50th Cinco de Mayo
SPECIAL EDITION
For only the second time in 50 years, Pueblo’s string of traditional Cinco de Mayo celebrations in the park has been broken. This year, the culprit is COVID-19. The first time was in 1994 when the threat of gang violence was the motive for cancelling El Cinco. Instead, a Cinco de Mayo Walk Against Violence was organized.

Also broken, are the hearts of the Cinco de Mayo committee members who have been building up to the 50th anniversary for several years. Without the pandemic, El Cinco de Mayo promised to be a special anniversary.

In addition to the celebration at Bessemer Park, a slate of other planned activities also have been shelved including a student conference at Colorado State University-Pueblo, a car show, film festival and the premier of an exhibit commemorating La Cucaracha newspaper.

Some of those events may be rescheduled once the pandemic crisis has passed.

One of the plans that didn’t get cancelled is this special edition of La Cucaracha. It is fitting that La Cucaracha be part of the celebration because it was founded in Pueblo in May 1976.

We realize a newspaper is not a substitute for a week of activities. It is an opportunity to get some of the original staff members back together, to bring the Chicano community up to date on some of the important issues that dominated the pages four decades ago.

In a way, this special edition in a victory lap for the organizers who fought for the historic rights to the Sangre de Cristo Mexican Land Grant; and for those who conducted a 27-year campaign to abolish the state Columbus Day holiday in Colorado.

It is also a chance to look at some of the pressing issues of the day, from the perspective of the Chicano Community.

Below is a list of some of the original La Cucaracha staff members and former contributors who worked on this publication.

Guillermo DeHerrera
Juan & Deborah Espinosa
Margarito & Cynthia Fuentes
David Martinez
Deborah Martinez-Martinez
Rita J. Martinez
Pablo Mora
Bob Pacheco
For the past five decades, Pueblo has been the place to be on El Cinco de Mayo. But this year, under the dark cloud of the COVID-19 pandemic, the festivities in Bessemer Park have been put on hold.

Because it is the 50th anniversary, of what has become known as the traditional Cinco de Mayo in the park, a week of activities were planned.

Pueblo has long claimed El Cinco as its own.

According to Rita J. Martinez, coordinator of the Pueblo Cinco de Mayo committee, that was the deal Colorado Chicano activists reached years ago.

“In 1969 it was decided by Chicano activists from Denver and Pueblo that El Diez y Seis de Septiembre (Sept. 16, Mexico's Independence Day) would be held in Denver, and El Cinco de Mayo would be held in Pueblo,” she said.

The pact between the Denver and Pueblo activists lasted only a few years, but it was enough to kick-start one of Pueblo’s most enduring commemorative traditions.

Ever since then, there have been Cinco de Mayo activities in one of Pueblo’s parks, except for 1994 when they were cancelled because of threatened gang violence. That year, the committee organized a peace march involving hundreds of youths from the city’s high schools.

The Chicano Movement and La Raza Unida political party focused on the historic date as a day of protest and education. Beginning with the East L.A. Walkouts in 1968, Chicano students throughout the Southwest began using El Cinco as a day to demonstrate against high dropout rates and the lack of Chicanos going to college.

According to newspaper clippings from 1970, the Cinco de Mayo was embraced by many segments of the community. That year, an estimated 2,500 people attended activities in Mineral Palace Park where Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales of Denver was the keynote speaker.

A Mariachi Mass was said at the park’s bandshell accompanied by Los Mariachis de Pueblo. Later that night at Zaragoza Hall, Joaquin Diaz, Leonard Flores and Henry Reyes delivered speeches.

The 1971 Cinco de Mayo planning committee consisted of 17 community organizations. Parade entries ranged from the Brown Berets to the Pride City Baton Corps.

Brown Berets, carrying a statue of La Virgen de Guadalupe at the head of their unit, raised clenched fists and shouted “Chicano power!” Floats in the 1971 parade were equally diverse. Groups entering floats included HeadStart, Pueblo County High School's Spanish Club, La Raza Unida, the Case Verde Club, Charro Club and entries from East and South high schools.

The Colorado State University Extension Office sponsored a tortilla-rolling contest in the park, as part of the festivities.

That year, District 60 reported 3,500 students were absent from the city’s middle and high schools on May 5. In years following, the day was designated as a teacher in-service day, and students were excused for the day.

Pueblo established itself as the hub of the region's Cinco de Mayo celebrations. A May 4, 1972, news story reported that two caravans, one starting in Lamar and another 40 cars from Walsenburg, were coming to Pueblo for the festivities.

Over the years, Pueblo's Cinco de Mayo in the park continued to evolve. Often, Golden Gloves boxing cards were added. Folkloric dance groups brought colorful and traditional dances from many regions of Mexico. Lowriders and car shows, a 5K run, and teatro were popular activities.

Pueblo's Chicano bands have provided the soundtrack to the celebration. For several years, El Cinco was the venue for a battle of bands like Maya, Burnt Mill Road, Abraxas and San Juan. On at least two occasions, concerts featuring El Chicano and another with Celia Cruz (1973) packed City Auditorium.

The earliest Cinco de Mayo celebrations were organized by Mexican immigrants with a motive of creating a forum for bringing the community together.

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celebrating Mexican culture, honoring Gen. Ignacio Zaragosa’s heroism and military brilliance and teaching the community a little Mexican history.

When the Chicano Movement seized the day to protest a long list of grievances, there was considerable friction between the factions. Despite their political differences, many groups continued to host Cinco events, and the holiday’s base has widened. The 1990s also saw the increase in local gang activity as the barrio-unity philosophy gave way to neighborhood rivalries. For many years, Cinco in the park was neutral territory, but that broke down in 1993, when several fights broke out at Bessemer Park.

But the next year, the threats continued, and it was decided to cancel the Cinco in the park and organize a citywide “March to Stop the Violence.”

Hundreds marched through Downtown to the Pueblo County Courthouse, where several young speakers called for nonviolence and mutual respect.

The significance of the true meaning of the Cinco de Mayo was not lost on the youth. “We must be just like those people who fought against the French, who did not give into fear,” Robyn Gonzalez, then 17, was quoted in a local newspaper.

Martinez said there are big differences between the Cinco de Mayo activities other nonprofit organization use to raise funds.

“They sell beer and we don’t,” she said. “But theirs is a fundraiser. That’s the reason behind it — to raise funds for those groups.

Zaragoza Society celebrated El Cinco in Pueblo in 1920s

Though the Cinco in the park has been the longest continuous commemoration, it wasn’t the first. According to The Pueblo Chieftain archives, a Cinco de Mayo celebration was organized on May 5 and 6, 1928, by “Pueblo Mexicans.”

There were no names in the brief story, but it said that the planned activities included coronation of a Cinco de Mayo queen, a parade from the Pueblo County Courthouse to City Park, food booths at the park and a dance. The program also included “patriotic” speeches from prominent figures in the city. The Mexican consul to Denver was an honored guest.

