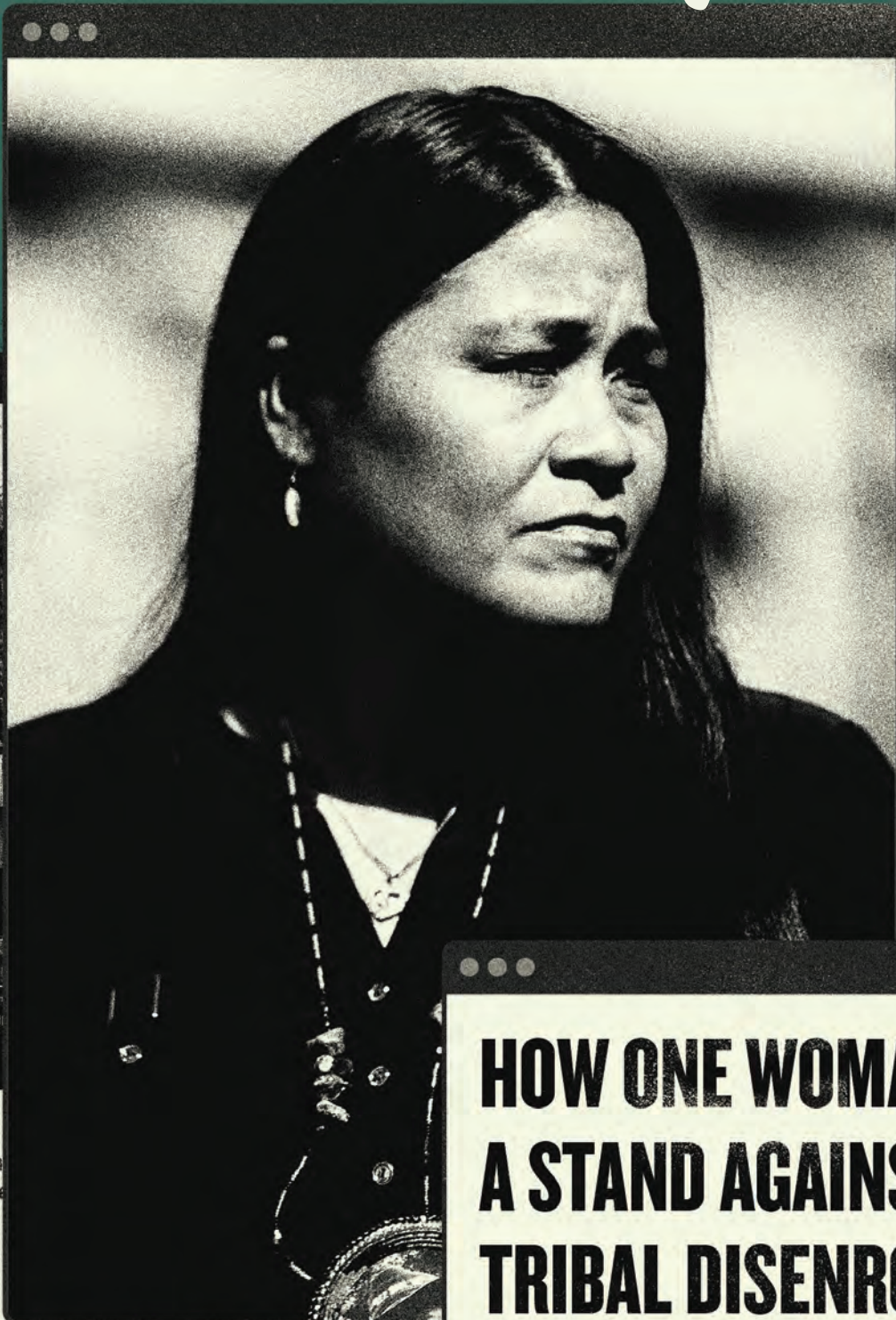


High Country News



HOW ONE WOMAN TOOK A STAND AGAINST TRIBAL DISENROLLMENT AND PAID FOR IT

By Jane C. Hu

BLM
maneuvers

Noncitizen
veterans

Pipeline
protests

So how did the 3 sisters enroll in
enrollment criteria that has to be met
a different in the 1980's?

They lied on their application

They claimed to descend from Madeline
Jobe, which they do not

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No. 2 • hcn.org

George And I'm sorry but Madeline Jobe was
Our Dear Annie George's dad Matsqui George
eventually moved to Matsqui but was Nooksack...
and that there was no headman. If you jump the

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Former Nooksack Tribal Councilwoman Carmen Tageant stands for a photograph at the Zuchanon housing site where she resides in Everson, Washington. A victim of cyberbullying, Tageant lost her job and says she has struggled with anxiety and depression. **Lindsey Wasson / HCN**

High Country News is a nonprofit 501(c)3 independent media organization that covers the important issues and stories that define the Western U.S. Our mission is to inform and inspire people – through in-depth journalism – to act on behalf of the West's diverse natural and human communities. (ISSN/0191/5657) is published monthly, 16 times a year, by High Country News, 119 Grand Ave., Paonia, CO 81428. Periodicals, postage paid at Paonia, CO, and other post offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to High Country News, Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428. All rights to publication of articles in this issue are reserved. See hcn.org for submission guidelines. Subscriptions to HCN are \$37 a year, \$47 for institutions: 800-905-1155 | hcn.org | For editorial comments or questions, write High Country News, P.O. Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428 or editor@hcn.org, or call 970-527-4898.





The contested West

I RECENTLY RECEIVED a note from a 71-year-old man in Arizona, who told me that he does not subscribe to *High Country News* “because it encourages, glorifies (and) attempts to justify illegal immigration.” Population growth is overtaking the nation and planet, he wrote, and we should heed the words of Edward Abbey and send immigrants “back” to “fix their country” armed with rifles.

This is an untenable position, one that ignores history in favor of an imagined American utopia. It erases the theft of Indigenous land and the violent displacement of Indigenous peoples by white settlers, and it ignores the exploitation of non-white peoples under the system of racist capitalism that continues today. I would prefer that our readers consider a more complicated picture of the Western United States, where a true sense of belonging, for anyone who lives here, is ever contested, always tenuous.

In this issue, for example, writer Jane C. Hu describes the travails of Carmen Tageant, a member of the Nooksack Tribal Council who faced serious online harassment and was ousted from her post amid a bitter conflict over tribal enrollment. Writer Sarah Tory describes the University of California’s legal struggle to protect Dreamers, the undocumented children of immigrant parents, who face an uncertain future under the Trump administration. Writer-photographer Jolene Yazzie describes the challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit communities as they seek to find their place in modern Diné society. And in a brief essay, our publisher, Paul Larmer, considers the implications of the lifetime disabilities pass he recently acquired, which grants him free access to federal public lands.

All of these stories describe a contested West. This is a region in constant conflict, rooted in hundreds of years of conquest. White-washed histories, an entrenched system of oppression and dominance, and escalating culture wars — all of these lean heavily on the region, amid the climate calamity. We need a new ethics and a politics of empathy, knowledge and wisdom. This is a moment that demands inclusion.

The question for those of us living here is whether we can find a way through these differences and difficulties. In a society that promotes division, in times where the divides are widening, can we imagine something better? I want this magazine to help people understand these complexities, no matter how uncomfortable they are. What choice do we have?

Brian Calvert, editor-in-chief

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Stephanie Medina sits with her mother in the living room of their San Bernardino, California, home. Medina, a University of California student, received assistance from the UC Immigrant Legal Services Center when DACA ended. (above) **Morgan Lieberman / HCN**

FlixBus driver Paul Mackenzie's face is reflected in the rearview mirror of the bus in Seattle, Washington, on its southbound route to Portland, Oregon. (above, right) **Chloe Collyer / HCN**

The brothers of Jose Raúl López Jiménez guide his casket out of the church on the day of his burial in Hobbs, New Mexico. López's body was returned to the U.S. after he was murdered at his home in Chihuahua, Mexico. (right) **Joel Angel Juárez**

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Photo illustration featuring Carmen Tageant:

J. D. Reeves / HCN

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print by Andy Warhol, 1986.
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The artist's little-known Western-themed works challenge cowboy mythologies — to a point.

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LETTERS

High Country News is dedicated to independent journalism, informed debate and discourse in the public interest. We welcome letters through digital media and the post. Send us a letter, find us on social, or email us at editor@hcn.org.

EMAIL

The kindergarten/first grade class at the Idaho campus of Teton Science Schools' Mountain Academy was thrilled to see your cover story about wildlife crossings ("Crossing to Safety," 1/1/20). Throughout the fall and early winter, our class has been studying our local Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the animals that live here. Our focus turned towards animal adaptations, and we learned that animals in our valley and beyond endure incredible conditions, but often struggle to manage highway crossings. As a result, students in our class expressed an eagerness to do something that would help with this ongoing issue and worked together to create a "Watch for Wildlife" sticker. We are selling these stickers locally and plan on donating our proceeds to the Teton Wildlife Rehabilitation Center here in Teton Valley, Idaho. Connecting our classroom work to your article was incredibly impactful for the young learners in our class, making their work feel so relevant to the world they live in.

Hilary Hays

FACEBOOK

Is this part of HCN's new slick magazine approach ("Worse for Wear," 1/1/20)? To keep reposting simplistic analyses of headgear? I kept thinking of the often-printed image of HCN's founder, Tom Bell, and what he would have thought

of your cowboy hat editorial. I understand what the editorial was trying to accomplish, but is this that pressing of an issue to your magazine?

Jason LaBelle

FACEBOOK

Cowboy hats don't stay on in the wind ("Worse for Wear," 1/20). You can't wear them at a gallop, or on a motorcycle, or on a windy day, without a chinstrap. So they're worthless for shade or during storms and hence have no practical value and serve as a symbol only. Too bad that symbol has come to represent bigotry rather than being the symbol of the freedom of the open range they once were.

Joe Ward

EMAIL

It was wonderful to see Henry George in the pages of *High Country News* ("Gilded Age problems," 12/9/19). Many of the myths and misunderstandings that have formed our idea of "the West" were partly conceived from a disconnection between economics and ecology or actual, physical life. George was incredibly forward-thinking, especially for his time, and spent the pages of his bestselling book *Progress & Poverty* dismantling the idea that wealth comes solely from capital or labor. All wealth, he wrote, comes first from land, and no human should have the right to own and control land at the expense of others. (He

distinguished land itself, which he said should be owned by the community, from improvements on that land, such as buildings.) Mainstream economic theories, he said, were often simply used by landowners and resource hoarders as an excuse to justify inequality and injustice. *Progress & Poverty* is rich in thought and careful observation, and should be required reading for economics students, land use planners, and legislators — required reading for everyone, in fact.

Antonia Malchik

EMAIL

"A Cherokee for Trump" and "Party Favors" (12/9/19) by Graham Lee Brewer and Will Ford seem bookends to each other, detailing really bad politics. Both portend a dismal outcome for our nation. In Brewer's article, the Oklahoma congressman seems to enjoy contradictory support from his own fragmented people. ("There are a lot of conservative hardcore evangelical Cherokees who believe he is doing the right thing.") In fact, many evangelicals see Trump's Christian Ship as a rotten boat. What this might mean for the congressperson's support, we shall see.

Meanwhile, Ford's article shows us a different rotting vessel, the increased exposure of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee as a vicious myopic enterprise cobbling together any candidate as a frontrunner, regardless of their waffling vision. It is obvious that the DCCC's real aim is to avoid electing candidates who are the moral and ethical future of their party and the nation, in favor of any political factotum who agrees to hang on to the status quo. To salvage the present state, liberals are going to have to become Progressives with a capital "P" and realize they have to deal hardball with this decrepit party apparatus.

John Roehling

EMAIL

"How Big Rec picks its battles" (11/25/19) distorts Patagonia's long-standing advocacy to protect public land. The reporter is right to care about border communities impacted by this administration's grotesque policies and the lack of diversity in the outdoor industry; both are deeply concerning, and Patagonia is addressing them through direct action. But the implication that we choose to fund conservation efforts based on our customer's zip codes or established networks is false. In just the past few years, Patagonia has funded 75 grants to 46 grassroots environmental organizations in Arizona and New Mexico, and we don't have a store in either state. We are fighting oil and gas development in remote villages in Alaska and across the American West because fossil fuel development is the number-one contributor to the climate crisis, and because we believe in the protection of wild places over any kind of access.

In San Juan County, home of Bears Ears National Monument, the average household income is nearly \$20,000 less than the national average. The five tribes that came together to protect it, along with the conservation and outdoor community, did so because the president illegally reduced the size of the monument, designated by President Barack Obama, by 85%. We "sprang into action" because we had spent years advocating and committing resources to protect the area, lobbied the government to designate the area as a national monument, and were prepared when it was illegally rescinded. This administration seems intent on ripping apart communities and destroying our planet. We should be coming together to fight back and create safe, healthy communities, not making false assumptions and accusations.

**K. Corley Kenna
Patagonia**

Mass transit West

Will younger generations find a way to ditch cars and planes?

