonzales, madre y miembro de los Organizadores en la Tierra del Encanto, no podría permitirse enviar a sus hijos a la guardería. Es madre de dos hijos y gana unos \$20.000 dólares al año como entrenadora física.

La mayor parte de su sueldo se destina a arriendo y otra parte importante a la compra de comestibles, lo que deja poco dinero para las necesidades del cuidado infantil. Dice que si tuviera que cubrir el copago, tendría que encontrar otro trabajo o a otra persona que cuidara de sus hijos, pero que tendría problemas financieros de cualquier forma.

Dijo que los educadores de la primera infancia la ayudan a ella y a muchos otros padres que tienen trabajo a cuidar y enseñar a sus hijos. Dice que eso es un trabajo duro que debe ser remunerado adecuadamente.

“No tenemos el tiempo necesario para enseñarles las habilidades básicas y conseguir ese aprendizaje y conocimiento que necesitan”, dijo Gonzales.

En la guardería Avengers, Mejía dijo que asisten regularmente más de 70 niños. Dijo que muchos de sus clientes también tendrían dificultades para pagar enviar a sus hijos allí sin que el Estado les eximiera de los pagos.

Mejía dijo que un cliente tendría que pagar \$2.000 dólares de su sueldo mensual de \$3.000 dólares para mantener a sus hijos en la guardería. La madre ya le ha dicho a Mejía que no puede pagar eso, así que si tuviera que cubrir el copago, dijo Mejía, entonces tendría que enviar a sus hijos a otro lugar.

“Todo es muy caro”, dijo Mejía. “Las familias necesitan más dinero”.

Lourdes Pérez, de 35 años, trabaja en el campo, recogiendo cebollas y chiles durante los meses de verano y otoño.

Pérez dijo que era difícil encontrar

una guardería que aceptara los horarios tempranos -dejar a los niños a las 4 a.m. y recogerlos después de la escuela-, pero también por la barrera del idioma entre ella y los educadores tempranos.

“Entiendo más (inglés) de lo que puedo hablar”, dijo Pérez en español. “Especialmente cuando vas a un centro donde la gente no te ve ni te habla si no hablas inglés, es una barrera”.

Si pierde la exención de copago, o Kelly’s cierra, dijo que no hay una buena alternativa para cuatro de sus seis hijos.

“Siempre me pregunto qué pasaría si cerraran el centro”, dijo Pérez. “Odiaría que cerrara, porque los padres tienen dificultades para encontrar cuidado infantil”.

*Megan Gleason is a Reporting Fellow with Source New Mexico. Danielle Prokop es reportera de Source New Mexico. Este artículo ha sido publicado por Source New Mexico bajo una licencia Creative Commons. Traducido por Denise García, intérprete de Juniper Language Translation.*

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## Hastings &amp; Torres/Esp

medios informativos han estado reportando sobre el abandono de los campos de Florida y de las construcciones, sobre todo, donde la mano de obra es básicamente migrante. La discriminación y el acoso, por otro lado, serán también una constante, especialmente por quienes se han puesto del lado de una de las leyes más antiinmigrantes de la historia de Estados Unidos.

Y aunque la ventaja que tenía DeSantis sobre Trump en la preferencia de los votantes republicanos se ha desvanecido, la realidad sigue siendo igual. Las dos figuras que hasta el momento despuntan en la ruta electoral del Partido Republicano son antiinmigrantes probados. Uno, Trump, usó la presidencia y el consejo de asesores extremistas como Stephen Miller para encabezar una de las cruzadas más duras y crueles contra los migrantes, incluyendo separar bebés de sus madres, muchos de los cuales ni siquiera han sido reunificados.

El otro, DeSantis, pupilo de Trump caído de su gracia, es otro antiinmigrante que ha desatado una guerra cultural en un estado multicultural como la Florida, metiendo las narices hasta en los libros de texto que deben asignarse en las escuelas, en los derechos reproductivos de la mujer y en los derechos de la comunidad LGBTQ+.

Es decir, tanto Trump como DeSantis se han destacado como los ejemplos más claros de esa profunda división entre la idea de Estados Unidos como una nación incluyente, multicultural y tolerante, y un país racista, xenófobo y antiinmigrante. Los dos no han dudado en apostar por el desprendimiento, tanto estatal como nacional, de Estados Unidos como eje de las libertades, y lo han querido llevar a la antecámara de la

intolerancia, así como otros personajes que antaño se inclinaron por el nazi-fascismo en otras latitudes, llevando a sus sociedades y al mundo hacia un callejón sin salida.

Además, aparte de su guerra corporativa contra Disney que ya le está costando millones de dólares al estado, DeSantis se propuso repetir en Florida lo que hace más de una década hicieron, sin éxito, otros estados republicanos como Arizona en 2010 y Alabama en 2011: tratar de convertirse en el epicentro de la guerra contra la migración indocumentada.

Lo que Arizona y Alabama aprendieron de inmediato es que entre la retórica y la realidad hay un espacio enorme, y que por más que en su miopía quieran hacer creer que de un dedazo pueden deshacerse de los indocumentados, son sus estados los que sufren serias consecuencias, particularmente en la economía.

En Alabama, por ejemplo, la [HB 56](#) se promulgó curiosamente hace casi 12 años, el 9 de junio de 2011. Uno de los efectos inmediatos fue la salida de inmigrantes indocumentados de los puestos que ocupaban, sobre todo en la agricultura. [America’s Voice en Español](#) reportó de primera mano sobre la desesperación de los agricultores al ver que sus cosechas se estaban pudriendo por la falta de mano de obra que el entonces gobernador republicano, Robert J. Bentley, satanizó gracias a una medida escrita en gran parte por una de las figuras más antiinmigrantes del país, Kris Kobach, entonces Secretario de Estado de Kansas y actual procurador del mismo estado.

Vimos de primera mano cómo los negocios donde esos migrantes compraban sus alimentos, ropa, se corta-

ban el pelo, o llevaban sus autos a lavar o a arreglar, perdieron de la noche a la mañana miles de clientes.