Six years earlier, 12 men who spoke only Spanish organized the Sociedad Mutualista Ignacio Zaragoza, recognizing El Cinco de Mayo by naming the group in honor of the 32-year-old Mexican army general credited with masterminding the French Army’s first defeat in more than 50 years — Gen. Ignacio Zaragoza.

According to a booklet published by the group, Zaragoza Society formed in 1922 to render aid to those damaged by Pueblo’s Flood of 1921. The organization built Zaragoza Hall in Bessemer in the 1950s and continued to offer mutual aid to its members and scholarships to Hispanic students until recent years.

In addition to offering mutual aid, the group’s bylaws also provided for the observance of the Mexican national holidays and social events. According to some published reports, the society began commemorating El Cinco de Mayo in 1930.

When the group’s membership disbanded in 2009, it was one of the oldest Hispanic organizations in the state. Some consider it an early civil-rights organization, because its stated purpose was to “band together as a mutual aid Society to cope with the many problems obstructing progress in their proverbial pursuit of happiness.”

During the Great Depression years, there was no mention of Cinco de Mayo activities in the newspaper archives. Organizations like the Zaragoza Society and the Comision Honorifica Mexicana continued to celebrate El Cinco within their membership, but it wasn’t until 1970 that the holiday became a citywide event.
Heavy rain drove El Cinco activities into El Pueblo History Museum in 2015. Here drummers draw a crowd in one of the classrooms.

A Trio, consisting of Martin Ortega, Antonio Ortega and Juan Zarate, performs at the 1979 Cinco de Mayo.


Gordan Raigosa tells of his strategy to eat his fill at the pie eating contest in 1979.

Freddy “Freak” Trujillo carries his Mexican-American flag and sports one of his favorite T-shirts at the 2010 Cinco in the park.
HECHO EN AZTLAN

By Cynthia Ortiz Fuentes

We're back! It's been a long time and we have all experienced joys, trials, sorrows, challenges and celebrations. Through the years, I hope your creativity has not gone dormant but, that you have experimented with different mediums and activities (clay, paint, fiber arts, quilting, metals, glass, cooking, gardening, etc). Continue doing so and if you haven't, there's no time like now to start. Online tutorials, Pinterest, you tube, and local libraries offer amazing ideas. Check out Craftychica.com.

There are many projects to share but recycling craft projects are favorites. This project calls for 2 pockets from a pair of jeans (a pair too tattered to pass down or donate). Did you know it takes approximately 1800 gallons of water to make 1 pair of jeans? Recycle!

Cell phone bag

Materials:
1. Pair of jeans (any size)
2. Fabric glue (Not glue gun!). Find at craft stores.
3. Strap material (5/8 inch ribbon, braided yarn, old strap) Need 1 ½ yard for a crossbody bag
4. Embellishments (iron on patches, markers, beads, paint, glitter, etc.) for pockets.
5. Lace or trim for edging of bag.

Optional:

Directions:
1. Cut pockets from jeans. Decorate as desired. Fig.1
2. Lay one pocket face down on flat surface, spread a layer of glue around inside side and bottom edge and lay end of strap about 4 inches on one edge and lay the other end on opposite side of pocket. (Fig. 2) If using, glue lace on edge before laying straps down.
3. Lay the other pocket on top, wrong sides together. Clip together with clothespins, or large clips. Fig. 3. Let dry overnight. Done! (Can sew together instead of gluing, need denim needle)

If you have several pockets, make a pocket panel. Stitch strips of jeans to make a backing and stitch or glue pockets on panel. Fold over a hem on top edge to stick a dowel through for hanging on wall. My 97-year-old dad has a panel on his wall with logos from his baseball caps on the pockets, which are filled with treasures and pictures. The possibilities are endless!

It has been fun writing for La Cucaracha again! Support and encourage the many great crafters and artistas that enrich our communities. Share your skills, talents, stories and traditions with family and friends. Keep our cultura strong. Recycle and reuse as much as possible. Future generations depend on what we do today. God bless you and yours, stay safe!

Flaming hearts can represent several things, charity, sincerity, love, and, gratitude.

In recent years, indigenous dancers adorned with feathers had danced to the beat of a different drum. In this 2018 photo, the group is honoring the four directions.

In 2018, the Cinco de Mayo committee added a full car show as part of the annual day’s events at Bessemer Park. Years prior, only a small exhibition with a few cars was included. The car show was a huge success and the feedback was very positive. However, due to a family death in 2019 and the COVID-19 in 2020, the car shows were cancelled. Nonetheless, we are hoping for an easement of the Stay-at-Home Order by end of summer so that we can once again organize our Cinco de Mayo Car Show and showcase this beautiful aspect of our culture. Stay tuned for future announcements about this event.
The series of events that led to the abolition of Columbus Day in Colorado began 30 years ago in Quito, Ecuador.

It was the summer of 1990 when 350 representatives from Native American groups throughout the Western Hemisphere met in Quito at the first Intercontinental Gathering of Indigenous People in the Americas. The agenda was to mobilize against the 500th anniversary of Columbus Day planned for 1992.

In the United States, Colorado became a focal point for the protest against Columbus because the holiday to honor him has its roots here. Pueblo legislators carried the bill to make it a statutory state holiday in 1907.

"I am proud to have organized, with many others, my community’s 28-year movement to re-examine the Columbus legacy and abolish this holiday," said Rita J. Martinez, an organizer of the protests in Pueblo.

"Columbus Day was born here and with the signing of this bill, it dies here," she said after being told Gov. Jared Polis had signed the legislation.

The Colorado Chapter of the American Indian Movement has been instrumental in their leadership and support. The many legislators who were committed to this struggle have ultimately won.

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Colorado is not alone. In the last three decades, many states have chosen to abstain from any celebration of Columbus, including Florida, Hawaii, Alaska, Vermont, South Dakota, and New Mexico, to name a few. Many cities also have moved to replace Columbus Day with a celebration of Indigenous People’s Day — starting with Berkeley, CA in 1992 and, as of 2018, includes Austin, Boise, Cincinnati, Denver, Los Angeles, Mankato, Portland, San Francisco, Santa Fe, Seattle, St. Paul, Tacoma, and dozens more.

In a press release, Martinez talked about the 27 years of organizing. We’d protest at the gathering of Italians lauding this first terrorist of the Americas and laying wreaths in tribute to his massacres,” she said.

Police officers with binoculars, cameras, and some with rifles, watched from the rooftops. Over the years crowd-control barriers were brought in to create what police called a “demilitarized zone” between the protestors and Columbus Day celebrants.

"We coupled the protests with educational forums," Martinez said. "We had debates, interviews, panels, and guest lecturers. For Chicanos, this was a formative time — a time to better understand our native and indigenous roots, a way to more fully embrace our identity.”