BY CARL SEGERSTROM

A MISBOOKED FLIGHT left Anthony Gill needing a quick ticket to Seattle from Spokane, Washington, last November. Gill, a 25-year-old graduate student in public policy at the University of Southern California, had heard of a new bus service called FlixBus, so he found the company's app on his phone. The first run connecting Washington's two largest cities, traversing the state from the rolling sagebrush of the east to the

winding mountain passes and Puget Sound in the west, was departing the next day. So, Gill said, "I booked the trip that night for, like, \$10."

The purchase was a spur-of-the-moment decision, but not an accident. Gill has an interest in transportation in the Northwest and was previously a board member of Cascadia Rail — a nonprofit pushing for a high-speed train connecting major population centers in

the region. He's also part of a generation whose members are less likely to have a driver's license and more willing to ditch their cars than older generations. "Why would I drive when I can sit back, surf the internet, continue my Twitter addiction or watch a movie?" Gill said.

Younger generations also worry more about the impact climate change will have on their lives. New bus options around the West are targeting these environment- and budget-conscious travelers. And rail proponents like Gill think demand for regional bus travel will demonstrate that there's a thirst for other alternatives, too — in particular, rail systems. With expanding avenues for long-distance travel, getting around the West in the future could require less hassle and spew less carbon.

FlixBus, a European company founded in Germany in 2013, first launched routes in California, Nevada and Arizona in 2018 and has since expanded to Utah, Washington, Oregon and a sliver of Idaho. They've entered an increasingly popular industry for city-to-city transport, with competitors like BoltBus, Megabus and



Erin Chiang works while on a FlixBus. Chiang has commuted from Portland to Seattle once a week for the past four years. **Chloe Collier / HCN**

the upscale Cabin bus, an overnight sleeper connecting San Francisco and Los Angeles. All of these brands have emerged in the last decade as alternatives to Greyhound, the only nationwide bus service.

To differentiate itself in a growing field, FlixBus targets passengers looking for perks like reliable Wi-Fi and charging outlets. The company also tries to meet younger riders where they are, such as on the campus of Central Washington University in Ellensburg, Washington. On a chilly December day with low clouds and foggy breath lingering in the air, two CWU students caught the bus heading to Seattle. “It’s way easier to access a bus that comes to your campus,” said Leilani Salu, who was riding FlixBus for the first time. “And even when you get dropped off in places like Seattle, it’s convenient because it’s right next to the light rail.” A driver who worked the Thanksgiving holiday weekend said the buses were packed with students.

In general, Millennials and the now coming-of-age members of Generation Z are more attracted to lifestyles that don’t rely on cars. A 2014 study by the Public Interest Research Group, for example, found that Millennials are less likely to drive and more likely to either use public transit or bike than generations before them were as young adults. Part of the trend, according to the report, is the number of younger people moving to cities where alternatives to car transportation are more practical than owning, parking and commuting by car. More convenient bus options and growing awareness of the climate impacts of travel could also lead younger generations to embrace regional bus travel, said Tony Dutzik, a co-author of the 2014 study and senior policy analyst at the public policy think-tank Frontier Group.

As concerns grow over the environmental impacts of travel, policy solutions could favor bus

“Why would I drive when I can sit back, surf the internet, continue my Twitter addiction or watch a movie?”

companies. While figures shift based on capacity, when buses are full, they are the most carbon-efficient form of long distance travel in the United States, according to Joseph Schwieterman, the director of DePaul University’s Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development and an expert on regional transportation. And that could become a big deal as Western states develop plans to rein in and possibly tax carbon emissions. “The single biggest policy to jump-start bus travel would be a fee on carbon use,” he said.

BUSES MAY NOT BE THE END of the line for regional travel in the West. As attitudes toward public transportation change and urban populations continue to grow, clogged Northwest freeways are leading regional planners to consider adding high-speed rail infrastructure. The Washington State Department of Transportation is studying an “ultra-high-speed” rail line that would connect Seattle, Portland and Vancouver, British Columbia, shortening the travel times between the region’s economic hubs. The agency thinks it could be cheaper than the alternative: WSDOT estimated a high-end price tag of \$42 billion for the project, which is less than half the estimated price of adding new north- and

south-bound lanes to Interstate 5 in Washington.

As it plans for the future, Washington is trying to learn from places like California, where high-speed rail projects have dragged on for more than a decade. “Robust public outreach and community engagement early on — that’s been really important to us,” said Janet Matkin, WSDOT’s communications manager. Although routes and rights of way have yet to be established for the new rail system, Matkin is confident high-speed rail could be a reality in the Northwest. “Many can’t imagine what this region will be like in 50 years if we don’t invest now,” she said, referencing support from business leaders like Microsoft.

Gill, who frequently travels between Spokane, Seattle and Los Angeles, said he hopes bus companies like FlixBus will show regional leaders that there’s a demand for new transportation alternatives. “I try as much as possible not to drive. It’s the hassle. I’d rather not deal with things like parking, gas and insurance,” he said. And he’s also hoping not to fly as much as he does now because of the climate impacts and inconveniences of air travel. Ideally, Gill would like to be able to board a high-speed train on the foggy shores of Puget Sound and hop out under the bright Southern California sun. ☀

THE LATEST

BLM two- step

Backstory

Leaked audio from a Bureau of Land Management staff meeting in Washington, D.C., last September revealed an agency struggling to justify the planned relocation of its headquarters to Grand Junction, Colorado. Angry staffers confronted acting BLM Director William Perry Pendley, who denied that the move was an attempt to weaken federal authority and said he was simply following the Trump administration’s orders. Employees appeared dissatisfied with the lack of transparency surrounding the move (“How BLM employees really feel about moving West,” 9/20/19).

Followup

Beginning in January 2020, some BLM senior leaders plan to rotate between Washington, D.C., and Grand Junction on two-week shifts, according to a report by *E&E News*. It remains unclear how many employees will permanently relocate, but *E&E* reported that up to 80% of those reassigned to the West are considering rejecting the order and retiring or leaving the agency. Also in early January, Interior Secretary David Bernhardt extended Pendley’s position as acting BLM director until at least April 3. (For more on the move, see page 16.)
—Helen Santoro



REPORTAGE

A return to isolation

Alaska's marine highway system is under threat.

BY MARC FAWCETT-ATKINSON

A RUSTING STEEL WALKWAY roofed with faded Plexiglas led to the ferry docked in Prince Rupert, British Columbia. Sirens wailed from the container port half a mile away, cutting through the moist air, as an acrid odor rose from the pier's tar-coated pilings. I stepped out

of the chilly late-September night and climbed a labyrinthine staircase to the boat's passenger lounge, where a dozen people, covered with blankets and sleeping bags, settled in for the six-hour trip. The ventilation system whistled loudly, muffling the ship's engines, as the *M/V*

Malaspina — a 450-person ferry operated by the state of Alaska — set sail for Ketchikan, Alaska, possibly for the last time. After 56 years, the state had announced it plans to shut down the route.

Boats and airplanes are the only way to move through Southeast Alaska, a rainforest-cloaked strip of islands and coastline squeezed between glaciated mountains and the Pacific Ocean. There are no roads between most of the region's towns and hamlets. Until relatively recently, when jet-serviced air travel became cheaper and more frequent, ferries were the main conduit among communities, and they remain far more reliable, efficient and economical than a barge or airplane. However, rising maintenance costs, declining ridership and a governor who favors privatization have led to severe budget cuts and major service



Members of the Metlakatla, Alaska, boys' basketball team play video games while riding the *M/V LeConte* back to Juneau from a game in Haines. The scenic route has become somewhat routine for many teams in remote areas. Before the Alaska Marine Highway System, teams would charter local fishing boats to take them to games up the Inside Passage. Those unfortunate enough to miss out on a bunk would sleep in the fish hold. **Samuel Wilson**

reductions, threatening the future of Alaska's fleet of public ferries — and the connections, both economic and social, that depend on them.

That fleet of ferries is called the Alaska Marine Highway System, or AMHS. "It has its name for a purpose — the Alaska Marine Highway System — we are on islands," state Rep. Dan Ortiz told me in Ketchikan. The AMHS was created in 1963, four years after Alaska statehood, to weave the region into North America's highways despite its geography. Prince Rupert, a Canadian city 40 miles south of the international border with road access, was its first southern terminus. The system grew over the next five decades, incorporating stops in Prince William Sound, the Aleutian Islands and Washington. By 2013, 35 communities were connected.

However, unlike its asphalt counterparts, Alaska's marine highway system would disappear overnight without government funding. Ticket sales account for about a third of its operating costs, and the state pays for the remainder. In early 2019, Gov. Mike Dunleavy proposed a 75% cut in the system's funding from the state, from \$86 million in fiscal year 2019 to \$21.8 million the next year, which would have effectively shut it down from Oct. 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020. The proposal was an effort to reform the "inefficient system," explained Donna Arduin, then the director of the Alaska Office of Management and Budget.

But after pushback from lawmakers and Alaskans, the administration backed down and allocated \$48 million to the AMHS — barely enough to keep the ferries on the water. These cuts are likely to remain, with the proposed 2021 budget warning that the "AMHS will provide significantly less services." The Ketchikan-Prince Rupert route faces additional challenges related to new U.S. Customs and Border Protection regulations and aging terminal facilities. As a result, in late 2019, officials reduced the number of sailings to many smaller communities and eliminated the route between Prince Rupert-Ketchikan entirely. "We're looking at no service from here until June," Travis Ohlson, a resident of Gustavus, one of the affected towns, told me a few weeks after my ferry ride. "People are freaking out a little bit."

IN GUSTAVUS, A 386-PERSON community nestled against Glacier Bay National Park, everything — bulldozers, books, boots, computers, cars, coffee, produce, people, pets — must arrive by boat or plane. But when Ohlson was growing up there in the late 1990s, Gustavus didn't yet have ferry service. So large items and most food came in by barge, including Ohlson's first car, a used sedan that cost him \$200 to buy and \$600 to ship from Juneau. With shipping costs so high, residents were resourceful — expert recyclers by necessity.

Life changed when the AMHS started scheduled sailings to the town in 2010. The four-hour ferry ride from Juneau brought more visitors to the community, and groceries became more affordable. A one-way ticket from the city cost around \$55, much cheaper than a roughly \$120 plane ticket. Community members got used to the consistent, all-weather transportation linking them to stores, a hospital and a jet airport in Juneau. But now, those amenities are threatened by the abrupt transition back to pre-AMHS isolation starting in mid-January 2020.

The losses could be far-reaching: According to a 2016 report commissioned by the AMHS Reform Initiative — a collaboration that's work-

ing to revitalize the ferry system as a public corporation — every dollar of state money budgeted to the AMHS generates \$2.30 in Alaska economic activity. The report also predicted that reduced AMHS service would cause economic losses for small businesses and fishermen, a higher cost of living in coastal communities, and a decline in the availability of medical care. Furthermore, without the ferries, Alaskans would "miss out on ... unique opportunities to interact with, do business with, and learn from each other." The AMHS, in other words, is both an economic engine and a floating community center well adapted to connecting people along the vast and rugged coastline.

Metlakatla, for example, a town 40 miles north of the Canadian border, was founded in 1887 by several Tsimshian families who had been living in B.C. Many residents still have relatives and friends in Canada and rely on the Ketchikan-Prince Rupert ferry route to visit them. It is also their main conduit to obtain a valuable food, grease from the eulachon fish. Eulachon are small, oily anadromous smelt that spawn during late winter in coastal rivers between Alaska and California. They are harvested for their oil, which can be rendered into a nutritious and long-lasting butter-like grease. This longevity makes it possible to trade the grease over long distances. The timing of the spawn during the lean winter months gives eulachon grease significant cultural, economic and nutritional importance among many coastal Indigenous peoples. "It's in our daily diet," explained Judith A. Eaton, a resident of the Metlakatla Indian Community and tribal member.

But rivers near the community are closed to the eulachon fishery, so residents rely on relatives fishing on the Nass River in northern B.C. and trade for the grease. Without the Prince Rupert-Ketchikan ferry, fishermen from the Nass must travel over 150 miles in their own, smaller fishing boats to reach Metlakatla, making the grease harder to get and more expensive.

Such connections aside, ridership on Alaska's ferries has steadily declined since 1992, a trend that correlates with more frequent and affordable jet service to Alaska's cities. Ketchikan hosts Alaska's fifth-busiest airport, and the Boeing 737 jet that carried me south at the end of my trip — one of four flights to Seattle that day — was packed. Still, jets can't land in most rural towns, and without the AMHS, getting in and out of most coastal Alaska communities means packing a few belongings on a small plane and hoping for clear weather. On my flight, I looked down from 35,000 feet in the air. I could see no roads — only an oceanic highway, waiting for a ferry. ☀



Only in death do they come home

If they survive military service, noncitizen veterans can face deportation.

PHOTOS BY JOEL ANGEL JUÁREZ TEXT BY JESSICA KUTZ

In the past century, more than 760,000 noncitizens — asylum seekers, refugees, DACA recipients and others — served in the United States military, fighting in both world wars, Afghanistan and Iraq.

They were often rewarded with a fast track to naturalization. After Sept. 11, for example, noncitizens were able to naturalize immediately upon enlisting. But while military service often helps, it does not guarantee citizenship. Lawful residents convicted of crimes can find themselves deported instead of naturalized.

All combat veterans face challenges adjusting to civilian life. Some suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); others turn to drugs and alcohol. Between 2011 and 2012, approximately 8% of incarcerated persons had served in the military.