Vimos también el impacto directo sobre los hijos ciudadanos de padres indocumentados. Algunos por temor a ser detenidos y deportados dejaron de enviar a sus hijos ciudadanos a las escuelas, o incluso al doctor, aunque estuvieran enfermos, lo que generó preocupación entre los sectores de [salubridad](#).

Es el anterior un escenario de terror que se prevé ocurra nuevamente, ahora en Florida, afectando otra vez a las poblaciones más vulnerables del país, entre las que por supuesto se encuentran en primer lugar los migrantes indocumentados y sus familias, a los que este tipo de leyes tratan con desprecio, a pesar del beneficio económico que su mano de obra representa para fortalecer las finanzas de los estados donde viven y trabajan arduamente.

No ver eso ahora es como caer en ese viejo adagio de las sociedades que declinan: quienes no conocen su historia están condenados a repetirla.

Es decir, cuando se promulga una ley antiinmigrante, como acaba de hacer DeSantis —solamente con el fin de demostrar a la base de su también antiinmigrante rival político, Trump, que puede ser tan o más cruel que su líder—, la realidad no tarda en dar sus lecciones históricas, las que un terco y necio Partido Republicano parece que no ha querido aprender.

*Maribel Hastings es Asesora Ejecutiva de América’s Voice. David Torres es Asesor en Español de América’s Voice.*

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Migrants

More than 10,000 migrants

By 10 a.m. on May 22, 96 people had already entered Denver's processing center to either find shelter or be sent to their final destination — some leaving after only arriving that morning.

As of May 22, the city has served more than 10,000 migrants since December, according to [Denver's Office of Emergency Management](#). The migrants have flowed through the processing center in the city, with the majority going off to cities like New York or Chicago, but others have wanted to stay in Denver. Those migrants, about 1,200, have been staying at one of five shelters the city is running, relying mostly on faith-based organizations for staffing and space, according to com-

munity engagement officer Jill Lis at the city's Department of Housing Stability.

In mid-May, Lis said the recent influx of migrants seemed to have been mellowing, but this was before May 18, which saw a bus of 41 migrants chartered to Denver by Texas officials. The biggest influx of migrants since the winter occurred from May 1 to May 10, according to the [city's data dashboard](#), and it has stayed relatively stable since.

*Andrew Fraieli is a freelance journalist and editor-in-chief of the Homeless Voice. This article is republished from Colorado Newswire under a Creative Commons license.*

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Torres

the Denver 7 News Voter Guide interview that "in November, there's three seats up [for DPS Board] and I would advocate for three people in November who restore confidence that they're running our school district." This approach appears to this writer as undue influence from the Mayor's Office into the DPS School Board; would Ms. Brough invite such DPS intrusion into the Denver Mayor's Office?

To reiterate about the "Latino Leaders" interviews, education was a major issue for them, with 10 sub-topical questions. One stands out for this "Mayor's Office vs. DPS Board" issue, as I call it. The question was #29 of the total questions, "Supports rejecting ballot initiatives to change DPS governance structures." Mr. Johnston's answer was a clear "Yes" to support rejecting such an initiative, supporting DPS self-governance. Ms. Brough

received a "?" score, that is, the Latino leaders judgment was that her answer, or answers, were equivocal, not directly rejecting such Mayoral involvement.

For question #27, about preventing "school closures by providing affordable and family friendly housing (that are not microunits)," similarly Mr. Johnston received a "Yes" score, and Ms. Brough, a "?" rating, indicating, again, that Mr. Johnston's remarks were more attuned to the Latino Leaders group perspective.

With education as an issue representing other areas, this brings us back to our original topic for this article. We are not endorsing one candidate over another. Rather, we ask, can we get out the votes of Latina/o eligible voters in Denver to actually vote on June 6? Recent trends are promising. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, nationally

Hispanic (their term) voters increased from 48% of their eligible voters actually voting in 2016, to 54% voting in 2020 for the Presidential-year vote (U.S. Census, "Record High Turnout in 2020..."). In Colorado in 2020, with 21.7% of the population, Latinos represented 15.9% of the eligible voters (Pew Research, "Mapping the 2020 Latino Electorate). However, we must factor in that we are a very young population, with for Hispanics a "median age in 2020 was 30.0... [but] the non-Hispanic population was older... median age was 41.1" (U.S. Census Bureau, "Hispanic Population is Younger..." May 25, 2023), and the younger the voter, often the less voter participation rate. An overarching reason to vote is that "children of Hispanic or Latino origin in 2020 made up a quarter of all children under age 18 in the United States" (U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanic Population is Younger...").

Finally, considering the need for advances in such Latina/o issues as the above, and the need for our voices to be heard and our votes to be counted, *El Semanario* recommends and even exhorts Latinas/os to vote June 6... and remember, the Presidential race of 2024 looms on the horizon.

Luis Torres, Ph.D. for The Weekly Issue/*El Semanario*.

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## Vasquez

it's not because migrant farmworkers are unwilling to make their voices heard. These workers are hard to reach because of the nature of their work.

Farmworkers are also fully aware of the consequences of speaking to a reporter—employers of H-2A workers can covertly blacklist them from being able to legally work in the U.S. Retaliatory employers have threatened undocumented farmworkers with immigration enforcement for detailing wage theft and other abuses. More often than not, these workers choose to speak out anyway.

Once I was tapped in, one worker led to another. I tuned in to a chorus of voices and an avalanche of stories. There was no way to ignore farmworkers' decades-long fight to be heard. In recent years alone, they have inspired berry boycotts and changed the face of labor organizing through efforts like the Milk With Dignity Program and the Fair Food Program. In Florida, they marched 45 miles to demand that companies such as Publix, Wendy's, and Kroger provide farmworkers with better working conditions and wages.

In California, farmworkers marched 335 miles to the state capital to urge the governor to sign a bill that would have made it easier for them to vote in unions.

The appalling injustices farmworkers experience in the U.S. are not the result of a few bad apples in the agricultural industry. Their mistreatment is cemented into law by way of the Fair Labor Standards Act, which denies agricultural workers the bare minimum: a livable wage and overtime pay, while failing to mandate access to shade and water. These racist exclusions from basic labor protections have literally cost farmworkers their lives. But when their co-workers die in the fields from thirst and heat exposure, they protest. They strike. Farmworkers fight back.