In addition to the contentious protests at the statue in Pueblo’s Mesa Junction, a parallel struggle has taken place in the Colorado legislature since 2007, when Sen. Suzanne Williams drafted a bill to repeal Columbus Day and replace it with a floating state holiday. In every legislative session through 2018, a similar bill has been introduced, but never made it out of House committees.

In 2019, Rep. Adrienne Benavidez and Sen. Julie Gonzales sponsored a bill to repeal Columbus Day and replace it with Colorado Day. This 2019 bill passed the House committee and the full House of Representatives but died in a Senate committee.

The 2020 bill — House Bill 20-1031 — was carried by Reps. Adrienne Benavidez and Kyle Mullica. It would repeal Columbus Day and replace it with Frances Xavier Cabrini Day. This bill passed the House and moved on to a Senate committee sponsored by Sens. Angela Williams and Chris Hansen. It was then taken to the Senate floor where it passed and moved on to Gov. Polis’ desk. It was signed on March 20, 2020.

This is how your local legislators voted: Rep. Daneya Esgar (D)-YES to Abolish Columbus Day and Rep. Bri Buentello (D) -NO, and Rep. Donald Valdez (D) -NO. Senator Leroy Garcia voted -YES to Abolish Columbus Day.

With the March 20, 2020 signing of House Bill 20-1031 by Gov. Polis, Colorado will no longer celebrate a paid holiday in Christopher Columbus’ name. The statewide 30 year struggle has included participants from many states, all races, many ethnicities, and many ages, all in solidarity with abolishing Columbus Day.

The Colorado Chapter of the American Indian Movement has been instrumental in their leadership and support. The many legislators who were committed to this struggle have ultimately won. This will go down in history as a social justice victory, where the people’s voices were loud and have been heard. Now, the chant that has been heard for decades, is a reality, “No More Columbus Day!”
The legal case of Lobato vs. Taylor has come to a conclusion, and it is imperative that those who have access understand their rights to the full extent of the law. Access rights that were awarded by the Colorado Courts in 2002 and 2018.

In 1981, 118 plaintiffs filed a class action lawsuit against Jack Taylor known as Lobato vs. Taylor, in an effort to regain “historic use rights” to La Sierra. We had to reverse and create new property law in Colorado while challenging and defeating outsiders who have always been some of the wealthiest men in America, Jack Taylor, Lou Pai, Bobby Hill and currently William Harrison. After 37 years of litigation and thousands and thousands of hours of volunteer attorney and community organizing hours, the Colorado Court of Appeals, the Colorado Supreme Court and the U.S. Supreme Court handed the plaintiffs a total victory.

The most current victory, by the Colorado Court of Appeals, Nov. 2018, made permanent the fact that thousands of properties settled by Chicano/Mexicano families now have established rights to use La Sierra to graze their livestock, to harvest firewood, and to cut and take timber.

These rights are permanent and held into perpetuity (literally set in stone). In other words, these rights will pass down from one generation to another until the end of time. It is also important to understand that law says the owner’s rights to use the land are limited and will forever be inferior to the community’s dominant rights to use La Sierra. This means that the owner’s use of the land can never unreasonably burden or interfere with the community’s right to harvest firewood, take timber, and graze their animals.

As an example, the owner can hire staff to carry out his operations and maintain the property, but that staff cannot take actions that unreasonably interfere with or burden access holders when they exercise their rights. Similarly, the owner cannot engage in any business or other operations, either hunting, ranching, farming, logging, grazing, or anything else, that would unreasonably interfere with the plaintiff’s superior rights.

Another important fact, established by William Harrison in 2019 during the community dialogues, was that no person has his permission to remove trees or bushes from La Sierra. In the past, there have been many complaints that individuals have removed trees for either personal or commercial use without permits or permission from the ranch owner. Harrison admitted he had not given anyone permission or permits to remove such resources. This is considered an “undue burden” on access holders and against court orders.

Although the legal case is over, if there is an attempt to restrict access or place any undue burdens on access holders and such issues can’t be resolved through dialogue with both parties, we will look to the courts for resolution. If anyone has information related to the ranch owner’s or employee’s use of La Sierra, or any information about the ranch owner interfering with your rights or someone else’s rights, please contact the Land Rights Council or class representatives immediately.

Let me remind the community that generations and hundreds of thousands of folks have struggled with us to regain the “historic use rights” that were stolen in the early 1960s. The victory didn’t come easy or without sacrifices. The struggle is not over, as we encourage Mr. Harrison to continue in a community dialogue for the sake of both parties.

Know Your Rights On La Sierra

By: Shirley Romero Otero,
Land Rights Council, President

Supporters of the Land Rights Council gather on the Vega outside of San Luis, CO, last August to celebrate the end of the legal battle to reclaim plaintiffs’ historic rights to La Sierra.

Photo by Juan Espinosa
Los Seis de Boulder Are Remembered

Editor's note: The following story originally appeared in Verdict, a magazine published by the National Coalition of Concerned Legal Professionals. It is reprinted here with permission.

On September 6, 2019, a memorial celebration was held at the University of Colorado Boulder (CU), dedicated to the lives of six Chicano political activists, Los Seis de Boulder (The Boulder Six), who died in two separate car bombings, two days apart, on May 27 and May 29, 1974. The memorial included the unveiling of a four-panel ceramic sculpture, created by 200 volunteers, to commemorate the six who were killed.

The six were Alamosa (Colorado) attorney and CU Law School graduate Reyes Martinez, 26; CU junior Neva Romero, 21, and CU graduate Una Jaakola, 24, who died in the bombing on May 27; and former CU students, Florencio Granado, 31, and Heriberto Teran, 24; along with Francisco Dougherty, 20, a former Army medic from Texas, who died in the bombing on May 29. Antonio Alcantar, standing outside the car on May 29, was severely burned and lost a leg, but he survived. To this day, the two bombings — one so powerful it could be heard throughout Boulder — remain unsolved.

Attorney Reyes Martinez was the brother of Francisco “Kiko” Martinez, also an Alamosa attorney and Chicano activist committed to serving the poor of Colorado. Kiko Martinez served as the planner for the sculpture, as well as a primary organizer of the tribute to his brother and the others of Los Seis. Kiko himself was framed on false bombing charges in 1973 and after a 16-year battle, was finally cleared of all the charges. (See Verdict, January 2013, “When The Adversary System Turns Adversary,” by Walter L. Geras, Esq.)

Students Form UMAS in 1968

In 1968 at the CU campus, there were only 28 Mexican-American full-time students. Nine of those students came together to form United Mexican American Students (UMAS) dedicated to the political, social and economic empowerment of Mexican-American students in higher education. UMAS developed the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), which, in just a few years, succeeded in increasing the enrollment of Mexican American students at CU to 1400. The university, however, never allocated adequate funds for the UMAS EOP; and UMAS was in a constant battle with the university administration over the need for more resources to enable Mexican-American students to finance their educations.