Support for veterans is something that unites people across the political spectrum. But veterans who lack citizenship often find that respect for their service ends the moment they get into trouble. After their sentence is served, they face a

second and more harrowing punishment: deportation. Their only guarantee of returning to the country that deported them lies in death: They remain entitled to a U.S. military burial.

The Government Accountability Office says at least 92 veterans were deported between 2013 and 2018. Immigration and Customs Enforcement does not collect data on veterans, and many advocates who work with deported veterans believe the number is much higher. Hector Barajas-Varela, a deported veteran who gained citizenship after being pardoned by California Gov. Jerry Brown, founded the Deported Veterans Support House in Tijuana, Mexico, to promote naturalization of veterans. In congressional testimony in October 2019, he said he knows of at least 300 veterans who have been deported and suspects there are thousands more.

Jose Raúl López Jiménez was one of those veterans. He saw active duty in the U.S. Army between 1980 and 1983 and was honorably discharged. He was later convicted of a felony narcotics charge and served time in prison. Upon release, he attended routine parole meet-

ings. Then, one day, López was detained by immigration officials, and six months later, in 2008, he was deported to Mexico.

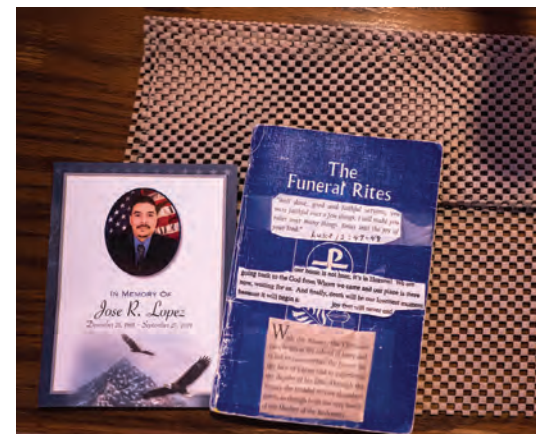
In autumn 2019, López was shot and killed after a gunman broke into his Chihuahua, Mexico, home. Later that month, his body crossed the international border — the geopolitical boundary that for so long separated him from his family in Hobbs, New Mexico. At his funeral, a member of the Army National Guard handed his mother an American flag. And as relatives and friends — including other veterans fighting deportation — looked on, his casket was lowered into the grave. He was home at last. ☀

Reporting contributed by Joel Angel Juárez

Jose Raúl López Jiménez was deported in 2008 following a narcotics conviction, even though he had already served his sentence. (opposite)

At the funeral Mass in Hobbs, New Mexico, López's brothers stand in the front pew of the church. (left)

A photograph of Jose Raúl López Jiménez lies next to a guide to the Roman Catholic funeral Mass rites. (below)





From left, Ramon López, Danny López and Eddie López gather inside their mother's home in Hobbs, New Mexico, before the funeral of their brother, Jose Raúl López Jiménez. The brothers and their mother traveled to Chihuahua, Mexico, when they heard López was shot by an unidentified gunman at his own home. After authorities analyzed the crime scene, the brothers had to clean up the aftermath, including the blood on the floors. (above)

Five days before the burial of Jose Raúl López Jiménez, a deported U.S. Army veteran, funeral home employees load his casket into a hearse in Chihuahua, Mexico. López's body was returned to Hobbs, New Mexico, for a military burial a few days after he was murdered. (right)





Graciela López stands over the casket of her son during a private family viewing. Jose Raúl López Jiménez was unable to gain access to VA-approved hospitals and clinics while in Mexico. His mother stayed with him at a hospital in Mexico for nearly two weeks until he died. (above)



Manuel Valenzuela, left, and his older brother, Valente Valenzuela, both Vietnam War combat veterans, say their goodbyes to López. The Valenzuela brothers have been fighting their own deportation since 2009, when they both received removal notices for previous misdemeanors, despite the fact that they had already served their time. They have been active in raising awareness about the problems facing deported U.S. military veterans. (above right)



Army National Guard Honor Guard Spc. Marcia Perez, left, and Sgt. Michael Trujillo stand at attention during the burial of deported U.S. Army veteran Jose Raúl López Jiménez. (above)



Army National Guard Honor Guard Sgt. Michael Trujillo presents an American flag to Graciela López during the burial of her son, who was deported despite his service to the nation. (left)

Agency displacement

Moving land-management headquarters out of Washington, D.C., manifests Trump's 'deconstruction of the administrative state.'

BY JONATHAN THOMPSON

IN 2017, STEVE BANNON, then chief strategist for the Trump administration, told a conservative gathering that the administration's first-round Cabinet appointees were selected in order to carry out the "deconstruction of the administrative state" by repealing regulations and otherwise dismantling government agencies. Bannon was articulating what most observers already knew. After all, Trump's appointees were, for the most part, either woefully unequipped for the job or openly hostile to the agencies they would lead.

Many of those first-round picks are now gone, but their successors have carried on the deconstruction agenda, some with even greater fervor. Perhaps nowhere have they had more success than within the Department of Interior, particu-

larly the Bureau of Land Management, which oversees some 245 million acres of public land. Ryan Zinke, Trump's first Interior secretary, and now his successor, David Bernhardt, have rescinded regulations, tossed out plans to save the imperiled sage grouse, streamlined oil and gas permitting, and made it easier for mining and drilling companies to avoid paying royalties on the public's minerals. Now, in what may be the ultimate manifestation of the agency's deconstruction, Bernhardt is moving the BLM's national headquarters from Washington, D.C., to Grand Junction, Colorado.

This letter, from William Perry Pendley to BLM employees, provides a glimpse into the workings of the move and the context surrounding it.

Instead of officially appointing someone to lead the BLM, President Donald Trump has installed acting directors, who do not require Senate confirmation. William Perry Pendley has filled that role since July 2019 and just had his position extended to April. Prior to becoming a federal bureaucrat, Pendley — whose twitter handle is @Sagebrush_Rebel — was the president of the Mountain States Legal Foundation, an organization that embodied Bannon's goal of destroying the administrative state.

Ryan Zinke first proposed moving BLM headquarters West in 2017. When he was ousted in early 2019, the plan was picked up by his successor, David Bernhardt, a Coloradan, who has a vested interest in getting the so-called administrative state out of industry's way. Bernhardt has served as a lobbyist for Halliburton, the Independent Petroleum Association of America, the Westlands Water District and the Rosemont Mine. He was a solicitor in George W. Bush's Interior Department when it was notoriously plagued by scandal for cozying to the industries it regulated.

Bernhardt argues that moving BLM HQ West will bring the agency's leaders closer to the land that they manage — the bulk of which is located in Western states — as well as giving the national office better oversight of the state and regional field offices. **It would also presumably bring nearly 300 high-paying government jobs to a mid-sized Western city.** This promise of economic development garnered support from the likes of Sen. Michael Bennet, D-Colo., and Colorado Gov. Jared Polis, also a Democrat. Critics of the relocation, such as Rep. Raúl Grijalva, D-Ariz., however, argued that moving national headquarters out of Washington could violate U.S. code and that it gives industry greater access to BLM leaders while reducing congressional oversight of the agency.

In July, the BLM officially announced the move to Grand Junction. **Only about 30 employees would relocate to this western Colorado city of 63,000, however, with another 220 staffers dispersed around the West.** Grand Junction's initial hopes for a needed economic boost were dashed. At the same time, it became clear that the move was not only displacing the agency, but also dismantling it by scattering staffers across a huge geographic area.

In November 2019, BLM employees were given just 30 days to decide whether to move West or lose their jobs. D.C. staffers who are transferred to Grand Junction, for example, will face significant upheaval. The city is about one-tenth the size of the nation's capital, with a fraction of the amenities, employment opportunities for partners and educational options for children. They would be relocating from a racially and ethnically diverse city to an overwhelmingly white, politically conservative town that doesn't offer direct flights to D.C. Because the cost of living is far lower in Grand Junction, relocated staffers will receive a substantial cut in their "locality pay." They will also be taken out of the Washington, D.C., loop, diminishing their opportunities to move between federal agencies as they climb the government career ladder.

Former BLM officials have told *Government Executive* that they expect as few as 15% of staffers to choose to be transferred. In his letter, Pendley justifies this prediction when he indicates that as of early December, 30 employees had already been reassigned to other government jobs in Washington, while only two staffers were in their new positions in the West. In other words, the move appears to be serving yet another purpose for the Bannon deconstructionists: **It has become a de facto housecleaning of senior staffers, particularly people of color.** In a letter to Bernhardt, Grijalva pointed out that Black employees are far less likely than white staffers to choose to "uproot their lives and families and (move) to areas with a sparse Black/African-American population." Whether new employees will be hired to fill those positions is not clear. As of Jan. 14, the agency was not advertising for any full-time positions in the Grand Junction office, and a BLM official told us that the agency does not yet have any numbers on how many people have accepted or declined the re-assignment.

From: "Pendley, William"

Date: December 12, 2019 at 12:00:17 PM EST

To: BLM_WO_Everyone@blm.gov

Subject: Latest Update

Dear Colleagues,

Last month, when you received a **Management Directed Geographic Reassignment** (MDR) letter, you were asked to respond within **30 days** to let us know if you will accept or decline the reassignment. As you know, that deadline is at close of business today.

For those of you who will be **moving West**, we will be working hard to help you have a smooth transition over the next 90 days so you can report to your new location as soon as possible. Already, two of your colleagues are at their new duty stations in Lakewood, Colorado, and Phoenix, Arizona. Welcome!

By the way, **I will be in Grand Junction, Colorado** at the new BLM Headquarters on January 2, 2020, for the start of the new year!

In addition to information from HR and transitions services, the BLM Daily site on **Living Out West** offers more information about your new area. You'll also be receiving additional insights and guidance from your new office.

For those who are not relocating, we understand the difficulty of your decision and I sincerely hope you will avail yourself of all the services that we are providing.

For example, right now, affected employees receive early consideration for any new positions within the entire Department in the Washington area five days before being advertised on USAJobs. I have been working individually with the Department's senior leadership to make sure that BLM employees have a fair shot at any postings that are available.

Also, there are 21 positions in the BLM Washington Office and the BLM Eastern States Office in Falls Church, VA, so you can check on the status of those positions on the **Headquarters Move West** site.

Our efforts are bearing fruit, as of Friday, December 7, we placed 30 of our BLM colleagues who could not move West in positions within BLM, DOI, or other agencies. Others are being processed.

Additionally, if you decline the relocation, and subsequently become displaced pursuant to applicable regulations, you will be eligible for the Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan and the Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP/CTAP), which will give you priority placement.

Moreover, Voluntary Early Retirement Authority and Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments (VERA/VSIP), are also being offered to those of you in the Washington Office who are eligible.

Finally, a Transition Support Team is providing assistance and information, as well as career counseling, résumé-writing, interviewing workshops, and identification of DOI and BLM vacancies for interested and qualified employees at M Street Tuesday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. or virtually by scheduling on the **Transition Support page** on the BLM Daily site. Please take advantage of these services as soon as possible to ensure you are in the best possible position and present the most attractive case to obtain a new post if you wish to remain a federal employee.

I will continue to provide status updates for you and the rest of the BLM team. You can also visit **the BLM Daily** where you will find up-to-date information as well as resources to assist you.

We remain committed to working with each of you to assist in the transition, regardless of whether or not you are able to make the move West.

Thank you for all you do for the Bureau, the American people, and the Nation.

Best, Perry

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Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W., Room 5655
Washington, D.C. 20240
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Pendley, however, won't have to make that choice — not really. **Rather than relocating to Grand Junction, Pendley and BLM Deputy Director of Operations Michael Nedd will be rotating in and out of the new headquarters for two-week stints**, spending the rest of their time in Washington, at least until the new headquarters is "operational."

\$13.6 million

The amount the Department of Interior is asking from Congress to fund the relocation.

In September 2019, the government signed a lease with Crossroads Venture LLC for 6,000 square feet of office space in a Grand Junction building, with an annual rent of

\$156,278.

Fellow tenants of the building include

Chevron, the Colorado Oil and Gas Association and Laramie Energy.

Other oil and gas companies have offices nearby.

Defending DACA

Why the University of California is fighting for undocumented students.

BY SARAH TORY

FOR MOST OF HER LIFE, Stephanie Medina felt adrift. When her classmates in San Bernardino, California, were dreaming of college and careers, Medina hesitated to think about her future. Because she was undocumented, it was easier to forgo her dreams and ambitions, accepting her life as it was without the hope that anything would change.

But things did change. In 2012, when Medina was 12, President Barack Obama announced the “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals” program, or DACA, which provided temporary deportation relief and work authorization to undocumented young people who had come to the U.S. as children. To qualify, young immigrants had to meet certain requirements, including not having a serious criminal record. They also had to have earned (or be in the process of earning) an American high school diploma.

Medina begged her mother to let her apply so she could work legally and make more money. Her mom, who was also undocumented, did not trust the program, but eventually relented, and in 2016, Medina received DACA. For the first time

in her life, Medina felt like she had options. She started thinking about college and chose UC Santa Cruz, in part because its leafy campus near the sea felt like a fresh start, far away from her life in the Mojave Desert.