The most important public data we have about abuse in the agricultural industry exists because farmworkers risked it all to speak truth to power. The media's portrayal of farmworkers as meek, scared, and hiding in the shadows flies in the face of what they have shown us: an unquenchable thirst for justice and a deep, abiding hunger for

accountability—two things that have been denied to them for far too long.

Until we truly reckon with the almighty agricultural industry that abuses our farmworkers with impunity, there can be no future where agriculture miraculously saves us from the damage already wrought on our agri-food systems. Without significant steps to ensure dignity and safety for the workers who nourish us—hundreds of thousands of whom come to the U.S. each year as part of a federal program that functions as a form of indentured servitude—we are doomed to continue perpetuating these cycles of harm.

*Tina Vasquez is a movement journalist who has reported on immigration, reproductive injustice, gender, food, labor, and culture for more than a decade. She is the editor-at-large for Prism and a board member at Southern journalism collective Press On. This commentary is republished from YES! Magazine.org, under a Creative Commons license.*

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## Build

its for resettlement. They call for state legislators and the Governor and to prioritize effective policies like master leasing and rent control for newcomers and unhoused or housing insecure Coloradans alike as well as lead efforts to welcome folks to areas outside Metro Denver.

Everyday people and small nonprofits worked with an estimated 30,000 newcomers to Colorado this year, quietly integrating people into daily life in Summit County, Morgan County, Larimer County and the Metro area.

On May 11, President Biden's asylum ban began. Over 51,000 people in the US submitted comments opposing the ban before it went into effect. The

ban makes approaching a port of entry to ask for asylum at the US southern or northern borders impossible in practice. Border Patrol immediately began turning people away, trapping them between walls on the US-Mexico border without shelter or food. The Biden Administration has continued construction of Trump's wall and is about to destroy historic Friendship Park in San Diego. On April 12, Denver began excluding people who are undocumented newcomers from shelter stays, going against our cities' commitment to fair treatment.

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## Fossil Fuels

relationships with lands being sacrificed to oil and gas, like the Greater Chaco landscape, when they have stewarded these ancestral lands since time immemorial," said Julia Bernal, Executive Director of Pueblo Action Alliance. "We are at the epicenter of these fights and it is imperative that Indigenous people and their knowledge of the landscape be centered in solutions for land management decisions to address the oil and gas industry, the global climate crisis, and to ensure better land and water practices that absorb the shock of climate change."

Since 2016, Indigenous, environmental, and social justice organizations have delivered millions of public comments challenging Bureau of Land Management lease sales in New Mexico, but the agency continues to lease more lands for oil and gas extraction.

Advocates urge that the Bureau finally take this resounding public protest to heart, and incorporate a plan to stop leasing public and ancestral lands for extraction as part of the proposed rule.

"This rule is an opportunity to right the wrongs of the federal leasing program, but we are still fighting Dirty Deals that continue the legacy of fossil fuel sacrifice zones," said Rebecca Sobel, Organizing Director for WildEarth Guardians. "Every new well drilled is another nail in the coffin for communities who cannot afford to wait for an end to the destruction of clean air, clean water, and healthy lands. In the courts and in the streets, the calls to end the era of fossil fuels are resounding."

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## Kendrick

Child Tax Credit cut child poverty nearly in half.

Combined with the direct stimulus payments, the American Rescue Plan brought poverty down by 22 percent, illustrating that poverty is indeed a political choice in America. By July 2022, the unemployment level had fallen to a 50-year low of 3.5 percent.

With pandemic aid expired, those gains are being reversed. More of us will have to choose between paying for health care and car repairs, or between putting food on the table and seeing a dentist.

We need stronger safety net protections that won't be torn away by lawmakers or complicated eligibility requirements. But now whenever I turn on the news, I hear politicians demanding we slash human needs programs even further so they can extend tax giveaways to the very wealthy. How is that fair?

That's why I've joined the Poor People's Campaign — a movement led by people like me, impacted by policies that harm the poor in order to help the wealthy. We know that proper social investments keep us out of poverty, drastically reduce unemployment, and give lifelong positive benefits to children. So we're fighting back.

In the world's wealthiest country, we must learn this lesson and move in that direction again — not away from it. Join us.

*Joyce Kendrick is the Southwest Ohio co-leader of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival. This op-ed was distributed by OtherWords.org.*

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## Construya

alquileres para los recién llegados y los habitantes de Colorado sin vivienda o con vivienda insegura por igual, así como para liderar los esfuerzos para dar la bienvenida a la gente a las áreas fuera del área metropolitana de Denver.

La gente común y las pequeñas organizaciones sin fines de lucro trabajaron con aproximadamente 30,000 recién llegados a Colorado este año, integrando tranquilamente a las personas en la vida diaria en el condado de Summit, el condado de Morgan, el condado de Larimer y el área metropolitana.

El 11 de mayo comenzó la prohibición de asilo del presidente Biden. Más de 51.000 personas en los EE. UU. enviaron comentarios oponiéndose a la prohibición antes de que entrara en vig-

or. La prohibición hace que acercarse a un puerto de entrada para pedir asilo en las fronteras sur o norte de EE. UU. sea imposible en la práctica. La Patrulla Fronteriza inmediatamente comenzó a rechazar a las personas, atrapándolas entre muros en la frontera entre Estados Unidos y México sin refugio ni comida. La Administración Biden ha continuado con la construcción del muro de Trump y está a punto de destruir el histórico Parque de la Amistad en San Diego. El 12 de abril, Denver comenzó a excluir a las personas indocumentadas recién llegadas de las estancias en albergues, yendo en contra del compromiso de nuestras ciudades con el trato justo.