Occurring during the time of the Vietnam War protests and the civil rights era of political activism, UMAS clashed with the university, which had replaced the authentic UMAS leadership with proxies more agreeable to university policies. In the fall of 1973, the university withheld the UMAS students’ financial aid that they needed for tuition, books, rent and food; they, in turn, occupied the regent building and issued a demand that their financial aid be released, which the university eventually did.

In the spring of 1974, however, UMAS students, who were still not receiving adequate support from CU, demanded that the university-appointed leaders of UMAS be removed. UMAS students occupied CU’s TB-I building for 18 days, during which time the two car bombs killed the six, all of whom had been connected to UMAS. Police blamed the students themselves for both incidents, claiming they were carrying homemade bombs that they intended to detonate later, but which “accidentally” exploded. Activists, however, have maintained that the likelihood of two identical “accidents” in two days strains credibility, and that the six were targeted for their political activism. They considered that the FBI’s COINTELPRO (Counterintelligence Program) or other government-sanctioned operatives likely had a role in the deaths. In the days following the bombings, hundreds participated in ceremonies mourning Los Seis de Boulder, as they came to be known. In July 1974, Chicano leader Corky Gonzalez spoke at the federal court-house in Denver where protesters demonstrated against federal grand jury harassment of the families and friends of Los Seis. Notably, prosecutors determined there was insufficient evidence to charge sole survivor Antonio Alcantar with any crime in relation to the bombings.

A Time of Social Unrest

The deaths of Los Seis de Boulder occurred at a time of great social unrest in the United States. The Civil Rights Movement fought for better homes, jobs and education for people of color, in an era filled with massive marches, demonstrations and rioting in major U.S. cities. It was also the height of the increasingly unpopular Vietnam War; student protests erupted on campuses across the U.S., as Gallup polls indicated that the majority of Americans were opposed to the war.

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The history of the Chicano organizing efforts at CU and the bombings that killed Los Seis are not widely known, even in Colorado, but the horrific events were not unique to the era. What occurred at Kent State on May 4, 1970 was nationally publicized, when the Ohio National Guard shot into a group of student protesters, killing four and wounding nine others, during a mass protest against the U.S. bombing of Cambodia. Less than two weeks later, in a much less publicized event, police opened fire on a dormitory building at Jackson State University, an historically black college in Mississippi, killing three students, injuring 12 and shattering all the windows on one side of the building. Students were protesting in response to a false rumor that civil rights leader Charles Evers was assassinated. In 1972, police opened fire on a crowd of unarmed student protesters at Southern University in Louisiana, another historically black college; two students were killed. The students were protesting the lack of adequate resources at their university.

Preceding these events was the even lesser known “Orangeburg Massacre,” in 1968 when highway patrol officers fired into a group of 200 unarmed student protesters at South Carolina State University, also an historically black college; three students were killed and 28 were injured. The students were protesting racial segregation at a local bowling alley.

The Continued Need to Organize

The sculpture of Los Seis de Boulder features a mosaic of the faces of all six who died in the bombings and serves to educate people about these relatively unknown events and inspire people to continue to fight for social justice.

LOS SEIS continued from Page 9

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Forty-six years later, shock waves from two car explosions that killed six young activists continue to rumble across the University of Colorado campus in Boulder.

This time, the vibrations are being felt by those supporting a new sculpture commemorating the six who died. The sculpture is a four-sided cement monument bearing ceramic portraits of Los Seis de Boulder designed and erected by Jasmine Baetz, in mid-2019 near Temporary Building 1.

The sculpture was dedicated last Sept. 6, on a six-month temporary permit, while a request for the art to remain permanently was under consideration. More than 500 attended the dedication.

Since then, the university administration has stalled on the sculpture’s permanency. According to Baetz, CU Chancellor Phil DiStefano announced a one-month extension on Jan. 17, of this year. The new deadline of March 8 was set while a newly appointed Art in Public Space Committee determined the future of the sculpture.

Also at this time, the formation of a CU Boulder History Project, “charged with deepening the campus’s understanding and collective recognition of under-represented groups and their contributions to CU Boulder’s rich and complex history,” was announced.

Two days before the extended deadline, rather than make the sculpture permanent the university administration said it would extend the temporary permit “indefinitely.”

In the face of this stalling tactic, students organized a show of support for the sculpture on March 11. It was attended by 150 students, faculty, staff, and community supporters, and was one of the last events on campus before most buildings on campus closed and classes were moved online due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

“We will insist that a timely decision is made when or before students return to campus,” a student press statement said. “If you would like to send a letter of support for the permanent installation of the sculpture on campus, we are collecting them at: los6bouldersculptureproject@gmail.com.

In an interview conducted before the sculpture was completed, Baetz said she learned of Los Seis in the fall of 2017, when she attended the screening of “Symbols of Resistance,” a documentary film about Los Seis and others in Colorado who died as a result of their involvement in the Chicano Movement.

“It wasn’t lost on me that if I hadn’t seen that film, I could have easily finished my degree here at CU without learning about Los Seis,” Baetz said.

Baetz, then a graduate student in the Department of Art and Art History, decided to design and build a memorial in their honor.
Southern Poverty Law Center Report Finds

Hate groups growing across nation

Hate groups are growing at exponential rates across the country and in Colorado, according to an annual report of the Southern Poverty Law Center, a 49-year-old nonprofit civil rights organization based in Montgomery, AL. The SPLC is “dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry, and seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of society.”

Titled “The Year In Hate and Extremism 2019,” the report identified and provided recent information on 940 hate groups in the U.S. in 2019. “The number of white nationalist groups identified by the SPLC rose for the second straight year, a 55 percent increase since 2017, when Trump’s campaign energized white nationalists who saw him as an avatar of their grievances and their anxiety over the country’s demographic changes. The numbers are a barometer, though an imperfect one, of the size and growth of the movement.”

According to the report: “White nationalism poses a series of threats to national security and pluralistic democracy. It’s a virulent and profoundly authoritarian ideology that infects our political system with hate, fear and resentment. As this report demonstrates, the threat of increased violence is very real. Growing sectors of white supremacists, who call themselves ‘accelerationists,’ believe mass violence is necessary to bring about the collapse of our pluralistic society.”

A series of terror attacks in the U.S. and abroad, including the mass killings in El Paso, Texas have led federal authorities to upgrade its assessment of the threat posed by racially motivated extremists to a “national threat priority.” The upgrade is based on statistics that reveal a majority of domestic terror attacks are “fueled by some type of white supremacy.” By far the worst carnage wrought by domestic extremists within the last year came on Aug. 3 at a Walmart in the border town of El Paso, Texas, a city that is nearly 80 percent Hispanic, when a man opened fire with an AK-47 just as parents and children were taking advantage of a tax-free shopping day before the beginning of the school year. Twenty-two people were killed and another 26 injured. Authorities believe the 21-year-old man from Allen, Texas who surrendered to police after the shootings, posted a racist and anti-immigrant screed online shortly before the attack.