A year after Medina got DACA, in September 2017, Jeff Sessions, who was then President Donald Trump’s attorney general, announced the end of the program, claiming that Obama had acted unlawfully and circumvented the country’s immigration laws by creating the program via executive order.

“The compassionate thing to do is end the lawlessness, enforce our laws,” said Sessions, defending the decision.

AS A UC STUDENT, Medina had access to an indispensable resource: the University of California’s Immigrant Legal Services Center. Headquartered at the UC Davis Law School, it was launched in 2015 by UC President Janet Napolitano to offer free immigration legal help for the estimated 3,700 undocumented students enrolled at UC campuses. As the Trump administration escalates its crackdown on both legal and illegal immigration, the center

has become a lifeline for students trying to navigate the increasingly bewildering U.S. immigration system. A little over two years ago, when the Trump administration ended DACA, the University of California stepped up its efforts, not only supporting its undocumented students, but actively fighting the government on their behalf.

That fight has now reached the U.S. Supreme Court, with a lawsuit the university filed in 2017 challenging the government’s decision to end DACA — the first legal effort by a university to preserve the program that has helped tens of thousands of undocumented students access higher education. With a decision expected sometime in 2020, attorneys at the UC Immigrant Legal Services Center are doing what they can to keep the door open for undocumented students. Without DACA and the work authorization it provides, María Blanco, the center’s executive director, fears that undocumented students will struggle to pay for college or even see any point in finishing. “I’m really worried that we’ll lose students from this population,” she said.

Stephanie Medina sits in the living room at her mother’s home in San Bernardino.

Medina never considered college an option until DACA was announced when she was 12. (top)

When DACA ended, Medina applied for a green card to stay in the country and continue her degree program at UC Santa Cruz. After completing extensive paperwork, she had to appear in Mexico for an interview with the consulate. (bottom) **Morgan Lieberman / HCN**



ONE MORNING in November, I met Blanco in her office at the UC Davis Law School. She had just finished interviewing a candidate for the staff attorney position and emerged wearing a navy blazer, earrings and a touch of perfume. In conversation, Blanco has a deep laugh that comes out often, despite the nature of her work. She had recently returned from Mexico City, where she met with deported families and discussed their legal options for returning to the U.S. “It was pretty heavy,” she admitted. “One of the things that was really disturbing is a lot of the kids haven’t been able to go to school because they don’t have a Mexican ID.”

For Blanco, who was born in Mexico and moved to the U.S. with her family as a toddler, it was a reminder of what is at stake with her work at the Legal Services Center — and why it matters that the UC has taken such an aggressive role in the fight to preserve DACA.

In college, Blanco was involved in Chicano rights activism before attending law school at UC Berkeley. After graduating in 1984, she went to work as a civil rights lawyer defending low-income immigrant women, many of them undocumented. As she learned the particulars of the women’s situations, she realized how much their immigration status compounded their vulnerability to discrimination.

In 2001, Democratic Rep. Luis Gutiérrez of Illinois authored the first DREAM Act, which would have provided legal status and a path to citizenship for many undocumented young people or “Dreamers.” But it died in Congress, as has every new version introduced since then.

For nearly 20 years, congressional efforts to reform America’s immigration laws have gone nowhere. But Blanco has continued to fight for immigrant rights in other ways. At the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, she convinced California legislators to pass AB 540, a 2001 state law that allowed undocumented students who are California residents to pay in-state tuition at public colleges.

Despite the success of AB 540, many undocumented students still struggled to afford college. Without work authorization, they could not get jobs on campus, and many had to drop out of school when they ran out of money. When Obama created DACA, not only did the number of undocumented students enrolled in the UC system jump; the number who graduated rose as well.

FOR MEDINA, the end of DACA meant a return to the vulnerability that had defined her life without a legal status — and marked the beginning of another ordeal. Her mother had recently married a U.S. citizen, making her daughter eligible to apply for a green card. Last summer, after all Medina’s paperwork had been approved, she went to Ciudad Juárez, across the

border from El Paso, Texas, for the final step in the green card process: an interview at a U.S. consulate in Mexico.

That part — leaving the country — had always terrified Medina. At home in Santa Cruz, she had a new job at a law firm and had recently been offered a competitive research position with the university’s Human Rights Investigations Lab.

She was earning money and felt like she was succeeding. But what if something went wrong in the green card process and she wasn’t allowed back into the U.S.? “Don’t be stupid,” her mother told her. “You’re going to go to Mexico to do the interview.”

Last July, Medina faced the U.S. consul, who sat behind a glass window inside an office building in Ciudad Juárez. The consul asked about her sponsor. In order to petition for a family member’s green card, a sponsor must prove that he or she can financially support the immigrant and his or her own household members. Medina’s stepfather’s epilepsy prevents him from working, though, and her mother’s \$20,000-a-year factory job did not meet the financial requirements. A family friend had offered to become Medina’s “joint financial sponsor,” but the consul told her that his income was also not high enough. Even though Medina was working three jobs and an internship and paying her way through college, the consul denied her green card.

When Medina told her mother the news, she started weeping. “What are we going to do?” she asked. It had taken a lot of effort to find a family friend to act as Medina’s financial sponsor. Who else would be willing to accept that kind of responsibility?

Medina, still in shock, tried to think of people who might be able to help. She called her mentor from her campus internship and the provost of her college at UC Santa Cruz. Both agreed to sponsor her and put her in touch with the UC Immigrant Legal Services Center.

The next day, Medina’s mother had to return to California for work, leaving her 19-year-old daughter alone in Ciudad Juárez. For the next two months, Medina was stuck in Mexico, staying with relatives in Mexico City and Oaxaca while she waited for Anna Manuel, an attorney at the UC Immigrant Legal Services Center, to help sort out the new sponsorship paperwork. Medina tried not to think about the worst-case scenario: that she would be stuck in Mexico for years,

*What if something
went wrong in
the green card
process?*

unable to finish college and pursue her dream of becoming a lawyer.

SITUATIONS LIKE the one Medina found herself in last summer are why the UC Immigrant Legal Services Center exists — and why the future of DACA matters to the president of the University of California: Janet Napolitano. Years ago, under Obama, Napolitano served as secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), where she authored the memo that created DACA. But UC students remembered her for another reason: She also oversaw a record number of deportations during her tenure as DHS secretary. When Napolitano became UC's president in 2013, student protests erupted over her immigration record.

Partly in response, she set up a committee to advise her on how to

Stephanie Medina had mixed emotions when she received her green card. She was no longer afraid of getting deported, but the experience had left her uneasy. "I still have these doubts about whether I belong in this country," she said. (right; private information has been concealed)

Stephanie Medina with her mother outside their San Bernardino, California, home.

(below) **Morgan Lieberman / HCN**



better serve the needs of undocumented students, who, among other things, suffer disproportionately from clinical-level stress — 30% compared to just 5% among the regular college population. Kevin Johnson, the dean of the UC Davis Law School and a prominent immigration scholar, suggested that she set up a free legal services center to serve both students and their families, since the students' stress is also caused by their relatives' risk of deportation. In January 2015, the center opened with a staff of three and Blanco as the executive director.

The first two years were optimistic times. Blanco liked to say, "We're building the plane as we're flying it." Many of their cases involved helping undocumented students apply for DACA, which had a provision that allowed undocumented students to travel abroad.

"It was such a big deal for them," Blanco said. "If they were French majors, they could go to France. They could leave the U.S. for the first time in their lives to visit ailing grandparents."

Blanco was learning things, too. The majority of the students and families that come to the center are originally from Mexico, but the second-largest number are from South Korea. Many of them, as Blanco learned, don't think of themselves as undocumented, because their parents came to the U.S. legally on a visa and then overstayed. She recalled meeting an undocumented Korean student during the early years. "Can I get DACA?" he inquired, adding, "I'm not undocumented."

Then came the 2016 election. For Napolitano, the new administration's decision to rescind DACA felt like a personal attack. She was the one who had made the program possible, after all, said Blanco, who meets regularly with the college president. "She knew that there would be a lot of lawsuits, but she wanted hers to be first."

On Sept. 8, 2017, just three days after Sessions announced the end of DACA, the University of California's lawyers filed their lawsuit.

"Neither I, nor the University of California, take the step of suing the federal government lightly, especially not the very agency that I led," Napolitano said in a statement announcing the lawsuit. But "to arbitrarily and capriciously end the DACA program, which benefits our country as a whole, is not only unlawful, it is contrary to our national values and bad policy."

JUST AFTER NOON on the day of my visit, Blanco walked to lunch at a cafeteria across campus with attorney Anna Manuel, discussing the two DACA renewal appointments scheduled for that afternoon. In 2018, a San Francisco judge granted a request by California and other states to stop the administration from ending DACA, at least until lawsuits can play out in court, allowing existing DACA recipients to renew their DACA status until the Supreme Court decides on the case.

In 2018, the center processed 500 DACA renewals. This year, it was 960, out of a total 1,495 cases. The jump in renewals encouraged Blanco and Manuel, but they were anxious about what will happen to these students if the Supreme Court sides with the government and allows DACA to fully expire. "I hear a lot of 'Why should I bother continuing in school if I can't get a job?'" Manuel said.

The two women entered a cafeteria buzzing with students carrying backpacks and trays. "This is where I really feel old," Blanco joked, getting a bowl of hot noodle soup and making her way towards one of the few empty tables.

The previous week, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments on the university's lawsuit, which has been combined with several other lawsuits arguing that Trump ended DACA without thoroughly considering the impact the decision would have on its 700,000 recipients and their families — more than a million people in total. Their argument rests on a federal law called the Administrative Procedure Act, which requires government agencies to base policy changes on

sound reasoning that is explained to the public. Instead, the lawsuit argues, the Trump administration's decision to end DACA was "arbitrary and capricious," violating the law.

Given the conservative majority in the U.S. Supreme Court, Blanco is nervous. She had recently conducted a webinar on the possible outcomes for TheDream.US, a nonprofit that helps make college affordable for undocumented students. After the presentation, questions flooded the chat box. The first one read: "Are they going to round us up if they strike down DACA?"

"My heart sank," she said. The question made her realize the fear people were holding. Immigration enforcement officials have already targeted DACA recipients who have spoken out against U.S. immigration policies, so it hurt to know that she could not truthfully say that their fear was unwarranted. "I don't think I've ever seen a case with so many people at risk," she said.

Still, Blanco is grateful for the UC lawsuit, which has energized both the center's attorneys and the undocumented students they support. "I know I always get a little excited when I see the name of the case and it's *University of California vs. U.S. Government*," Blanco laughed and turned to Manuel: "Don't you get that feeling?" she asked.

"Totally!" Manuel said.

The lawsuit garnered 36 different letters of support, or amicus briefs, from a wide swath of U.S. civil society, ranging from the normally conservative U.S. Chamber of Commerce to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The lawsuit has boosted the center's work in other ways, too. When it opened five years ago, many undocumented students didn't trust the initiative, believing it was just Napolitano's attempt to make amends for her immigration record under Obama. But after the lawsuit was filed, Blanco sensed a change in those students. "It made them feel like somebody has their back," she said.

WHEN MEDINA WAS in Mexico, waiting anxiously for her second interview at the U.S. Consulate in Ciudad Juárez, she took comfort in knowing that so many people were doing what they could to help her. After years of feeling invisible, it was reassuring to know that her education and her life in America mattered to them.

Manuel hastened to get Medina's new sponsorship paperwork ready. She was worried about the student's mental health. "She went through this range of trauma, where she just kept imagining everything she was going to lose," Manuel said.

Nearly two months after the ordeal began, Medina submitted her new sponsorship paperwork to the U.S. Consulate. A few days later, she picked up her new passport.

Medina had finally received her green card, yet she found herself feeling strangely ambivalent: She was no longer afraid of getting deported, but she didn't feel any more welcome in the U.S.

"I still have these doubts about whether I belong in this country," she said, as we walked back from the restaurant where we met to her dorm, through the sun-dappled redwood forest that envelops UC Santa Cruz.

At college, though, she felt at home. A gifted student, she threw herself into her politics and legal studies classes and the other opportunities available for students. "I apply for everything," she admitted, smiling sheepishly. Though she had always tried not to get too attached to anything — possessions or people — her education had always felt different. No matter what happened, it was the one thing that nobody could ever take away. ✨

ON THE ROAD TO 50

Who has access to the West?

BY PAUL LARMER



Butler Wash, Utah. Paul Larmer / HCN

If you're looking for solitude in the increasingly crowded West, I recommend avoiding interstates and airports, especially right before Christmas. That's when I found myself motoring alone on Utah State Route 95 through Bears Ears National Monument, on a roundabout way from western Colorado to family in Tucson, Arizona.

There was not another soul at Butler Wash, where I crutched a half-mile through patches of icy snow to the overlook. There, above a tree-lined creek, Ancestral Puebloan dwellings basked in the slanting afternoon sunlight. It looked downright cozy, but I imagined living here 800 years ago, and wondered whether I, a disabled middle-aged man, would have made it. Nope.

Later that day, I reached Natural Bridges National Monument, a geological marvel formed by the inexorable force of water cutting through stone. The two other cars at the visitor center must have belonged to the two Park Service employees inside.

"How much to get into the park?" I asked. "\$20," said the cheery woman behind the desk, "but you may qualify for a pass." She pointed to a sign that said, "America the Beautiful Pass, permanently disabled, free." A free lifetime pass for every park? I have wandered the West for 40 years now, but this was news to me. And, she added, it was good for all kinds of discounts.