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## Arsenic



A rainstorm hits the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, whose snowmelt and rainfall drain into Colorado's San Luis Valley, replenishing aquifers, in September 2022. / Una tormenta de lluvia golpea las montañas Sangre de Cristo, cuyo deshielo y lluvia drenan hacia el Valle de San Luis en Colorado, reponiendo los acuíferos, en septiembre de 2022. (Photo/Foto: Melissa Bailey for KFF Health News)



Sally Wier, who lives in Rio Grande County, Colorado, is working on innovative ways to replenish local aquifers as a conservation project manager for Colorado Open Lands. / Sally Wier, que vive en el condado de Rio Grande (Colorado), trabaja en formas innovadoras de reabastecer los acuíferos locales como gestora de proyectos de conservación para Colorado Open Lands. (Photo/Foto: Melissa Bailey for KFF Health News)

from it until she tests for arsenic and E. coli, which are common in the area. As she awaits test results, she has been hauling 5-gallon jugs of water from her father's house each time she spends the weekend at her newly constructed yurt.

### A Colorless, Odorless Threat

Meanwhile, Julie Zahringer, whose family settled in the valley from Spain nearly 400 years ago, has been watching water-quality trends firsthand. Zahringer, 47, grew up driving a tractor on her grandfather's ranch near San Luis, Colorado's oldest town — and hanging out in the lab with her mother, a scientist.

As a chemist and laboratory director of SDC Laboratory in Alamosa, Zahringer tests private and public

drinking water in the valley. She estimated that 25% of the private wells tested by her lab show elevated arsenic.

"It's colorless, it's odorless," Zahringer said. "Most families don't know if they're drinking arsenic."

To Zahringer, the link to climate seems clear: During dry periods, a well that usually hovers around 10 µg/L of arsenic may easily double or triple in concentration, she said. One possible reason is that there's less water to dilute the natural contaminants in the soil, though other factors are at play. The arsenic levels used to be fairly stable, she said, but after 20 years of drought, they're fluctuating wildly.

"Now, more and more rapidly, I'm seeing the same well that I just test-

ed three years ago — it doesn't even look like the same well" because levels of contaminants have risen so much, said Zahringer, who also serves as a member of the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission. At her own drinking well, the arsenic level jumped from 13 to 20 µg/L this year, she said.

Zahringer's observations are important firsthand anecdotes. James aims to explore, in a rigorous scientific study with a representative sample of wells and extensive geochemical data, the prevalence of arsenic and its connection to drought.

Research is still in the early stages, but scientists have several hypotheses for how drought could affect arsenic in drinking water.

In the San Joaquin Valley, a major agricultural hub in California, research led by hydrologist Ryan Smith linked rising arsenic in groundwater to "land subsidence," a phenomenon first documented in Vietnam.

Land subsidence — when the ground sinks due to aquifer overpumping — appears to release arsenic from the clay into the water, said Smith, an assistant professor at Colorado State University. In California, the overpumping was strongly correlated to drought, he said.

However, other factors, such as how deep a well is, also play a role: Another study of the same California aquifer system found that while arsenic increased in deeper groundwater, it decreased in shallower water due in part to oxidation.

Smith is now working with James in the San Luis Valley study, where he hopes a wealth of geochemical data will offer more answers.

Meanwhile, community leaders in the valley are adapting in impressive and innovative ways, James said.

Zahringer said if arsenic shows up in a private well, she encourages clients to install reverse osmosis water filtration at the kitchen sink. The equipment costs about \$300 from an outside supplier, though filters costing less than \$50 may need to be changed every six to 18 months, she said. People who treat their water for arsenic should continue to test every six months to make sure the filters are effective, said Zahringer. SDC Laboratory offers an arsenic test for \$25.

"People don't want to test their water because it tastes good and their grandpa drank it," she said. But "the cure for it is so easy."

A water-quality campaign in 2009, led by the San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council, also found elevated arsenic in wells across the valley. As part of its outreach, the nonprofit worked with real estate agents to make sure that domestic wells are tested before someone buys a home.

That's what Sally Wier did when she bought a house five years ago on an 8-acre plot in Rio Grande County surrounded by fields of barley and alfalfa. The first time she tested her well, the arsenic level was 47 µg/L, nearly five times the EPA's limit. Wier installed a reverse osmosis water filtration system, but she said the arsenic level rises before she changes the filters every few months.

"It makes me really anxious," said Wier, 38. "I'm probably ingesting arsenic. That is not good for long-term health."

Wier is one of many people working on innovative solutions to the water shortage. As a conservation project manager for Colorado Open Lands, she worked on a deal by which a local farmer, Ron Bowman, was paid to stop irrigating his 1,800-acre farm. The deal marks the first time in the country that a conservation easement has been used to save groundwater for aquifer replenishment, Wier said.

### Funneling Money Toward a Solution

In Costilla County, the Move Mountains Youth Project has been paying local farmers, through a government grant, to convert a portion of their land to grow vegetables instead of water-intensive alfalfa. Farmers then train youth to grow crops like broccoli, spinach, and bolita beans, which are sold at a local grocery store. The project aims to nurture the next generation of farmers, and "beat diabetes" by providing locally grown food, said executive director Shirley Romero Otero. Her group worked with three farmers last summer and plans to work with seven this season, if enough water is available, she said.

In another effort, farmers like the Mestas are taxing themselves to draw water from their own irrigation wells. And Simpson, of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District, recently secured \$30 million in federal money to support water conservation. The plan includes paying farmers \$3,000 per acre-foot of water to permanently retire their irrigation wells.

Since arsenic is not limited to private wells, public agencies have responded, too: The city of Alamosa built a new water treatment plant in 2008 to bring its arsenic levels into compliance with federal standards. In 2020, the state of Colorado sued an Alamosa mushroom farm for exposing its workers to arsenic in tap water.

At the High Valley Park mobile home community in Alamosa County, a well serving 85 people has exceeded legal arsenic levels since 2006, when the Environmental Protection Agency tightened its standard from 50 to 10 µg/L. At the most recent test in February, the concentration was 19 µg/L.

On an April afternoon, four children bounced on a trampoline and chased one another up a tree.

"Uncle, I'm thirsty and there's no bottled water left," said one child, catching her breath.

The well serves 28 households. But tenants from five homes said they haven't been drinking the water for years, not because of arsenic — which some said they were not aware of — but because the water often comes out brown.

Eduardo Rodríguez, 29, who works in excavation, said he buys two cases of bottled water every week for his wife and five children.

"It needs to be fixed," he said.

"The water sucks," agreed Craig Nelson, 51, who has lived in the mobile home park for two years. "You don't drink it." Because the well serves at least 25 people, it is regulated by the state.