The author expressed white nationalist themes about “ethnic displacement,” expressed displeasure at “race-mixing,” and referred to the attack as a response to the “Hispanic invasion of Texas.” He praised the Christchurch shooter in New Zealand.

The report identified notable alleged extremist plots that led to arrests in 2019. In that category it identified an FBI sting operation in Pueblo, where self-proclaimed white supremacist Richard Holzer, 27, was taken into custody when he picked up two pipe bombs and 14 sticks of dynamite from undercover agents. It was reported that Holzer was “plotting to blow up a historic synagouge and poison congregants as part of a ‘racial holy war.’” He was wearing a Nazi armband and carrying a copy of Mein Kompf at the time of the arrest.

In addition to white nationalist groups previously identified, the SPLC research listed 576 “extreme antigovernment groups that were active in 2019, of which an additional 12 were operating in Colorado last year.”

In that regard, the SPLC’s report stated: Three years into the term of a president who shares its penchant for conspiracy theories – about the “deep state” and Barack Obama’s birthplace, for example – the antigovernment “Patriot” movement has found itself in the odd position of being on the same side of the very federal government it has long professed to despise.

The SPLC identified 22 hate groups operating in Colorado in 2019, a 68% increase of 15 new groups from the seven that were identified in the organization’s original report published in 2012.

NOTICIAS

Noticias were a standard column in La Cucaracha. In June 1980, the paper announced that Radio KAPI would read the “Noticias Chicanas” once a week on air and will consist of “nuevas, vistas, y opinion.” See on coloradohistoricnewspapers.org and type in “La Cucaracha.”

YEAR of La Chicana

Olibama Lopez Tushar (d. 2004) was honored by Colorado Latino’s Hall of Fame with the Legacy Award in 2019. She is the author of The People of El Valle: A History of the Spanish Colonials in the San Luis Valle in its third printing. The Hall of Fame says, “Our mission to honor our heritage of leadership, advance Latino professional to positions of influence, and prepare individuals and organizations for the changing demographic landscape is rooted in our unwavering belief that leadership is both our heritage and our legacy.”

In 1930, Olibama was one of the first Latina graduates of CU-Boulder. She was a cultural and writing pioneer, according to Charlene Garcia Simms who nominated her and also published her book. She was also honored on the international stage for finding and translating old Spanish documents by the International Biographical Center, Cambridge, England in 1990. El Azteca — a flash from past Cinco

In 1997, Central High School MECHA students published the 28-page El Azteca under the direction of Dave Marquez, Chicano Studies teacher. Topics included the MECHA Assembly on May 2 with a theme of ¿Quienes Somos? with dancing, singing, poetry reading of Xicano/Mexicano poems and an art show.

Pueblo library services available online

Pueblo City-County Library District’s buildings may be closed to the public, but the library is still serving the community online anytime, anywhere with The Library @ Home. Available at www.pueblolibrary.org/thelibraryathome, The Library @ Home is your hub for access to e-resources, virtual programming and at-home learning resources.

With a PCCLD library card, users can access e-books, digital magazines, downloadable audiobooks, streaming movies, music, television shows and online research and learning tools. Currently, the district has invested more than $30,000 toward the purchase of an additional 8,000 titles.

For those who don’t have a library card they can get an immediate electronic card at www.pueblolibrary.org via the link “Get a library card.” This immediate card will allow patrons to access the full array of online library services.

In addition to e-resources, the district is also offering virtual programming such as storytimes, book clubs, an online book club and more. Look for the Virtual Programming tab on the Library @ Home homepage.

At-Home Learning resources provide free online tools to support families who are homeschooling children at this time. There are links to resources for preschool through high school; programs include virtual tours, PE and art classes, science projects and more. To learn more, select the At-Home Learning tab on the Library @ Home homepage.

Patrons are also welcome to access the district’s Wi-Fi network; the network can be accessed outside any PCCLD location. To join, select PCCLD on your digital device’s Wi-Fi tab, no password is required.

At this time patrons are asked not to return books and other library materials via library drop boxes even if the items are due for return. No fines will be assessed. All materials checked out and holds currently in-place will be maintained until further notice.

PCCLD is continuing to follow mandates from Gov. Jared Polis, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and Pueblo Department of Public Health and Environment to guide the protection of our patrons, staff and overall community.

Follow PCCLD on Facebook and check the library’s website (www.pueblolibrary.org) for the latest updates.
History Colorado salutes activists

By Deborah Martinez Martinez
La Cucaracha News Service

"El Movimiento: The Chicano Movement" opened as a permanent History Colorado exhibit in 2019. The exhibit was ushered along by El Movimiento Advisory Committee comprised of Colorado Chicano activists. Making the exhibit part of the core collection of History Colorado means it will be there for years to come.

After the opening of the museum exhibit, the Committee met with a group of dissatisfied Chicanas led by Flor Lovato of Denver. They expressed their distress that the exhibit focused on the men of El Movimiento, leaving out the efforts of the women from throughout the state.

It was decided that Chicanas be present throughout the exhibit, in photos, text, large quotes, and significant events, contextually, as the history unfolded, not in one section. That would never be inclusive enough," explained Deborah Espinosa.

The group’s answer was to create “Year of La Chicana” to feature many of the women. Year of La Chicana’s mission is “To celebrate and honor La Chicana past, present, and future; to share her story with a wide range of audiences; and to connect the core issues of the Chicano Movement with present-day issues of social justice, identity, and inclusion.”

Featured Chicanas were Guadalupe “Lupe” Briseño, of Brighton, a union organizer, Juana Domínguez, an activist, and Teresita Sandoval, an historical figure.

Part of the Year of La Chicana was a lecture at Pueblo Community College. In November 2019, Deborah Espinosa, former director of El Pueblo History Museum, gave a presentation at PCC. Her presentation “In the Shadow of History: Teresita Sandoval, 1811 — 1894.” Teresita Sandoval is one of the women who lived at El Pueblo Trading Post between 1842 and 1856.

Forthcoming Denver events include a Chicano murals conference on October 19. Watch the website for time and format. Although some of the lectures and events had to be cancelled, the Facebook slide show, link on the History Colorado website, includes the photos and stories of 114 women.

The Pueblo City-County Libraries, in conjunction with History Colorado and El Movimiento Community Advisory Committee, celebrates and honors La Chicana, past, present and future. An Year of La Chicana Exhibit of ten women, developed by Charlene Garcia Simms, was erected before the Library closed and was to be in each of the libraries in the city and county.

The ten women shown in the Library exhibit are Dolores Huerta, Shirley Romero Otero, Deborah Espinosa, Angela Giron, Deborah Martinez Martinez, Judy Baca, Carmen Arteaga, Denise Torrez, Carla Barela and Rita J. Martinez.