Sold. I used my new "access pass" card that day, and then the next at Arizona's Petrified Forest National Park, where rainbow-colored crystals from 200 million-year-old stone trees littered the dry hills.

But I'm conflicted. "For U.S. citizens or permanent residents," the card says, "medically determined to have a permanent disability that severely limits one or more major life activities." My condition, a congenital anomaly that has shortened and deformed my legs, is permanent. I have back pain from a lifetime of asymmetric sitting. I will never run a marathon or climb Mount Washington. Occasionally, when I see photos of myself, I think, "I really am short and funny-looking." But all told, I've had it pretty damn good, with the help of a loving family, and the privilege of being a white male in America. I've had a great career and helped raise two healthy adult kids. I am fit, with no severe limitations in sight. Do I really deserve this card?

In 2016, the American Communities Survey identified 12.8 percent of the U.S. population as disabled. People with disabilities are employed at half the rate of those without, and those who do work earn on average about two-thirds the salary. As I motored on, I wondered: Who deserves access to the wonders of this world? Who actually gets it, and why? And how do our disabilities and abilities, inextricably linked, change our views of the West?

High Country News has asked such questions for 50 years now, and we plan to keep doing so in the years ahead. I look forward to the journey, and to everyone who helps us along the way. ☼

And how do our disabilities and abilities, inextricably linked, change our views of the West?

“Thank you for your diverse coverage, which has changed in step with the changing West. My mother-in-law, 104 years old and from Buffalo, Wyoming, moved out East after college but has her heart still in the West. HCN keeps us connected.”

— *Frank Miles, Hanover, New Hampshire*

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Dear Friends

From adopting puppies to planning our 50th anniversary bash, we've been busy. Here's the inside scoop from our Paonia, Colorado, headquarters and elsewhere across the West.

Over Christmas, Editorial Fellow Helen Santoro's wife, Ky, impulsively brought home a 9-week-old fluffy ball of energy with razor-sharp baby teeth. Nana is thought to be part Australian shepherd, mainly due to her looks and her aptitude for herding Helen's two chagrined cats. Meanwhile, Associate Editor Emily Benson soaked up scientific knowledge at the annual American Geophysical Union meeting in December, where she learned about analyzing arsenic in Pacific Northwest ponds and earthquake early warning systems.

Some readers noted the absence of *HCN's* annual holiday party. Fear not: We are planning a major 50th anniversary party and picnic in Paonia this summer, and everyone is invited — details to come. Which reminds us: We'd love to see you at our 50th anniversary gala Friday, June 12, at the Denver Botanic Gardens. Dan Flores, longtime *HCN* contributor and author of *The New York Times* bestseller *Coyote America*, is the keynote speaker. Early-bird ticket pricing ends Feb. 28. Visit hcn.org/gala for more details.

We're also thrilled to announce *HCN's* Virginia Spencer Davis Fellowship. "Ginny" grew up on a ranch in California's Sacramento Valley and was a lifelong conservation advocate. She and her husband, Dick, were active in local land trusts, and after meeting Betsy and Ed Marston in the 1990s, she became an avid *HCN* fan. She died in 2013, and the fellowship was established by one of her daughters in honor of Ginny's love of the land and commitment to a healthy environment and good journalism. Yours truly is the grateful first recipient. I'm honored.

Finally, two corrections. We stated that 30 million tons of uranium were removed from the Navajo Nation; it was 30 million tons of uranium ore ("Editor's Note," 11/25/19). We also incorrectly stated that the Yurok Tribe is based in Washington ("The Latest," 12/9/19). It is actually based in California. We regret the errors.

—Nick Bowlin, for the staff



Former Nooksack Tribal Councilwoman Carmen Tageant outside her home in Everson, Washington. **Lindsey Wasson / HCN**

EXILED

HOW ONE WOMAN
TOOK A STAND
AGAINST TRIBAL
DISENROLLMENT
AND PAID FOR IT

By Jane C. Hu

THE LINGERIE PHOTO was Carmen Tageant's breaking point. Sixteen years earlier, she'd taken a set of boudoir photos as a Valentine's Day gift for her partner. But as life happened — raising seven children, going back to school, achieving a spot on the Nooksack Tribal Council — she'd all but forgotten about them. So when she checked her Facebook notifications one morning in February 2016, she was shocked.

An image of Tageant posing with her legs in the air had been posted by someone named Keith Williams, and the accompanying text made it clear the post was intended to shame: "We all now know how we got her votes for (sic) in office and has nothing to hide!" It was soon posted to a Nooksack Facebook group by another user. Tribal citizens jumped in with dozens of comments, making it painfully obvious to Tageant that her picture was making the rounds. "Lol she's shameful," one person wrote. "Spreading lies and legs," wrote another. And a third attacked Tageant's leadership credentials: "Who is going to support a liar ... A cheat ... I will not support a person like Carmen T and I don't think our true tribal membership should either."

"I was a tribal leader, thinking, 'I can handle it, I have thick skin,'" Tageant says. Still, she locked herself in her room for the rest of the day. Embarrassment gave way to fear when she considered how the photos might impact her family's safety. A few weeks earlier, someone had broken into her home, and the violation had shaken her. Her mind reeled as she realized that the burglar must have stolen those photos. She checked her album, and sure enough, four of the boudoir shots were missing. Did that mean that "Keith Williams" was the thief? She didn't know anyone by that name, and that struck her as suspicious; during the 20 years she'd lived in Everson, Washington, and worked for the Nooksack tribe, she'd met nearly everyone in the community.

Tageant grew up on Bainbridge Island, a short ferry ride away from Seattle. As a child, she often traveled north to the Nooksack Reservation with her grandma and her mother. After a short stint at a tribal college in Kansas, Tageant returned to Nooksack territory. "I came back and got pregnant with my first child. ... I wanted them to know their culture," she says.

The reservation itself is just four buildings on a one-acre parcel in northern Washington, tucked into a U-shaped dip of the Nooksack River. Much of the tribe's activity takes place on the constellation of trust lands it maintains nearby. About half of the tribe's 2,000 members live in the rolling foothills of Mount Baker, on traditional Nooksack territory. Tageant quickly found her place in the community, working

as a receptionist in administration and a clerk at the tribe's social services office, then doing public relations work for the tribe before moving into advocacy work. There, she assisted victims of domestic violence and addiction, and connected families with food stamps, energy credits and parenting classes. "I wanted to help everybody I could," Tageant said. After nearly a decade of public service, Tageant won a seat on the Nooksack Tribal Council in 2004 and was elected again in March 2014.

But conflict began shortly before Tageant's second term. In early 2013, the tribal council voted to invalidate the enrollment of descendants of a Nooksack woman named Annie George. According to the tribe's Constitution, people can apply for enrollment if they're direct descendants of a member who received an original land allotment. They can also apply if they're descended from a member who appeared on a 1942 official tribal census roll or received a federal payment in the 1960s, provided they meet a one-fourth-degree blood quantum or are adopted by an enrolled member or the tribe itself. Annie George, the council alleged, did not appear on that 1942 census or receive a land allotment, and therefore any members enrolled through their relationship to her were "erroneously enrolled." By Valentine's Day 2013, letters had been sent to 306 Nooksack people, informing them that their citizenship would be revoked within 30 days, unless they requested a meeting to dispute the decision.

Tageant was not among the disenrollees, who came to be known as the Nooksack 306, but she was outspoken in her support for them. "When my picture was placed on Facebook, I was standing up vocally" against disenrollment, she says. On Facebook, Keith Williams slammed Tageant and her support for the 306, urging tribal members to recall her from the council. When Tageant noted, on Williams' page, that she had reported the attacks to county authorities, Williams appeared undeterred: "Whatcom (County) detectives come arrest me for speaking the truth!"

Meanwhile, other men saw the photo as an invitation: "I had men messaging me, asking me for sex, making rude comments," says Tageant. Little did she know, the digital intimidation was just the beginning of what would become a full-on assault on her reputation.

TAGEANT'S DIGITAL HARASSMENT was a new outlet for old tensions in the Nooksack community. Long before that lingerie photo, or before the council's move to disenroll the 306 in 2013, there were growing resentments between families. Williams alluded to this in a

February 2016 post: "I know everyone is tired of the 306 drama, but some of our Nooksack people have waited 30 years for this."

The roots of the conflict stretch back to the 1920s and '30s, when Nooksack families moved to Bainbridge Island for farm work. Around the same time, the area saw an influx of Filipino immigrants. Some Filipino men married Indigenous women, and many of their descendants, who call themselves "Indipinos," returned to their ancestral land in the 1980s at the tribe's urging and enrolled as members. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Rabangs, an Indipino family, dominated the tribal council, and other Nooksack families were not pleased. In a 2000 Associated Press story, tribal elders called the Rabangs "outsiders" who exploited "lax membership rules" in the '80s to "infiltrate" the tribe. There was an attempt to disenroll the Rabangs through an enrollment review, but it failed after "more than 100 angry Rabangs confronted the council," according to the AP.

Tageant, whose grandfather was Filipino, says some tribal elders resented the interracial families. "They didn't like the 'mixed breed,'" she says. After the Rabangs fell from power in the 2010s, the council again moved in 2013 to invalidate their enrollments. It would be easy to conclude the disenrollment of the 306 is racially motivated; all the disenrollees come from Indipino families. But the reality is more complicated: Some of the disenrollment supporters also come from interracial families. The 306 say the effort is driven not only by anti-Filipino sentiments, but also by a hunger for power and the desire to share limited resources like Christmas bonuses and school supplies funds with a smaller number of members. Supporters of disenrollment, on the other hand, insist the issue is strictly about bloodlines and belonging. "They are not eligible for enrollment. They are not Nooksack," read one post from We Are Nooksack, a pro-disenrollment Facebook group.

Since the 1990s, there's been a "surge" of disenrollment among tribal nations, says David Wilkins, a citizen of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina and co-author of *Dismembered: Native Disenrollment and the Battle for Human Rights*. While there are no official statistics, Wilkins estimates that as many as 8,000 individuals from up to 85 tribes have been affected. In a 2014 Associated Press story, a member facing disenrollment from the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde spoke of being "culturally homeless." The consequences are practical, too, as disenrollment eliminates people's access to tribal housing, healthcare and other social services.

When “Keith Williams” first appeared, Tageant suspected that then-Tribal Council Chairman Bob Kelly was behind the account. During their time on the council, she and Kelly vehemently disagreed about disenrollment. “The council members would call me every name,” says Tageant. A single mom, she felt she was seen as “easy prey” for intimidation: “They thought they could bully me at the council table.”

A few months after Williams began harassing Tageant, Kelly announced a special election to recall her. The tribe’s Facebook page posted a letter from Kelly in April 2016, saying that Tageant had voted “against adopting the Constitution.” She had indeed voted against a proposed change to the Constitution — an amendment eliminating an avenue for many of the 306 members to reapply for tribal membership. In the official paperwork documenting Tageant’s recall, the council charged her with treason. “We urge you to vote YES to recall Carmen Tageant,” Kelly wrote in the letter to Nooksack members. Likewise, Keith Williams encouraged his followers to recall Tageant. “Nooksack Carmen is a liar and a manipulator!” read one post. “She will support the 306 until the end, therefore she can kick rocks with them! Vote yes and remove Carmen Tageant!”

As tensions mounted between the council and the 306, Tageant found herself caught in the middle of a political game. When Tageant was recalled, the tribe’s leadership failed to hold elections to fill several expiring seats on the council. That July, a group of 200 tribal members held their own special election to fill those seats. They voted to reinstate Tageant, but Kelly refused to recognize the results. Over the next year and a half, the U.S. Department of the Interior said it would not recognize any of the council’s moves until it held a valid election. The department also invalidated Tageant’s recall; she was reinstated but said she remained excluded from council chambers. When the tribe announced its 2018 elections, Tageant tried to submit her candidacy application in person, minutes before the filing deadline. But, she alleges, the election superintendent told her she was “too late,” and Police Chief Mike Ashby grabbed her by the arms and violently pushed her. The case is ongoing, and Ashby declined to comment.

“After that, I just got so depressed,” she says. “I lost my job, I lost my title. I lost all my income. I was being harassed. I was losing everything that I worked so hard for.” After the lingerie photo was posted, Tageant’s legal battles against the tribe intensified, and she struggled to find work. “My name has been drug through the dirt. I have been slandered as a whore,” Tageant said in a 2018 deposition. She

“After that, I just got so depressed. I lost my job, I lost my title. I lost all my income. I was being harassed. I was losing everything that I worked so hard for.”

testified that her sole income was the \$328.12 a month she received in child support: “I have been surviving off pennies with my babies, and food stamps, since Nooksack let me go.”

Tageant lost friends, too. One family worried that being seen as close to her might have consequences. “They didn’t want to get punished, lose their job or their home,” says Tageant, who suggested they maintain a healthy distance while in town. No more hugs in public, they agreed, just polite waves in passing.

By July 2018, Tageant was in the thick of two lawsuits; she’d filed one against the “John Doe” behind the Keith Williams account, and another against Mike Ashby for his alleged assault. So when the Nooksack police served Tageant a court document related to her council recall, the thought of dealing with the case filled her with anxiety. She felt lightheaded and figured she needed to eat something. But when she sat down, she suddenly realized she couldn’t feel half her face. Tageant turned to her daughter. “Gabby,” she said, “I don’t feel right.”