Landlord Rob Treat, of Salida, bought the property in February 2022 for nearly half a million dollars. Getting arsenic within federal standards has been difficult, he said, because arsenic levels fluctuate when nearby farmers tap the aquifer to irrigate their crops. Treat was using chlorine to con-

## Workers

Even at \$20 per hour, she said most of her paycheck goes to rent, leaving little left over for other necessities.

In addition to needing more to pay for basic expenses, Natachu said providers should be paid adequately for the experience they bring to the field.

“We really want the public to know we are not babysitters,” she said. “We have the education to teach children, the youngest children in New Mexico, to become independent, to help them with their milestones.”

Natachu said a wage and career ladder would help workers get paid better. This would be a system to compensate teachers more based on additional years of experience, education or speaking multiple languages.

Micah McCoy, spokesperson for the state Department, said creating this system is the first objective in its [five-year strategic plan](#).

He said the agency also has a wage ladder in its four-year finance plan and cost model, which would reimburse early childhood providers based on “assumed increases in wages for increased levels of qualifications.”

Karen Mejía owns the Avengers Learning Center with her husband. She pays her dozen or so employees the minimum \$15 per hour because she can’t afford more than that. She said her workers used to get even less, before the statewide \$3 boost.

Because of low wages, Mejía said, it’s been difficult finding people who

want to work at daycares. She said public school districts or even chain stores like Walmart or Costco pay more.

“I need more money for my teachers, workers,” she said.

The wage increase will be a relief for employees, said Merline Gallegos, the director of Kelly’s Learning Academy.

“We’re just recovering, we’re floating, just enough to pay the bills, pay the workers, but we are not able to make a profit,” Gallegos said in Spanish.

Gallegos and her staff are able to care for 12 children, but there are another 14 on the waiting list.

While low wages and high turnover plagued early child care before the pandemic, COVID-19 caused a crisis, as a shortage of facilities and workers became acute, said Alicia Borrego, executive director for New Mexico Association for the Education of Young Children.

“All of a sudden there’s an even worse child care shortage, people didn’t have a place to take their kids,” Borrego said. “I know several child care centers across the state that have a waiting list of over 1,000 kids trying to get into child care.”

#### **New Mexico maintains child care affordability programs and wages for providers**

Funding for the state waiver and minimum \$15 per hour wage isn’t fully promised beyond 2023.

McCoy said the agency has one-time federal funds to waive the copay and \$15 per hour minimum wage for this fiscal year. He said he hopes the state will keep funds coming in future years.

“We are hopeful that we can work with the Legislature in coming years to ensure that child care assistance is fully funded so that families can enjoy increased financial stability and children can continue to grow and develop in high quality early learning environments,” he said.

He said “barring the unanticipated,” the Department should have enough funds to continue the child care assistance and waive copays through June 2024.

If that copay waiver disappears, Diana Gonzales, a parent and member of the Organizers in the Land of Enchantment, couldn’t afford to send her children to day care. She’s a mom of two and makes about \$20,000 a year as a physical trainer.

Most of her paycheck goes to rent and another significant chunk goes to groceries, which leaves little funds left over for child care needs. She said if she had to cover the copay, she’d have to find another job or someone else to take care of her children, but would struggle financially either way.

She said early childhood educators help her and many other parents who have jobs in watching over and teaching their children. She said that’s

hard work which needs to be paid adequately.

“We don’t have the time needed to teach them the basic skills and to get that learning and knowledge that they need,” Gonzales said.

At the Avengers day care center, Mejía said over 70 children attend regularly. She said many of her clients would also struggle to afford sending their kids there without the state waiving their payments.

Mejía said one client would have to pay \$2,000 out of her \$3,000 monthly paycheck to keep her kids at the center. The parent has already told Mejía she can’t afford that, so if she had to cover the copay, Mejía said, then she would have to send their kids somewhere else.

“Everything is really expensive,” Mejía said. “The families need more money.”

Lourdes Pérez, 35, works in the fields, picking onions and chiles during the summer and fall months.

Pérez said it was difficult to find child care that would accept the early

hours – dropping children off at 4 a.m. and picking them up after school – but also because of the language barrier between herself and early educators.

“I understand more (English) than what I can speak,” Pérez said in Spanish. “Especially when you go to a center where people will not see you or talk to you when you don’t speak English, it’s a barrier.”

If she loses the copay waiver, or the Kelly’s closes, she said there’s no good alternative for four of her six children.

“I’m always wondering what would happen if they closed the center,” Pérez said. “I would hate for it to close, because parents are struggling to find child care.”

*Megan Gleason is a Reporting Fellow with Source New Mexico. Danielle Prokop is a Reporter with Source New Mexico. This article is republished from Source New Mexico under a Creative Commons license.*

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## Arsénico



Craig Nelson, afuera de su remolque en el parque de casas móviles High Valley en el condado de Alamosa, Colorado, dice que el agua no ha sido potable durante años, debido al arsénico y los sedimentos marrones. / Craig Nelson, outside his trailer at High Valley Park mobile home park in Alamosa County, Colorado, says the water has been undrinkable for years, due to arsenic and brown sediment. (Foto/Photo: Melissa Bailey for KFF Health News)



El río Conejos aporta el agua que tanto necesita el valle de San Luis, en Colorado, donde sólo llueve una media de 20 cm al año. / The Conejos River brings much-needed water through Colorado's San Luis Valley, which averages only 7 inches of rain a year. (Foto/Photo: Melissa Bailey for KFF Health News)

Pero desde 2002, el acuífero no confinado del valle ha perdido 1 millón de acres-pie de agua, o suficiente para cubrir 1 millón de acres de tierra con un pie de agua de profundidad, debido a la sequía persistente y el uso excesivo. Ahora las comunidades del valle enfrentan una fecha límite para reponer el acuífero, o enfrentar el cierre estatal de cientos de pozos de riego.

“Estamos una década adelante de lo que está sucediendo en el resto de Colorado” debido a la intensidad de la escasez de agua, dijo Simpson, quien administra el Río Grande Water Conservation District.