They are examples of what La Chicana represents and what they and others have done for the Chicano community. Garcia Simms reported that the exhibit will still be up until an undetermined time.

Future presentations at Rawlings Library include Deborah Espinosa, “In the Shadow of History: The Story of Teresita Sandoval”;

Chicana Literature and its Relevance, and Arlette Lucero, artist. The dates are pending. The Rawlings Library also hosted the Chicana Film Festival on Jan. 24, with coordination by library staffer Charlene Garcia Simms and a community committee including Carmen Arteaga, Maria Vega Clark, Victoria Garduno, and Theresa Trujillo.

The first film was a short documentary “La Chicana” followed by a panel of Chicanas. The second film was “Dolores,” about Dolores Huerta, a labor organizer and negotiator with the United Farm Workers, A feature animation, “Dora the Explorer and the Lost City of Gold,” was introduced by Angela Giron. “La Misma Luna/Under the Same Moon,” an immigration story, was introduced by Yesenia Beascochea.


El Pueblo History Museum staff in conjunction with a community group, assembled a number of projects for Year of La Chicana. Zack Werkowitch, Director of Community Relations, met with Carmen Arteaga, Rita Martinez, Theresa Trujillo, Denise Torrez, Velia Venegas Rincon, Jose A. Ortega, Yesenia Beascochea, Judy Baca, Tamara Trujillo, Maria Vega-Clark, Diane Archuleta and Judy Baca through quite a few meetings.


According to Carmen Arteaga, the Book Club will be ongoing until the end of the year. Meetings normally held at EPHM will be held on ZOOM until further notice according, Dianne Archuleta, Community Museum Operations Manager. Archuleta said, “The easiest way to hook up for the Book Club is to go to the Facebook page, click on the event, then respond that you will attend.” She added, “The website will connect you to receive a link for the meeting either on phone or computer.”

When EPHM reopens, the bookstore will have the books available for sale.

Another EPHM project was to create a tapestry of Chicanas who have contributed to the community. According to Jose Ortega, EPHM had already created a tapestry for the Dogpatch Memory Workshop, so it was another step to create the Year of La Chicana tapestry which opened November 2019. The women selected for this honor are: Angela Giron, Bernie Esquivel-Tennant, Charlene Garcia Simms, Deborah Espinosa, Carmen Arteaga, Phyllis Robinson, Delfina Garcia, Denise Torrez, Dianne Archuleta, Rita J. Martinez, Alfie Salazar, Elizabeth Aragon Blanton, Josette Jaramillo, Judy Baca, Lola Gutierrez, Melanie Bravo, Ruth Coca, Sandra Ruiz, Teresa Torrez, Tamara Trujillo, Velia Venegas Rincon, Velma Roybal, Xochitl Chavez, Yesenia Beascochea, Maria Vega-Clark, Neva Martinez Ortega, Fawn Amber Montoya, the Dancer of Grupo Xochitl, and Theresa Trujillo. The tapestry will still be on display when the Museum reopens.
In the 1970s when Chicanas (Mexican American women) were students in college and high school, civil rights was the topic. To women in the community, social justice was the concern. Author Deborah Martinez Martinez devised a fun way of saluting these women and telling their stories—by making them dolls!

Twenty women are featured as paper dolls and their stories told in this new book. The author uses the paper doll book form to briefly tell each powerful Chicana’s story. Instead of fashionable clothes, each doll can use “Tools of Activist Women” such as a typewriter, bolt cutters, microphone, guitar and hard hat. There is even a podium for the use of the 7” dolls.

The publisher, Vanishing Horizons, designed the unusual book as a portfolio with each page stacked inside the cover.

The Chicanas featured utilized their voice, their story, their willingness to share their suffering. They used their determination to speak the truth and say, “Ya Basta! Enough!” From the Arkansas Valley to Center, from Pueblo to Brighton, enough of second-class schools! On the farms, enough of $4 per day and no toilets!

In the cities, enough of discrimination in employment, no representation in media, and throughout the state, few women in the state house or senate!

They were women who fought for their place in the American system and, thereby, laid the pathway for others.

According to Martinez Martinez, “This book is a way to honor these women, their families and their communities. It’s a way to say ‘we are proud of you and we thank you!’”

The women recognized are Neva Romero, Ignacio/Boulder, Guadalupe Briseño, Brighton, Shirley Romero, San Luis, Ruth Coca, Aguilar, Priscilla Falcón, Greeley, Juanita Dominguez, San Luis/Littleton, Diana Velasquez, Denver, Rita Martinez Melgares, Alamosa/ Omaha, Jennie Sanchez, Center. From Pueblo, those honored are: Deborah Espinosa, Velma Roybal, Diana Ortiz, Delfina Garcia, Mothers of Casa Verde, Rita J. Martinez, Angela Giron, Carmen Arteaga, Ann Dominguez, Judy Baca, Carla Barela.

Another 80 women are acknowledged in “More Women of Heart and Action.” “It’s more than time for Chicana women to be recognized for their role in making our communities better, and for keeping the struggle for equity and social justice alive,” said Martinez Martinez.

Contact: Deborah Martinez Martinez 719-561-0993
Vanishing Horizons1@me.com

Dear Scholars,

Youth leadership conferences have a long history in the Chicano Movement promoting education, leadership development, and cultural identity.

The conference committee of the 50th Annual Cinco de Mayo in Pueblo was looking forward to this year’s commemoration. We had hoped the significance of overcoming adversity in the Battle of Puebla, Mexico would inspire our next generation of warriors. Due to COVID-19 we had to postpone and look forward to recruiting students to a conference in the fall.

As children of the Chicano movement, we recognize our access to higher education is afforded to us by the generations before us who sacrificed, fought, prayed, and died for our taste of education, leadership development, and cultural identity. The collective knowledge of social activism, and of our own self-determination growing up in youth leadership conferences. We were raised not to fit in but to challenge the status quo with our presence.

I remember being dragged to conferences throughout my childhood by Shirley Otero, Rita Martinez, and Eddie Montour. We learned to navigate systems that are not built for us while never forgetting who we are and our connection to this land.

Students were taught to self-advocate, organize, and create change. Everywhere we were made to feel that we did not belong, we unapologetically carved out our own space. Student organizations like UMAS (United Mexican American Students) and MECHA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) across campuses never forgot to reach back into their communities to serve, educate, and live under our own power.

Chicanxs have a history of race, class, and gender constraints in educational institutions creating the marginality of our scholars. Student walkouts in 1968, led to the first National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in March of 1969, hosted by the Crusade for Justice.

Since then, youth leadership conferences have convened students to unlearn oppression of history and reteach the brilliance and beauty of our story. As a result, Chicanox Studies programs are the work of students and teachers who fought for representation in curriculum for you.

A 2018 study by the Center on Education and Workforce at Georgetown University, reported Colorado continues to be the second-most educated state in the nation with the widest college-attainment gap between White and Latino students. This “Rocky Mountain Divide” reminds Chicanox that our work is far from done.