When she woke up, she was in the hospital, initially unable to walk after what doctors diagnosed as a “mini-stroke.” Her memory has been affected by the episode, and the antidepressants she was prescribed caused her to gain around 25 pounds. Tageant no longer feels quite like herself. “I don’t feel as confident as I used to be,” she says. “It just doesn’t click like it used to.”

Meanwhile, a member of her legal team was working with a private investigator to uncover Keith Williams’ true identity. Tageant had some evidence suggesting that Kelly was behind the account — in one comment on a Williams post, a friend calls him “Bob” — but she wanted to be sure. Several other enthusiastic commenters regularly smeared her on Facebook, calling her “shameful,” “dumb,” or worse, and she wondered whether they might all be sharing Williams’ account, taking turns attacking her. The account was deactivated in January 2018, the day after Tageant filed her lawsuit, but her legal team subpoenaed Facebook for the account’s records, which netted them a list of the IP addresses used to access it. Many of those addresses were hosted by Comcast and Verizon Wireless, so they also subpoenaed those telecom giants for additional details.

The Comcast account was associated with the Nooksack Tribe, and it led straight to computers at the Nooksack Tribal Government Office. Tageant and her team weren’t particularly surprised that the account was associated with the “Kelly faction”; from Williams’ posts, it was clear that whoever the writer was, they had intimate knowledge about tribal politics.

After nearly 10 months, the breakthrough

came: The team identified a cellphone number used to access the Williams account. The owner, the investigators found, was a woman named LeAndra Smith.

The details all lined up: Smith, a member of the tribe, worked at the Nooksack Tribal Health Clinic, and the cellphone she used to log in to the Williams account was issued to her by the tribe. She also logged in using work computers — hence the Nooksack government office IP addresses. In several of Williams' posts, Smith is the first or second commenter to insult Tageant. "I feel dumber after reading anything (Tageant) says," reads one of her comments. "She thinks people forgot about her lies, nice try Carmen," says another, with three laughing emojis.

It wasn't always like this. For years, Smith and Tageant were friendly. Their paths crossed frequently: Tageant worked with Smith's mom, and when Smith was younger, Tageant thought of her as a niece. Later, they actually became family; Tageant's sister had a baby with the father of Smith's oldest son, so they attended the same birthday parties and Easter egg hunts

in Tageant's front yard. Smith attended one of Tageant's baby showers, and both pulled for the Nooksack's Rikkole Cree Canoe Club.

But the disenrollment dispute muddled their relationship. "(Smith) was against the 306 family, and she was very loud about it," Tageant says. Smith was close to several members of the "Kelly faction," including tribal council members who were outspoken about their support for disenrollment. In a 2013 interview, Smith told a local newspaper reporter that tribal elders in their families never believed Indigenous families had "authentic Nooksack ancestry." The dispute wasn't really personal, Smith insisted, noting that some of her own family and friends might be disenrolled.

But Smith and her friends' Facebook taunts felt quite personal to Tageant. "They wanted to stop me because I was a vocal, strong Indigenous woman who did not have fear," she says. It wasn't just Facebook talk, either; Smith also pushed to remove Tageant from the tribal council. She not only signed the petition initiating the recall election, she also testified that she assisted in gathering signatures for it.

Still, despite their recent rocky relationship, Tageant was shocked to learn that Smith was apparently behind the lingerie post, and she wondered where Smith got the photos. The burglary case was never solved, and no one has been charged; Tageant questioned whether Smith had been involved. Regardless, here was a fellow Indigenous woman that Tageant had invited into her home, a woman who had held her children — who now hated Tageant enough to harass her with a fake Facebook profile. "I've known LeAndra for so long that I honestly didn't want to believe it was her."

SINCE DISENROLLMENT BEGAN, divisions in the community have only deepened. This summer, Nooksack tribal member George Adams was allegedly assaulted by three tribal police officers, who came to arrest his daughter, Elile, for failing to appear in court for a civil case. Adams, often called "307" for his vocal support of the 306, believes this was retaliation for his activism. His daughter, who relinquished her Nooksack membership, has enrolled with the Lummi Tribe; his wife has been disenrolled; and



Adams has filed suit in Whatcom County Court against the Nooksack court judge and tribal police officers. “It’s divided the small community of Nooksack,” says Tageant, noting that the tribe’s sense of community has crumbled. “They stopped enrolling babies, they stopped community gatherings. They went backwards.”

Currently, the Nooksack Tribal Council is the only entity with the power to decide the future of disenrollees or their supporters. The Nooksack, like all federally recognized tribes, is a sovereign nation. Once the tribe gained federal recognition in the 1970s, it adopted a constitution, which lays out the framework establishing the tribal council, along with its wide range of responsibilities: determining membership, of course, but also managing tribal lands, negotiating with federal, state or local governments, administering funds, levying taxes, and establishing a tribal police force and court system.

Like many other tribal constitutions, the Nooksack Constitution resembles what legal scholars call “IRA constitutions” — the model constitutions and outlines circulated to some tribes by the Bureau of Indian Affairs shortly after the passage of the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, which was designed to return sovereignty and self-governance to tribes. The prescribed constitutions were, unsurprisingly, modeled on colonial concepts of national government: Each tribe would be a “nation” responsible for determining membership, where members would have voting powers. But the new rules didn’t reflect the lives of Indigenous people; unlike the system the BIA recommended, Indigenous people didn’t enforce official tribal “membership,” delineate national borders, or track blood quantum before colonial intervention.

IRA constitutions differ from the U.S. Constitution in that they usually lack checks and balances between branches of government. Instead, the tribal council holds all legislative, judicial and executive power. According to a 2016 *Harvard Law Review* analysis, this “prevents the enforcement of remedies for violations of individual rights” and “incentivizes instability, corruption, and micromanagement.”

The Nooksack Council’s actions in response to the 306’s fight against disenrollment illustrate how a council drawn from an IRA constitution could consolidate its power to shut down opposition, and how the federal courts’ interpretation of tribal membership power can leave that council unchecked. Initially, the 306 fought disenrollment through the tribal court, but the council responded by disbaring the 306’s legal council, Galanda

“(Disenrollment has) divided the small community of Nooksack. They stopped enrolling babies, they stopped community gatherings. They went backwards.”

The Tribal Services Building where former Nooksack Tribal Councilwoman Carmen Tageant used to work with LeAndra Smith, who is thought to have used a fake Facebook page to cyberstalk and harass Tageant. Smith still works at the same office and lives in the same neighborhood as Tageant, and she has not been formally reprimanded by the tribe.

Lindsey Wasson / HCN

Broadman — the same firm that represents Tageant — from Nooksack courts, by creating a constitutional amendment requiring that all attorneys must have a tribal business license.

In response, Susan Alexander, the judge presiding over the 306 case, wrote in a motion that the tribe employed “extreme tactics” and did not afford Galanda Broadman “due process of any kind.” The tribe reacted by firing Alexander and creating a new “supreme court” with Chairman Bob Kelly as its chief justice. In a 2018 hearing in a related case filed in federal court, a federal court of appeals judge commented on the rapid-fire changes: “That’s a record a tin-pot dictator of a banana republic might be proud of.”

For tribal members at odds with their council leaders’ interests, seeking support through tribal government can feel futile, especially if that government has a history of blocking opposition. Retaliation from tribal officials is common in disenrollment cases, according to Wilkins, as is social ostracism. Disenrolled members or their supporters often end up feeling like pariahs.

Gabriel Galanda, who is a member of the Round Valley Indian Tribes and the managing lawyer at Galanda Broadman who handled Tageant’s suits, believes that the U.S. government should intervene when it comes to disenrollment cases. (*High Country News* previously published an op-ed from Galanda and Anthony Broadman on related issues.)

By law, however, the U.S. government has no right to meddle in tribal courts. “Federal courts generally don’t have jurisdiction to intervene, and state courts certainly don’t have jurisdiction,” said Rebecca Tsosie, a law professor at the University of Arizona’s Indigenous Peoples’ Law and Policy Program. (The one exception would be if tribal members’ essential human rights were violated.) A change in tribal membership requirements might advantage or disadvantage certain people, says Tsosie, “but unless there’s something clearly unlawful, the mere fact that it advantages or disadvantages in itself is not enough to take it to (federal) court.” As sovereign nations, she says, “every tribe is treated by the U.S. government by having an equal right to self-govern.”

But, Galanda argues, not every tribe has the same ability to self-govern, and the U.S. government, whose actions set the stage for what Galanda calls “tribal self-annihilation,” has a responsibility to intervene. It was the U.S. government, after all, that pressured the Nooksack Tribe into ceding its ancestral lands in the 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott in return for fishing, hunting and gathering rights. The Nooksack,

who were not granted a reservation, were expected to move from their villages to the Lummi Reservation, but most stayed in the area and filed homestead claims to gain legal title to their lands. Galanda argues that the U.S. government's colonization of Native lands contributed to, if it didn't cause, a profound loss of tradition that impedes the tribe's ability to self-govern. "What are the traditions in time of crisis? What are the peacemaking norms when a tribe is being ripped apart at the seams?" he asks. By way of example, he notes that George Adams — the 306 supporter dubbed "307" — is the last remaining speaker of Lhéchelesem, the Nooksack language. "The U.S. government, which for the last couple hundred years has been responsible for the decimation of this Indigenous ability to self-govern, can't simply throw up its hands and say, 'It's not our problem.'"

Galanda knows how controversial his view is, but he says he's seen no other solution to cases where tribes appear to have lost the ability to govern themselves. But even if it were allowed, how would one determine the right time for the federal government to step in? It's a "smell test," says Galanda. "You know it when you see it — when you have a tribe firing judges, disbarring opponents' council, or anointing themselves to a brand new Supreme Court," he says.

There is another possibility, he adds: Congress could amend the Indian Civil Rights Act to allow federal courts to review disenrollment cases, a move he believes would deter disenrollment. But however well-intentioned or even effective it might be, this kind of federal oversight could come at the cost of eroding tribal sovereignty. If disenrollment issues could trigger a federal intervention or review, the federal government could easily argue that similar intervention is necessary in other cases related to disenrollment, such as tribal council elections (an area where the federal government has already intervened, in the Nooksack Tribe as well as others) or resource allocation.

"One of the big challenges is to have respect for governments as they make these very difficult determinations," says Tsosie. Controversial decisions are unavoidable, she adds: "Tribal governments, like all governments, go through these times."

But Galanda believes the U.S. government needs to step up to address the problems it's created, especially during these difficult times. He seems less concerned about the potential creep of government intervention than he is about the possibility that tribes' democratic systems could be destroyed entirely. "If there's no due process afforded to sacred birth right, what about other civil rights that an Indige-

"The U.S. government, which for the last couple hundred years has been responsible for the decimation of this Indigenous ability to self-govern, can't simply throw up its hands and say, 'It's not our problem.'"

nous person might enjoy in their own community?" he asks. "The slippery slope I see is a motion away from the notion of democratic Indigenous government, and toward one of tyranny and dictatorship."

Tageant, who obviously disagrees with the tribal council, respects the Nooksack government's sovereignty in theory. Still, she elected to file her lawsuits in Washington State Court, avoiding the tribal court system entirely. After the way she's seen intertribal politics play out, it's no mystery why she might look outside her tribe for a ruling.

Tageant is trying to move on, but that's been hard to do. As we drive around town, Tageant still knows everyone we see, and rattles off details about their marriages, their siblings and parents, where they live and the jobs they've held in the tribe. She shows me her home, and as we loop back toward the main road to the reservation, she points out Smith's house. It's mere steps from hers, an easy distance to walk to ask your neighbor for a cup of sugar.

Smith could not be reached for comment, but in a deposition, her lawyer invoked the Fifth Amendment over 100 times when Galanda interrogated her about the Williams account, lingerie photos and the burglary of Tageant's home. "Do you know anybody who has broken into Ms. Tageant's home?" asked Galanda. Smith replied no. "Why are you smirking about the burglary in Ms. Tageant's home?" Galanda asked next. "I don't know," replied Smith. The case ended in a settlement in April 2019.

Smith still works for the tribe, and Tageant sometimes sees her in the tribal office's parking lot when Tageant has a doctor's appointment. Tageant is especially bothered that even after the settlement, Smith was able to keep her job while Tageant has been struggling to find work. They both attended a mutual friend's funeral over the summer, but haven't spoken.

We cruise past farmland on a two-lane state highway, and Tageant tells me about her new part-time job: She's teaching a course on chemical dependency at Northwest Indian College. It's a total career change for her, her first time teaching. It's not easy, starting from scratch with a brand-new career, but it feels right. Working in social services was a way to lift up her community, and she sees teaching as another opportunity to care for others. Her childhood role models always encouraged her to stay strong and keep going through her struggles, she tells me, showing me a pendant she's wearing with a picture of her late stepfather's smiling face. She wants to pay that lesson forward, she says. "I didn't come this far to give up now." ❀



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Perfectly natural

Given a changing climate, an ethical approach to technology has become essential.