“Esto ya no es una sequía, esto es realmente la desertificación del Oeste”, dijo Simpson. Así es como los científicos describen una tendencia a

largo plazo hacia la sequedad y aridez persistentes que solo puede detenerse abordando el cambio climático causado por los humanos.

James, quien es epidemióloga e ingeniera, ha estado estudiando las conexiones entre el clima y la salud en el valle durante los últimos 15 años. Descubrió que durante las tormentas de polvo en el Valle de San Luis, que se han vuelto más frecuentes, más personas llegan al hospital por ataques de asma. Y ha encuestado a los trabajadores agrícolas sobre cómo la sequía está afectando su salud mental.

En el estudio de los pozos domésticos, James se está centrando en el arsénico, que según dijo ha ido aumentando gradualmente en los pozos de agua potable del valle en los últimos 50 años. Los niveles de arsénico en el

agua subterránea del Valle de San Luis son “considerablemente más altos que en muchas otras áreas de los Estados Unidos”, según James. También está investigando las disparidades étnicas, ya que un estudio mostró que los adultos hispanos tenían niveles más altos de arsénico en su orina que los adultos blancos no hispanos. (Las personas hispanas pueden ser de cualquier raza o combinación de razas).

Ahora, James tiene como objetivo analizar 1,000 pozos privados en el valle para explorar las conexiones entre la sequía, la calidad del agua y la salud. Hasta ahora, dijo que una pequeña proporción de los pozos muestra niveles elevados de metales pesados, incluyendo arsénico, uranio, tungsteno y manganeso, que se encuentran naturalmente en el suelo.

A diferencia de los suministros públicos de agua, los pozos domésticos privados no están regulados y pueden pasar años sin ser analizados. James ofrece pruebas de agua gratuitas y consultas sobre los resultados a los participantes. En el condado de Conejos, la hija de John Mestas, Angie Mestas, aprovechó la oportunidad de hacer una prueba gratuita, que costaría \$195 en un laboratorio local.

Angie, maestra de 35 años, dijo que utilizó los ahorros de toda una vida para perforar un pozo de agua potable en su terreno, un campo abierto de hierba chamisa con vistas panorámicas a las Colinas de San Luis. Pero no beberá de este pozo hasta que se realicen pruebas de arsénico y E. coli, que son comunes en la zona.

Mientras espera los resultados de las pruebas, ha estado llevando barriles de agua de 5 galones desde la casa de su padre cada vez que pasa el fin de semana en su nueva carpa.

### Amenaza sin olor ni color

Mientras tanto, Julie Zahringer, cuya familia se estableció en el valle desde España hace casi 400 años, ha estado observando las tendencias de calidad del agua de primera mano.

Zahringer, de 47 años, creció conduciendo un tractor en el rancho de su abuelo cerca de San Luis, la ciudad más antigua de Colorado, y pasó tiempo en el laboratorio con su madre, que es científica.

Como química y directora de laboratorio de SDC Laboratory en Alamosa, Zahringer analiza el agua potable privada y pública en el valle. Estimó que el 25% de los pozos privados analizados por su laboratorio muestran niveles elevados de arsénico. “Es incoloro, es inodoro”, dijo Zahringer. “La mayoría de las familias no saben si están bebiendo arsénico”.

Para ella, el vínculo con el clima parece claro: durante los períodos de sequía, un pozo que normalmente tiene alrededor de 10 µg/L de arsénico puede fácilmente duplicar o triplicar su concentración, dijo. Una posible razón es que hay menos agua para diluir los contaminantes naturales del suelo, aunque también intervienen otros factores.

Dijo que los niveles de arsénico solían ser bastante estables, pero después de 20 años de sequía, fluctúan de manera descontrolada.

“Ahora, cada vez más rápido, veo el mismo pozo que analicé hace tres años, y ni siquiera parece el mismo” porque los niveles de contaminantes han aumentado tanto, dijo Zahringer, quien también es miembro de la Comisión de Control de Calidad del Agua de Colorado.

En su propio pozo de agua potable, el nivel de arsénico aumentó de 13 a 20 µg/L este año, dijo.

Las observaciones de Zahringer son importantes historias de primera mano. James tiene como objetivo explorar, en un estudio científico riguroso con una muestra representativa de pozos y datos geoquímicos extensos, la prevalencia del arsénico y su conexión con la sequía.

La investigación todavía se encuentra en etapas iniciales, pero los científicos tienen varias hipótesis sobre cómo la sequía podría afectar el arsénico en el agua potable. En el Valle de San Joaquín, un importante centro agrícola en California, la investigación liderada por el experto en hidráulica Ryan Smith relacionó el aumento de arsénico en las aguas subterráneas con el hundimiento del terreno, un fenómeno documentado por primera vez en Vietnam.

El hundimiento del terreno, cuando el suelo se hunde debido a la sobreexplotación de los acuíferos, parece liberar arsénico de la arcilla hacia el agua, dijo Smith, profesor asistente de la Universidad Estatal de Colorado. En California, la sobreexplotación estaba fuertemente correlacionada con la sequía, agregó.

Sin embargo, otros factores, como la profundidad de un pozo, también juegan un papel: otro estudio del mismo sistema de acuíferos en California encontró que mientras el arsénico aumentaba en las aguas subterráneas más profundas, disminuía en las aguas más superficiales debido, en parte, a la oxidación.

Smith está trabajando ahora con James en el estudio del Valle de San Luis, donde espera que una gran cantidad de datos geoquímicos brinden más respuestas. Mientras tanto, los líderes comunitarios en el valle se están adaptando de formas impresionantes e innovadoras, dijo James.

Zahringer dijo que si el arsénico aparece en un pozo privado, anima a los clientes a instalar un sistema de filtración de agua por ósmosis inversa en el fregadero de la cocina. El equipo cuesta alrededor de \$300 con un proveedor externo, aunque los filtros que cuestan menos de \$50 pueden necesitar cambiarse cada seis a 18 meses, dijo.

Aquellas personas que tratan su agua para eliminar el arsénico deben seguir realizando pruebas cada seis meses para asegurarse de que los filtros sean efectivos, agregó Zahringer. SDC Laboratory ofrece una prueba de arsénico por \$25.