Know that you have a community behind you ready to take the next watch in your educational journey. Our elders will provide the wisdom and relentless encouragement to give you strength in the moments that feel too heavy to carry.

They will help you to unlearn the implicit and explicit messages written in your story and help you write your own narrative.

You are the greatest asset to our community and the hope we have in overcoming adversity in commemoration of Cinco de Mayo. Take it from this sChOLAr, you were born to stand out. We look forward to learning with and alongside you soon. Until then, stay critical or lose consciousness.

In Solidarity,

Dr. Velia Rincon/Committee Member
Two named to the Colorado Chicano Movement Archives Hall of Fame

Juan Freddie “Freak” Trujillo and the late Jose Esteban Ortega are the first to be named to the Hall of Fame of the Colorado Chicano Movement Archives at Colorado State University — Pueblo.

Before COVID-19 cancelled plans, the awards were to be presented during the week of Cinco de Mayo. The plaques will be presented to Trujillo and representatives of Ortega’s family at a later date.

Trujillo and Ortega are considered co-founders of the archive and were the first to donate their personal collections of their involvement in the Chicano Movement.

The award was initiated this year by archive coordinator Beverly Allen and approved by the community advisory committee.

Ortega’s contributions included copies of La Cucaracha and El Diario de la Gente newspapers, posters, photographs and historical documents from numerous organizations including La Gente, Producciones Estrella Roja, Pueblo Neighborhood Health Centers and the Cinco de Mayo Organizing Committee.

Trujillo contributed hundreds of photographs and slides he collected at the University of Colorado in Boulder. Many of the photos were taken by Brian Sanchez and collected by the late Felipe Roybal.

Trujillo also contributed hours of audio recordings and an assortment of 8mm movie reels.

Individuals interested in donating their personal collections should contact the archives at 719-549-2475.

Case Study

Center, Colorado’s fight for bilingual education

By Shelley Wittevrongel

Adeline Sanchez, stepped before the Colorado State Senators and Representatives of the Bilingual Bicultural Steering Committee, and said “DO NOT give money to fund Center School District’s bilingual plan; it violates the law.”

It was 1975, when she demanded that the Senators turn down state money for bilingual education, until the Center plan included instruction in reading, writing and speaking, using both Spanish and English, and hire bilingual teachers. She was the parent-elected chair of Center’s Bicultural Bilingual Community Committee.

Adeline spoke on behalf of the estimated 185, K-3 bilingual children in Center schools who constituted 82% of all K-3 children. The schools plan preserved English as the sole language, except for 23 monolingual Chicano children. She weathered tough questions by steering committee members. She held her ground, speaking to what she knew – the needs of her kindergarten-aged daughter and Center’s other 5 to 8 year-olds.

Ya basta! It was time to demand that Center schools educate their Chicano children — no more taking federal/state money and pretending to serve these children. Stella Sanchez, a community leader, and Adeline Sanchez, her sister-in-law, had firsthand knowledge. Hired as teacher aides, they were eyewitnesses to Center school’s misuse of a federal Title VI Grant.

They blew the whistle. “Center schools have no bilingual education.” Anglo teachers still punish children for speaking Spanish! The first-grade teachers only occasionally “allowed” Stella and Adeline to teach “conversational” Spanish for 15 minutes.

The school system had to radically change. In 1974, the Supreme Court affirmed that the Civil Rights Act required school districts to address the language needs of for minority children. The Federal Department of Education applied the mandate. That same year, Colorado, groups like the Chicano Education Project organized to assist in drafting the Colorado Bilingual Bicultural Education Act of 1975. The legislature passed and funded the bill putting $2.55 million into Colorado school districts for bilingual education.

For three years, the Center School Board and administration defiantly refused to implement bilingual bicultural education. Center’s Chicano parents determinedly used every access point the bilingual law provided — electing strong parents to their Bicultural Bilingual Community Committee, training themselves, visiting active bilingual programs, using expert help to design programs, reporting school violations to state officials, and seeking help from the State Steering Committee. Those three years were ones of extreme struggles, but they marked a significant beginning.

From December 1975 to 1978, the Center School Board countered bilingual programs developed by the BBCC. In 1976, the Attorney General, found 15 violations including, that the district kept $11,205 of ‘75-’76 state monies for the general fund.

Undaunted, the Chicano community organized against anti-bilingual administrators, teachers and parents by holding instructive community meetings, creating bilingual programs and insisting on bilingual teachers.

Finally, on September 7, 1978, the federal Office for Civil Rights delivered an eighteen-page letter of findings, which threatened imminent withdrawal of federal funds. The OCR letter specified in meticulous detail the Center School District’s failure to educate linguistically different (Chicano) children.

But resistance surged. In 1986, Center Chicano parents again went to court represented by attorneys through the Colorado Lawyers Committee. They won a federal court-consent decree establishing baseline rights for linguistically different children in Center.

As we all know, the struggle must be made not just with every generation, but also with every new school administration. Pero, poco a poco andamos mas lejos!

Shelley Wittevrongel, formerly Sr. Michelle, who lived and worked in Center from 1970-1986. She is now a retired immigration attorney

This story is told in more detail and with reference to primary documents in Chapter 10 of Center, Colorado! Su Voto Cuenta! by Shelley Wittevrongel and Jennie Sanchez. Available at cost from Cambio, Inc. Center, Colorado or https://www.amazon.com/Center-Colorado-Su-Voto-Cuenta/dp/0997680938/ref=asr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1503096783&sr=8-2&keywords=wittevrongel
Opinion

Trump’s presidency promotes growth of hate groups

BY DAVID MARTINEZ

Few people, except his extreme-right-wing supporters, ever thought Donald Trump would be an honorable chief executive, especially when it comes to human rights, equality, discrimination and racism. The recent annual report of the Southern Poverty Law Center titled: “The Year in Hate and Extremism 2019,” presents thoroughly-researched information that confirms horrible increases in hate groups advocating violence across the country during this despicable presidency.

SPLC research found that in the last two years, the number of hate groups across the country more than doubled to 940 in 2019, constituting a 55 percent increase. SPLC found that such growth is documented to the last presidential election “when Trump’s campaign energized white nationalists who saw in him an avatar of their grievances and their anxiety over the country’s demographic changes. The numbers are a barometer, though an imperfect one, of the size and growth of the movement.”

Hate groups have beliefs or practices that attack or malign entire classes of people, typically for their individual characteristics because of their race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity – prejudices that strike at the heart of basic human values and fracture society along its most fragile fault lines. Attacking or demonizing groups of people on the basis of their human characteristics often inspires or is a precursor to violence. But violence itself is not a requirement to be identified as a hate group. A group’s ideology can inspire hate violence even when the group itself does not engage in violent activity.