BY BRIAN CALVERT

THIS TIME OF YEAR, two distinct groups make their way to the Rocky Mountain backcountry: the skiers and the snowmobilers. In the mountain passes of Colorado, you'll find ski tracks on one side of the highway and snowmobile tracks on the other. Because of their differing approaches to wild spaces — one group seeking quiet and solitude, the other chasing thrills and covering ground — they have a long history of mutual animosity. Given the climate crisis, however, debates over public-land use, recreation or wildlife conservation are not as useful as the insights the discussion itself might give us.

Arguments over backcountry access are often framed within an outdated environmental ethics, generally over the value of nature. Inside the climate crisis, however, it's our relationship to technology that warrants examination. We need an ethics to match our technological prowess, one of responsibility that understands humans as a part of nature, whether they're on skis or snow machines. I come from a family of "slednecks" (my aunt and uncle were competitive racers and hill-climbers), but I also enjoy backcountry skiing. A machine can carry you deep into the natural sublime as well as a pair of skis can. Both of these are merely forms of recreation, and neither provides a useful ethics for the Anthropocene.

We humans lack an ethics to match our ingenuity. Our technology is so powerful that



it has created the illusion of our separation from nature, undermining our ethical approach to the world around us. When Aldo Leopold, the godfather of conservation, compares nature to a machine and us to people tinkering with it, saying that we should not take apart what we can't put back together, he underscores the problem.

We need to understand ourselves — and everything we build — as part of nature. Strachan Donnelley, who founded Chicago's Center for Humans and Nature, a think tank for environmental ethics, suggests an "ethics of responsibility" borne from this understanding. "In a time of overweening and collective technological power, with its indefinite global and temporal reach, we are ethically enjoined to take care and be cautious," he

writes. "Human powers of action dangerously outstrip capacities for knowledge and wisdom. We are to do nothing that would throw evolved man and nature disastrously off balance, threaten their creative being, and thwart their emergent complexity."

Consider my Aunt Ellen, who keeps a bird book and binoculars

close at hand, who packed horses into Wyoming's Wind River Range for a living, and who won a world championship in snowmobile drag racing on a sled she built with her husband, my Uncle Ward. In Aunt Ellen's heyday as a rider, the machine was an extension of her will, and its track and paddles would dig into the snow and propel her through powder, so that she was floating, almost flying, through the mountains, as much a part of nature as the snow and the stone beneath.

To see this as natural calls for an ethics beyond nature, one that acknowledges technology but moves us toward what Donnelley calls "purposiveness." If all we do is a part of nature, then we have responsibilities. Humans have evolved — with all our technological power — as "nature's most significant actors." Because of this, we have as much responsibility for the world as a parent has for a newborn. "This paradigm of responsibility for our own offspring is the model for the responsibility for the care of all of life and nature," Donnelley writes.

This responsibility demands better ethics. Rather than debate whether snowmobilers value nature as much as skiers do, we might better spend the time in search of an ethical approach that encompasses technology. The next time I yank a starter rope, or turn an ignition key, or buckle up a polymer plastic ski boot, I might well consider how natural this is, then take responsibility for the consequences. ☼

"Human powers of action dangerously outstrip capacities for knowledge and wisdom."

Snowmobiling on the Bering Sea. **Paul Souder**



Endangered Species: Bighorn Ram, 1983



Cowboys and Indians: Plains Indian Shield, 1986

Andy Warhol's West

The artist's little-known Western-themed works challenge cowboy mythologies — to a point.

BY JEREMY LYBARGER

IN 1986, THE YEAR before he died, Andy Warhol produced *Cowboys and Indians*, a portfolio of prints commemorating the American West. Featuring almost psychedelic silkscreens of Theodore Roosevelt, George Custer, Geronimo and others, the series puts a historical spin on Warhol's trademark celebrity fixation. Warhol skewers some heroic, heteronormative myths, offering a more satiric, queer interpretation. But he fails to fully address the mythological frontier's racism, or his own appropriation of Indigenous iconography.

A recent exhibition and book, *Warhol and the West* (University of California Press, 2019), revisit *Cowboys and Indians*, exploring Warhol's lifelong fascination with the region. The book also suggests that Warhol's entire Western oeuvre — three decades of films and prints — is an exercise in paradox. Even as he enshrines his subjects' nobility, he can't resist fluorescing them into campy icons. It's an approach that perhaps only an outsider — a gay artist from New York City — would attempt. The result challenges typical Hollywood notions of

masculinity and the West, even as its naive romanticism furthers the exploitation of Indigenous peoples.

Essays in the book's first section trace Warhol's interest in Western themes — the artist wore cowboy boots almost every day — while grappling with his appropriation of Indigenous art. The second half reproduces Warhol's Western work, along with brief responses by artists, academics and curators. The result is a kaleidoscope of thoughtful, erudite and sometimes personal commentary about an artist whom I thought had long ago exhausted fresh takes.

Warhol's appropriation of Indigenous iconography comes under particular scrutiny. A senior curator at Oklahoma City's American Indian Cultural Center and Museum, heather ahtone (Choctaw/Chickasaw), situates the artist in a long tradition of white men who misrepresent, exploit or otherwise caricature Indigenous peoples. Photographer Edward S. Curtis, whose 20-volume *The North American Indian* was published between 1907 and 1930, is a prime example. Warhol's Western prints, ahtone observes, cater to "a society that wants a credible history that it can now own, even at the expense of those whose bodies are now fodder for visual commodification."

Cowboys and Indians was commissioned by a New York art dealer and an investment banker, and its commercial roots lend it an uncomfortable dissonance. Gloria



Cowboys and Indians: Annie Oakley, 1986



Cowboys and Indians: Geronimo, 1986

All images © 2019 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Lomahaftewa, a project manager for the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office, and Daryn A. Melvin, who works for the vice chairman of the Hopi Tribe, note that Warhol's vivid, almost electric prints of katsina dolls fit into a pattern of sacred tribal objects desecrated by non-Native artists, who paint the dolls "with bright colors, effectively erasing and/or distorting the figure's meaningful and sacred origin." Today, the Hopi Tribe asks that any institution planning to manufacture or display materials related to Hopi culture consult with it first. In 1986, though, Warhol depicted katsina dolls without tribal oversight, selling the print as part of a larger portfolio that retailed for \$15,000.

But Faith Brower, a curator at the Tacoma Art Museum, notes that Warhol offers a template by which to critique colonialism, mass

culture, sentimentalizing nostalgia, racism and injustice. In one of the book's most intriguing essays, she surveys the influence that Warhol and Pop Art have had on Native and non-Native artists, including Duke Beardsley, Frank Buffalo Hyde, Maura Allen, Billy Schenck and Alison Marks.

If *Warhol and the West* offers an overdue critique of Warhol's appropriation and commodification of Indigenous cultures, it's less rigorous in connecting his sexuality to his subversion of macho Western tropes. The 1963 print *Triple Elvis*, for example, has an obvious homoerotic subtext: Elvis stands with legs apart, pointing a gun, the ultimate phallic symbol, at the viewer, his triplicate legs intertwined and his free hand suspended in an almost masturbatory gesture. Likewise, in Warhol's rendering of John Wayne,

the openly homophobic actor cradles a gun cocked toward his mouth.

Warhol's films, also discussed, are perhaps more unabashed in their queering of Western clichés. In *Lonesome Cowboys*, an ultra-low-budget 1968 film, a gang invades a frontier town on horseback, wreaks havoc, and then splinters apart. Shot on location in Tucson, the movie features Warhol superstars Viva, Taylor Mead and Joe Dallesandro gamely improvising anachronistic dialogue. (At one point, two cowboys resolve to quit hell-raising and start a family before World War I.) The movie ends with two desperadoes riding off into the sunset, bound for California, where they plan to become surfers. "The production of *Lonesome Cowboys* allowed Warhol and his cast to play out a fantastical idea of life on the Western frontier

unfettered by social constraints — to be heroes in a world in which they were decidedly outcasts," the critic Chelsea Weathers writes in *Warhol and the West*, implying that Warhol's own queerness underlies his revisionism.

"Everybody has their own America, and then they have pieces of a fantasy America that they think is out there, but they can't see," Warhol once wrote. Warhol and the West suggests that the artist's rendition of history was unabashedly queer — and, despite its colorfulness, unmistakably white. ✨

Warhol and the West

By Heather Ahtone, Faith Brower and Seth Hopkins
140 pages, hardcover, \$24.95
University of California Press, 2019

A particular kind of journey

Tope Folarin's coming-of-age story recounts the transformations of a Nigerian-American family in Utah.

BY JULIE IROMUANYA

“SHE TOLD ME I COULD serve her in heaven,” narrator Tunde Akinola says in the opening line of Nigerian-American writer Tope Folarin’s debut novel, *A Particular Kind of Black Man*. He is recounting a dream-like memory, the first of many in this coming-of-age story. Five-year-old Tunde is on his way home from school when he meets a stranger, an elderly white woman. Blinded by the harsh sun of the Utah desert and encased by a “penetrating silence,” he feels captivated, even comforted, by her words. But when Tunde joyfully tells his Nigerian immigrant father about the encounter, he reacts in horror, and then devastation. The encounter

takes place in the early ’80s, just years after the Mormon Church struck down racist laws against Black parishioners. The moment Tunde mistook for an angel’s invitation into heaven was in fact an offering for an afterlife where Cain and Ham’s descendants, cursed with Blackness, are fit only to be servants. It is Tunde’s father’s mission to cultivate in his sons “a particular kind of black man” — “whose blackness would not prevent (him) from succeeding.”

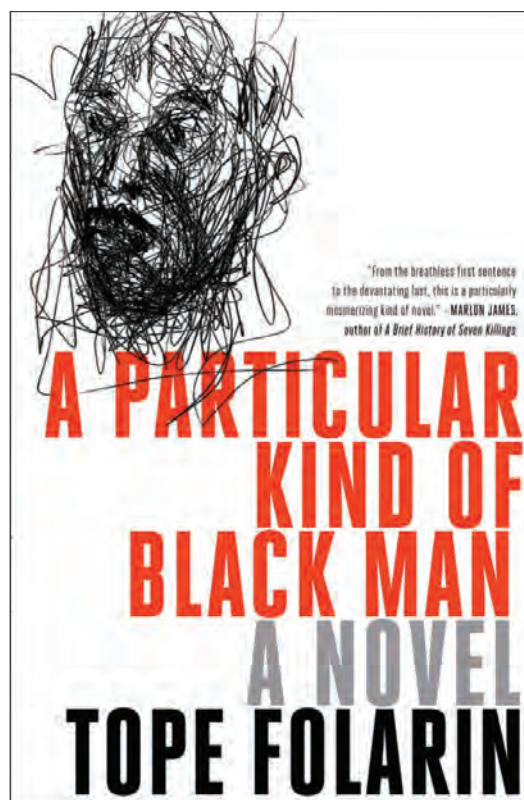
Like this primordial reverie, much of the novel is punctuated by glimpses of frenzied optimism sobered by pragmatism. An American pop-mythos initially beckons Tunde’s parents from their native Nigeria to Ogden, Utah. His father, a university student, is drawn by the gunslinger cowboys in ten-gallon hats in his favorite TV Westerns, while Tunde’s mother is seduced by the catchy tunes of the Beatles and the Beach Boys. Natives of Lagos, Nigeria’s former capital and most populous city, Tunde’s parents — rather than getting to clink glasses with John Wayne and John Lennon or even venturing into Utah’s many vast mountainous natural parks — are beset by a sparsely populated suburban American West of glaring sunlight, stretches of desert and placid streets colonized by two-bedroom apartments and low-wage jobs. Isolated in this anonymous landscape, the family begins to fray, increasing the pressure on Tunde’s father.

Undeterred by anti-Black racism, Tunde’s father, a newly credentialed mechanical engineer, sets out to conquer Utah’s suburban frontier. But under the blazing sun, amid precarious freezer units and a fast-approaching winter, his latest scheme, an ice cream truck business, seems doomed. Still, you desperately want the Akinolas to prevail, especially once Tunde’s mother begins to succumb to mental illness. When the family moves to Cirrilo, Texas, Tunde, now a teenager, befriends an African American boy who teaches him how to be Black “like Will Smith, like Michael Jordan.” It is only then that Tunde begins to realize that in his father’s attempts to make his sons into the “particular

kind of black man” accepted by whites, he has alienated Tunde from American Blacks, other Nigerians and even himself. We are reminded of Tunde’s meeting with the elderly white woman in the novel’s opening lines. By so completely embodying his father’s vision of success, perhaps Tunde has unwittingly entered his father’s nightmare, a heaven where Black boys, finally men, are servants to the whims of whites. Now, as Tunde embarks on his college education, he must cultivate his own kind of Black man.

A Particular Kind of Black Man is a long-awaited debut. If you know Folarin’s name from his 2013 Caine Prize-winning short story “Miracle” and his 2016 story “Genesis,” an early version of this novel, then you’ll recognize his evocation of the fever dreams of immigrants in outlier communities. Folarin writes about the Utah setting with the familiarity of a native and the insight of a newcomer. In “Miracle,” these communities are “made up of truths and lies,” and it is in the distance between the two that *A Particular Kind of Black Man* lives. Throughout the novel, Tunde desperately attempts to reconstruct and chronicle his life. In the process, he succeeds in eroding our sense of the gap between truths and lies, memories and lived realities. Although we begin to question the narrator, we never question his motives.