“A las personas no les gusta analizar el agua porque sabe bien y sus abuelos la bebían”, dijo. Pero “la solución es tan fácil”.

Una campaña de calidad del agua en 2009, liderada por el Consejo del Ecosistema del Valle de San Luis, también encontró niveles elevados de arsénico en los pozos a lo largo del valle. Como parte de sus actividades, la organización sin fines de lucro trabajó con agentes inmobiliarios para asegurarse de que los pozos domésticos sean analizados antes de que alguien compra una casa.

Eso es lo que hizo Sally Wier cuando compró una casa hace cinco años en una parcela de 8 acres en el condado de Río Grande, rodeada de campos de cebada y alfalfa. La primera vez que probó su pozo, el nivel de arsénico era de 47 µg/L, casi cinco veces más del límite establecido por la Agencia de



## Arsénico

Protección Ambiental (EPA). Wier instaló un sistema de filtración de agua por ósmosis inversa, pero dijo que el nivel de arsénico aumenta antes de que cambie los filtros cada pocos meses.

“Me pone muy ansiosa”, dijo Wier, de 38 años. “Probablemente estoy ingiriendo arsénico. Eso no es bueno para la salud a largo plazo”.

Wier es una de muchas personas que trabajan en soluciones innovadoras para la escasez de agua. Como gerente de proyectos de conservación en Colorado Open Lands, trabajó en un acuerdo mediante el cual se le pagó a un agricultor local, Ron Bowman, para que dejara de regar su granja de 1,800 acres. Según Wier, este acuerdo marca la primera vez en el país que se utiliza un acuerdo de uso de conservación para salvar agua subterránea y reponer acuíferos.

## Canalizando dinero hacia una solución

En el condado de Costilla, el Move Mountains Youth Project ha estado pagando a agricultores locales, a través de una subvención gubernamental, para que conviertan una parte de sus tierras en cultivos de vegetales en lugar de cultivos de alfalfa que requieren mucha agua.

Los agricultores luego entrenan a los jóvenes para cultivar brócoli, espinaca y frijoles bolita, que se venden en una tienda de comestibles local. El proyecto tiene como objetivo fomentar la próxima generación de agricultores y “combatir la diabetes” al proporcionar alimentos cultivados localmente, dijo la directora ejecutiva Shirley Romero Otero.

Su grupo trabajó con tres agricultores el verano pasado y planea hacerlo con siete esta temporada, si hay suficiente agua disponible, contó.

En otro esfuerzo, agricultores como los Mestas se están gravando a sí mismos para extraer agua de sus propios pozos de riego. Y Simpson, del Distrito de Conservación del Agua del Río Grande, recientemente aseguró \$30 millones en fondos federales para apoyar la conservación del agua. El plan incluye pagar a los agricultores \$3,000 por acre-pie de agua para retirar permanentemente sus pozos de riego.

Dado que el arsénico no se limita a los pozos privados, también han respondido las agencias públicas: la ciudad de Alamosa construyó una nueva planta de tratamiento de agua en 2008 para cumplir con los estándares federales de arsénico.

En 2020, el estado de Colorado demandó a una granja de hongos en Alamosa por exponer a sus trabajadores al arsénico presente en el agua de grifo.

En la comunidad de casas móviles High Valley Park en el condado de Alamosa, un pozo que abastece a 85 personas ha excedido los niveles legales de arsénico desde 2006, cuando EPA endureció su estándar de 50 a 10 µg/L. En la prueba más reciente en febrero, la concentración fue de 19 µg/L.

En una tarde de abril, cuatro niños saltaban en un trampolín y se perseguían unos a otros alrededor de un árbol. “Tío, tengo sed y no quedan botellas de agua”, dijo uno de los niños, sin aliento.

El pozo abastece a 28 hogares. Sin embargo, los inquilinos de cinco viviendas han afirmado que no han estado bebiendo el agua durante años, no por el arsénico, del cual algunos no estaban conscientes, sino porque el agua a menudo sale de color marrón.

Eduardo Rodríguez, de 29 años, quien trabaja en excavación, dijo que compra dos cajas de botellas de agua cada semana para su esposa y sus cinco hijos.

“Esto debe arreglarse”, afirmó.

“El agua es terrible”, coincidió Craig Nelson, de 51 años, quien ha vivido en el parque de casas móviles durante dos años. “No se puede tomar”. Debido a que el pozo abastece al menos a 25 personas, está regulado por el estado.

El propietario del terreno, Rob Treat, de Salida, compró la propiedad en febrero de 2022 por casi medio millón de dólares. Cumplir con los estándares federales en cuanto al contenido de arsénico ha sido difícil, afirmó, porque sus niveles fluctúan cuando los agricultores cercanos extraen agua del acuífero para regar sus cultivos.

Treat estaba utilizando cloro para convertir un tipo de arsénico en una forma más tratable. Sin embargo, si agregaba demasiado cloro, esto creaba subproductos tóxicos, lo cual también llamó la atención de los reguladores. Bajo presión del estado, comenzó a mejorar el sistema de tratamiento de agua en mayo, con un costo de \$150,000. Para cubrir los gastos, planea aumentar el alquiler mensual de \$250 a \$300 por lote.

“Si el estado se mantuviera al margen”, se quejó, “podríamos proporcionar viviendas asequibles”.

Mientras tanto, John Mestas aún está esperando los resultados de su pozo de agua potable.

Cuando regresa de viajar para administrar su rebaño de ganado, “lo primero que hago cuando entro a la casa es beber dos vasos de agua”, dijo. “Eso es lo que extraño, mi agua y mis perros. Saltan sobre mí mientras tomo mi agua. No sé quién está más feliz, si yo bebiendo el agua o ellos saltando”.

*Melissa Bailey fue corresponsal de Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) Health News hasta octubre de 2019. Esta historia fue producida por KFF Health News, una redacción nacional que produce periodismo en profundidad sobre temas de salud y es uno de los principales programas operativos de KFF, la fuente independiente de investigación de políticas de salud, encuestas y periodismo. Este artículo fue apoyado por The Water Desk, una iniciativa de periodismo independiente con sede en el Center for Environmental Journalism de la Universidad de Colorado-Boulder.*

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## Migrantes

para los gastos. Le pagaban 10 dólares a la semana, y una bolsa de arroz costaba 1 dólar, dijo.