There was an increase in sectors of the white supremacist movement in 2019, to 155 documented groups across the country. Most notably, some are advocating violence and encouraging their foot soldiers to prepare for (and precipitate) race war or mass civil conflict, the report stated. This research found a surging “white is right” movement linked to a series of racist and anti-Semitic terror attacks, and an increase in hate crimes. “Hundreds of hate groups are operating in America, targeting immigrants and refugees, LGBTQ people, Muslims, Jews, Blacks and other people of color,” the report stated.

SPLC found that these white supremacists followers have broken into two major strategist camps: “so-called accelerationists who wholeheartedly embrace violence as a political tool and ‘mainstreamers’ (or the ‘dissident right,’” as they often call themselves) who are attempting, with a degree of success, to bend the mainstream political right toward white nationalist ideas.” The SPLC research found that “much of the movement’s energy lies in the growing accelerationist wing … organized in informal online communities rather than formal groups.”

Colorado has not been spared. One attempt of such hate violence was thwarted by authorities here in Pueblo last November when white supremacist Richard Holzer, who reportedly was plotting to blow up a historic synagogue and poison congregants as part of a “racial holy war,” was arrested when he picked up two pipe bombs and 14 sticks of dynamite from undercover agents. At the time he was taken into custody, he was wearing a Nazi armband and carrying a copy of Mein Kompf.

On the political right in this country, it’s very apparent that a politics of passions unrelated to policy has flooded into the vacuum of convictions, thus driving behavior. Trump’s stranglehold on his party has strengthened the activities of the white supremacists, and other dangerous reactionary groups, many of whom are incompetents, sociopaths and those with no interest in mainstream politics or the greater good. The weakening of national party politics has strengthened these smaller radical right groups, whose members are united by loyalty to their niche organization, and motivated by hostility to their self-imposed enemies.

As a result of the present-day vast emptiness at the core of today’s politics, many more innocent lives in this country are in danger because of an individual’s race, color, gender, sexual preference, religion and political beliefs. The intersection of these various toxic belief systems is fueling the rise of hate violence and white nationalism in here and abroad. Having moved from the fringes of society to the mainstream, these ideologies now frame national narratives and influence electoral outcomes.

It is time to move beyond the illusion that hate, violence and extremism is merely a criminal crisis in America. It is also a political crisis. It has to be engaged politically. Just as there was a national movement against racial segregation in the 1960s, there now needs to be a national movement against hate violence in America.

When a society’s per capita quantity of conspicuous stupidity is so high and public manners so low that a critical mass of people are jolted into saying, “enough already,” one cannot be blamed for being scared enough to defend oneself. It appears that, that time has arrived.

David Martinez is a Denver attorney who was one of the founding staff members of La Cucaracha.
A Chicano/Hispanic coalition can dump Trump

By Guillermo DeHerrera

You hear it said often in these troubling and difficult days, we are in “unprecedented,” “historical,” and “transformative” globally changing times, “the greatest crisis of our times,” (LA Times Opinion, 12 April 2020, Nicholas Goldberg Column). But what does this really mean to us living our daily lives trying to survive on less and less money, resources and time? Will voting and democracy make a difference in my life and my families lives? Who cares if I vote? If I vote will anything change for me, my family, or my community?

I hope in these short paragraphs to offer some hope and encouragement for why we should take our right to vote very seriously, particularly during this Coronavirus Pandemic.

What the COVID-19 epidemic has shown us clearly and is now in full display across this country, in fact the entire world, is the political and social divide, the economic and health care disparity between people of color, the poor, the displaced and homeless among us and the wealthy 1 percent and the billionaire class.

In fact the economic disparity is growing as the greedy billionaire class takes advantage of the pandemic to make even more money increasing the wealth gap.

The stock market, where mostly the wealthy and corporate elite participate, seems unaware or oblivious to the pain and suffering of the working people and poor, not knowing how they will pay rent, buy food and groceries, or to know if they will have health care when unemployed.

All the while, the working poor in the service industry, health care workers, police, fire and emergency service providers are risking their lives without sufficient quantities of the necessary PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), ventilators and other medical equipment. Yet, President Trump lies to us daily that the pandemic is “under control,” and anyone needing or wanting to be tested will be tested.

We all know that bad stuff is happening and the Federal Government, which has not always been on our side or helped minority communities, will not or cannot in time solve the immediate health and economic crisis. So, what are we to do knowing elections are just months away? Who cares about voting and democracy in this most troubling and difficult time?

This November we will have national elections, Trump running for re-election, one of our two US Senators, Cory Gardner, also running for re-election, and all of our congressional delegation is up for re-election. In our two-party system, Democrats and Republicans, we actually don’t have many choices; it is either Trump or at the moment Joe Biden for president, since Bernie Sanders quit campaigning. For us here in Colorado, particularly the Hispanic/Chicano people of Colorado, we have a unique opportunity due to our increasing population to affect the outcome of the Colorado elections.

Even though Trump and the Republicans will make every attempt to stop the people from voting, such as limiting early voting and absentee voting by mail. This is democracy! If people vote we win.

Now don’t get me wrong, the liberal elite of the Democratic Party are not always on the side of working people, but we can pressure the politicians and they will listen to the needs of our community. So what are we, Hispanics/Chicanos, to do?

**Number one:** Register for the Census!

We need all our people to be counted in 2020. The Census is very important. The entire Spanish/Mexican/Hispanic/Chicano community needs to register for the 2020 Census. This is the foundation for making very important decisions on many social and economic matters, including drawing boundaries for elections.

**Number two:** Register to vote!

Start the political process now by making sure you are registered to vote, as are all your family, friends, and community members. It is never too late to start the Get Out the Vote campaign and better to start early.

**Number three:** Get involved in the political campaigns!

People are the key to winning elections, not so much the money, but people participating in the political process and voting win elections.

**Number four:** Here are my recommendations!

Vote Cory Gardner out of office. This is very important so as to change the Republican controlled Senate.

Removing just one or two republican senators will change the Senate and removing Cory Gardner, Trump’s boot licking lackey, will be doing our part to begin the change in Washington.

Of course, vote Trump out of office! If our people vote, we can do it. Now, I’m not the most ardent believer in another old white man being president, but it is better than the alternative of another disastrous four more years of lying Trump and his dirty money Jared Kushner, the idiot son-in-law, and his scheming family.

**Number five:** Let Bernie Sanders and his followers negotiate the Democratic Party platform. Bernie Sanders won the ideal logic campaign; he had the issues that will help the people, such as healthcare as a human right, free college tuition and eliminating college debt for the young people, etc.

The coalition to change this country is obvious. Young people, the millennials, minorities, especially Hispanics, working people, Unions, democrats and republicans wanting real change, and everyone affected by this disastrous Trump presidency. If we all vote, we can change government for the betterment of people. In this politically divided country it will take all of us voting to make the changes we need.

Guillermo DeHerrera is a former state representative and Adams County commissioner. He currently is a rancher in the San Luis Valley. He was on the original staff of La Cucaracha.

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