En última instancia, su objetivo es mantener a su familia en casa. Tanto su hermano como su madre están enfermos, y la familia no tiene dinero para tratarlos. Caripa dijo que conoce a alguien en Chicago, donde espera conseguir un trabajo y reunirse con su novia.

Caripa llegó al centro de tramitación esa misma mañana, y por la tarde iba a coger un autobús que le llevaría a un trabajo y, posiblemente, a su novia.

## Más de 10.000 inmigrantes

A las 10 de la mañana del 22 de mayo, 96 personas ya habían entrado en el centro de tramitación de Denver para buscar refugio o ser enviadas a su des-

tino final, algunas de ellas después de haber llegado esa misma mañana.

Hasta el 22 de mayo, la ciudad había atendido a más de 10.000 migrantes desde diciembre, según la Oficina de Gestión de Emergencias de Denver. Los migrantes han pasado por el centro de tramitación de la ciudad, la mayoría con destino a ciudades como Nueva York o Chicago, pero otros han querido quedarse en Denver. Esos inmigrantes, unos 1.200, se han alojado en uno de los cinco refugios que gestiona la ciudad, recurriendo sobre todo a organizaciones religiosas para conseguir personal y espacio, según la responsable de participación comunitaria Jill Lis, del Departamento de Estabilidad de la Vivienda de la ciudad.

A mediados de mayo, Lis dijo que la reciente afluencia de migrantes parecía

haberse suavizado, pero esto fue antes del 18 de mayo, cuando un autobús de 41 migrantes fue fletado a Denver por funcionarios de Texas. La mayor afluencia de inmigrantes desde el invierno se produjo entre el 1 y el 10 de mayo, según el panel de datos de la ciudad, y desde entonces se ha mantenido relativamente estable.

*Andrew Fraieli es periodista independiente y redactor jefe de Homeless Voice. Este artículo fue publicada originalmente por Colorado Newslite.*

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

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## Hastings &amp; Torres

In Alabama, for example, HB 56 was curiously passed almost 12 years ago, on June 9, 2011. One of its immediate effects was the exit of undocumented immigrants from the jobs they occupied, especially in farming. *America's Voice en Español* reported first hand the desperation of farmers, seeing their harvests rotting in the fields for the lack of labor that then-governor, Republican Robert J. Bentley, demonized through a measure largely written by one of the most anti-immigrant figures in the country, Kris Kobach, then Secretary of State in Kansas and today the Attorney General of that same state.

We saw first-hand how businesses where migrants shopped for groceries and clothing, where they got their hair cut, or took their cars to be washed or fixed, lost thousands of clients overnight.

We also saw the direct impact on the U.S. citizen children of undocumented parents. Some, for fear of being detained and deported, stopped sending their citizen kids to school, even the doctor—including when they were sick—which generated worries among public health groups.

This is a frightening scenario that is expected to occur again, now in Florida, once again affecting the most vulnerable populations in the country, among them in first place, of course, undocumented immigrants and their families, those who these types of laws treat with disdain, despite the economic benefit their work represents in order to strengthen the finances of the states where they live and work assiduously.

To not see this now is to fall into that age-old trap of societies in decline: those who don't know their history are condemned to repeat it.

So when an anti-immigrant law is passed, like DeSantis just did—with the only goal of showing the base of his also anti-immigrant political rival, Donald Trump, that he can be as or more cruel than their leader—reality doesn't delay its historical lessons, the ones that a stubborn and foolish Republican Party seems to have not learned.

*Maribel Hastings is a Senior Advisor to América's Voice. David Torres is a Spanish-language Advisor at América's Voice.*

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## Arsenic

vert one kind of arsenic into a more treatable form. But if he added too much chlorine, he said, that created its own toxic byproducts, which have also drawn regulators' attention.

Under pressure from the state, Treat began upgrading the water treatment system in May, at a cost of \$150,000. To cover the cost, he said, he aims to raise the monthly rent from \$250 to \$300 per lot.

"If the state would stay out of it," he grumbled, "we could supply affordable housing."

Meanwhile, John Mestas is still awaiting results on his drinking well.

When he returns from traveling to manage his cattle herd, "the first thing I do whenever I walk in the house is drink me two glasses of this water," Mestas said. "That's the one thing I miss, is my water and my dogs. They're

jumping all over me while I'm drinking my water. I don't know who's happier, me drinking the water or them jumping on me."

The independent source for health policy research, polling, and news.

*Melissa Bailey was a correspondent for Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) Health News until October 2019. KFF Health News, formerly known as Kaiser Health News or KHN, is a national newsroom that produces in-depth journalism about health issues and is one of the core operating programs at KFF. This article was supported by The Water Desk, an independent journalism initiative based at the University of Colorado-Boulder's Center for Environmental Journalism.*

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**Del 1 al 30 de Junio 2023**  
La pre-solicitud se tomará en línea en [www.abqha.org](http://www.abqha.org)

La Autoridad de Vivienda de Albuquerque (AHA) tomará la pre-solicitud para los programas de Sección 8 Housing Vouchers del 1 a 30 de Junio 2023.

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**IMPORTANTE:** no está obligado a visitar la oficina de Autoridad de Vivienda de Albuquerque al 1840 University Blvd SE para aplicar. Para asistencia con los programas de Sección 8 no necesita documentos para la pre-solicitud. Su solicitud previa puede completarse en cualquier momento de forma gratuita entre el 1 al 30 de Junio 2023 por medio el internet o teléfono inteligente en [www.abqha.org](http://www.abqha.org). Si no tiene acceso al Internet o necesita asistencia para completar y enviar su pre-solicitud en línea o si requiere ajustes razonables u otra asistencia especial, por favor de llamar 505-764-3953 o 505-764-3920 o al correo electrónico [update@abqha.org](mailto:update@abqha.org). AHA se compromete a ayudar a las personas con discapacidades.

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# Marriagepalooza

6.10.23



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- Complete the marriage license application then stop by the Recording Department (address below) to receive your exclusive, limited-edition marriage license to be used at the ceremony.
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