In its conclusion, the novel does more than illustrate the promises and failings of the American dream and the persistence of white supremacy. Through a patchwork of memories, dreams, telephone calls, and lyrical passages of fleeting thoughts and obsessions, Folarin molds his bildungsroman into one Black boy’s attempt to discover and articulate his own “particular kind of black man.” While some readers may find this latter part of the novel disarming, it is here where it diverts most starkly from the typical tropes of immigrant travail, becoming instead an existentialist odyssey that plumbs the depths of the human psyche. *A Particular Kind of Black Man* is, indeed, a particular kind of book — ambitious, incisive and imaginative, a promising debut. ☀



A Particular Kind of Black Man

By Tope Folarin

272 pages, hardcover, \$26

Simon & Schuster, 2019

Denied access to ceremony

We should not be discriminated against when our gender roles don't match our sex.

BY JOLENE YAZZIE

WHEN REI YAZZIE started his transition and his voice began to change, he knew it was time to prepare for a *tá'cheeh* — a traditional male puberty ceremony. To do so, he would need the help of a Diné medicine man — an ask that can take time — but more importantly, he would need to find a traditional healer willing to accept a transgender man.

“The older generation haven't acknowledged or embraced (people like me),” said Rei Yazzie. “I want to reach out to somebody who is going to acknowledge that.”

Rei Yazzie is not alone in his struggle to secure prayer or ceremony from traditional healers, yet he descends from a tradition that recognizes multiple gender roles.

In the Diné language, there are at least six genders: *Asdzáán* (woman), *Hastiin* (male), *Náhleeh* (feminine-man), *Dilbaa* (masculine-woman), *Nádleeh Asdzaa* (lesbian), *Nádleeh Hastii* (gay man). All come from the Diné creation story, in which *asdzáán* and *hastiin*, a cisgender married couple, were not getting along and separated. When that happened, *dilbaa* and *náhleeh* emerged from hiding and were seen as a special group that could perform the duties of both women and men, stepping into the vacated partner roles. They were accepted by *asdzáán* and *hastiin*, who realized their survival depended on them.

I identify as “*bah*” or *dilbaa náhleeh* (masculine woman) or *nádleeh asdzaa*. I prefer a masculine gender role that doesn't match my sex, but I continue to face bias over my gender expression. I am sad when I think that at one time my people accepted me for who I was. Yet I believe that respect for traditional practices and stories can help restore that acceptance.

Diné people have always understood gender as a spectrum rather than a binary, an understanding that has come from traditional teachings and our creation story. In order to stop discrimination, our traditional healers must set an example and accept people of all genders, including Rei Yazzie and me.



Hannabah Blue and Jolene Yazzie outside the county government building in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where they got their marriage license. The Navajo Nation wouldn't issue one. **Amy Lanteigne**

I was 4 years old when I knew I liked women. My whole family danced in powwows, but I didn't like the girl category my parents picked out for me, so I told my father I could dance better than my brothers. I began dancing northern traditional, a boys' category. I was 14 when the powwow community found out I was a girl, and I was bullied by people who called themselves “traditional,” as well as by their children. They would say homophobic things when I walked by or refuse to shake my hand if I placed in my category. It became difficult to continue to dance — emotionally, physically and spiritually. I started to doubt myself and internalized that hatred; I questioned myself and hated being gay. It didn't help that my brother — my powwow buddy — didn't accept me when he found out I

was gay. I stopped dancing for a couple of years. Today, however, I dance when I have the courage.

In September of 2017, I asked my wife to marry me. We were determined to have a Navajo wedding and tried to find a traditional healer who would consider a marriage between two women. At one point, I found a medicine woman who supported same-sex marriages, but only if they were performed in a church or other non-Diné venue. She said that according to Navajo tradition, we couldn't be blessed in the same way as a man and a woman, and she declined to perform the ceremony.

I felt like I was 14 again, frustrated and angry.

We eventually asked my wife's uncle, who agreed to hold a ceremony for us last fall, and we were blessed to bring our families together inside a hogan to celebrate, support and acknowledge our marriage. But for people like Rei Yazzie, such a blessing may still be a long way off.

Navajo ceremonies, including marriages, coming-of-age customs and even basic prayers, are essential to ensure the survival of the Diné people. There are more than 350,000 enrolled Navajo people who still need their language and culture, and we cannot discriminate against relatives who identify as *nádleeh*, *dilbaa*, *nádleeh asdzaa* and *nádleeh hastii*.

Traditional healers must talk about the Navajo creation story, understand and explain gender roles, use correct gender pronouns, and conduct ceremonies that honor multiple gender roles and different forms of relationships. Otherwise, we will lose those traditions for good. I caught up with Rei Yazzie at the Diné Pride Christmas Drag Show Benefit at the Navajo Nation Museum in Window Rock, Arizona, in December. He told me he still hasn't found someone to help him take part in a *tá'cheeh*, but he'll keep trying. Rei Yazzie and I come from the same creation story. We take pride in who we are, and we shouldn't be denied access to ceremony just because our gender roles don't match our sex. ☀

Going to jail for our great-granddaughters

A pipeline protest brings a writer and a rancher together.

BY EMMA MARRIS

EVERY YEAR, THE SAME bald eagle appears in the same tall Douglas fir, just across from Sandy Lyon's window at her house in the foothills of the Oregon Cascades. That's how she knows the coho are back.

In 1990, long before I met Sandy, she and her husband, Russ, bought 306-acre Fate Creek Ranch in Douglas County, Oregon. The creek ran cold all summer and was shaded by big old trees. It was perfect salmon-spawning habitat, but there weren't any fish, thanks to a culvert and irrigation dam that blocked their way. So the Lyons removed the barriers, fenced cattle out of the creek and replanted the banks, adding boulders and logjams to create areas for salmon to lay their eggs.

The Lyons saw the first spawning coho in the winter of 2001-2002, their scarlet bodies battered from making the same trip their ancestors had for thousands of years.

Sandy told me much of this story in November, while we were sitting together on the carpet in the ceremonial office of Oregon Gov. Kate Brown. We had never met before, but we were thrown together because we were both protesting a proposed gas pipeline, part of the Jordan Cove Energy Project. It would start near my home in Klamath County, slice through the middle of the Lyons' salmon restoration on Fate Creek, and continue to a proposed liquefaction and export terminal on the coast, in Coos Bay.

The company behind the project, Pembina, would dam Fate Creek, rip up all the trees and vegetation along a 75-foot swath, dig a huge trench across it for the pipe, and then "restore" it. "We can't trust that they would do a good job of putting it all back right," Sandy told me. And the permanent removal of shading vegetation means the stream would inevitably heat up, which could kill the coho. "It is a double whammy. We are already fighting global warming," she added.

Climate change is, broadly speaking, what

brought me to this sit-in. I began fighting the pipeline because of the millions of metric tons of greenhouse gases it would emit each year. But as I worked with ranchers, members of the Klamath, Hoopa Valley and Yurok tribes and others, I came to see the infrastructure itself as dangerous and destructive. The company would clear a swath up to 95 feet wide to bury a 36-inch-diameter pipe across 229 miles of mountainous, forested land, crossing more than 300 waterways and risking each and every one. And it would do so against the objections of tribal governments and landowners like Sandy. The whole project seems like a too on-the-nose allegory of how capital is allowed to crash through our communities and nonhuman ecosystems alike — how the metal tentacles of the rich are allowed to go anywhere they want and do whatever the hell they please.

SANDY AND I WERE NOT ALONE in the governor's office; nearly 100 of us stayed for eight hours. To pass the time, we told stories, sang and shared meals. Sandy and I agreed to keep track of each other, to watch out for one another as the day unfolded.

At around 8 p.m., Brown walked into the office, flanked by police. She listened to several individual pleas, but said she could not come out against the pipeline while state agencies were still reviewing permits, adding, "I believe Oregonians are best served by knowing there is a fair process and that I'm not putting my finger on the scale one way or another." As she left, some people started to boo, while others began to sing. A few minutes later, state troopers told us we had to leave too, or risk arrest.

Twenty-one people decided to stay. We sat and held hands as police removed us one by one. Sandy and I were both nervous; we chatted to keep calm. I told her about explaining to my small children that sometimes getting arrested was a good thing. She told me about her son, now

in his late 20s, who grew up on the ranch and isn't sure he wants to have kids of his own in a warming world.

A fellow protester taught us a short song with a sweet melody that a friend had written. She changed the words just a bit to fit our situation:

*Gentle heart, gentle soul, gentle mind, mind
Life is strange, love remains, all the time.*

*Like an eagle in the sky,
Like a fish in the sea,
Like my great-granddaughter watching over me.*

That last line got both Sandy and me in the throat, and we started to cry. Neither of us had been arrested before, but with our great-granddaughters watching over us, we felt a surge of determination.

Eventually, we were cuffed with plastic zip-ties and led to a paddy wagon. This was hard on Sandy, who is in her 70s; the stiff plastic cuffs bruised her wrists, and she got a pretty wicked migraine. She wept, but with her hands cuffed behind her, she had to wipe her tears on the shoulders of the young man cuffed next to her, an activist younger than her son.

At the jail, we were unloaded, searched and tossed in a couple of holding cells — one for the women and one for the men. It was by now long after midnight, and Sandy was in pain and exhausted. There were no chairs or benches in our cell, just thin plastic mats on the floor. She curled up on one and tried to sleep. Finally, at around 5 a.m., we were released.

The next morning, several of us had breakfast at Denny's. We learned that our story had been picked up by the Associated Press and several Oregon newspapers. Our goal had been to put very public pressure on the governor to take a stand, and now thousands of people were reading about the pipeline and her refusal to

oppose it. Sandy looked radiant. She said she had made a bigger difference in one long, scared and miserable day than she had in 15 years of writing comments to federal agencies and attending permit hearings.

Sandy and I will stay in touch. The fight is not over. We are still waiting for Brown to oppose the project and pledge to fight it. After all, she herself has said that “climate change isn’t looming — it’s here. How many reports must the U.N. issue, and how many warnings must global scientists give before we listen and act?”

I hope Brown herself will listen. And I hope she will act. And I hope that when our great-granddaughters are grown women, eagles will still feast on coho in Fate Creek every winter. ☀

Protesters rally at the state Capitol in Salem, Oregon, to demand that the state reject proposals by energy giant Pembina for the Jordan Cove Energy Project. If approved, a natural gas export terminal would be constructed at Coos Bay, fed by a 229-mile pipeline.

Alex Milan Tracy / Sipa USA via AP Images





Q&A

Wildlife biologist Sergio Avila spent decades working on conservation projects in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands. Originally from the ecologically diverse desert landscape of Zacatecas, Mexico, he's led binational projects that brought together conservation scientists and biologists to preserve habitat and allow animals like the jaguar to move freely through the Sonoran Desert and across an international border.

Two years ago, Avila left conservation science for advocacy and joined the Sierra Club as its regional Southwest outdoor coordinator. As a person of color, he often felt uncomfortable within a conservation world that continues to tout the greatness of Sierra Club founder John Muir and Edward Abbey, both of whom propagated

Conservation justice

Sergio Avila is championing the idea that a diversity of connections to nature should be honored and cultivated.

BY JESSICA KUTZ

racism within the environmental movement. Now, he's challenging the narrative of the outdoors as a place for only a certain type of person — championing the idea that a diversity of connections to nature should be honored and cultivated.

Avila sat down with *HCN* in Tucson, where he lives, to talk about equity and representation in the mainstream conservation

movement. Without it, he says, our stewardship of the planet is in jeopardy.

Would you talk about your past work in conservation?

For 20 years, I researched endangered species, like jaguars, ocelots, pygmy owls and monarch butterflies. The idea of working with those species has been to understand their movements

in this binational region. I have always focused on wildlife moving across the boundaries to show that there needs to be connectivity. To show that migration is a natural phenomenon, and to show that in this region, two countries are working on conservation.

I say this because, at least from the United States' side, it's very clear that as much as people know about conservation, national parks and endangered species, they think all that ends at the border. There are many groups that don't know there are national parks south of the border or that there are agencies working on conservation. They don't know that in Mexico there is a biodiversity commission, that in Mexico they collect information not only about the biodiversity,

but also about the cultural values for those plants and animals.

Why did you leave that work?

I left conservation science and conservation biology because I felt isolated. For many years, I had skills and field experience, especially with jaguars. That was very useful, but I started to feel very alone. I thought: I can't be the only person of color working with jaguar conservation. I can't be the only Latinx person who comes to the states to work on this. I started seeing the inequities in the conservation world.

My first job was about wilderness campaigns, and I learned about these concepts of a wilderness untrammelled by man, you know, these pristine places, these "Yosemites" and "Yellowstones." And by learning history and meeting other people, I realized that that was made up — that pristine wilderness is a lie. And the traditional Western conservation model only cares about places and nature without people. And the only people that do count in those places are white people.

And that's where recreation comes in, right? Because white people like to talk about their connection to the land, but they don't have ancestors to that land, they don't know what to eat, they don't have names for those mountains. So, connection to land is different. I felt really isolated. And I felt like I needed to leave to represent my people in a different way and to be visible for people of color who want to work in conservation, but don't know that they belong in conservation.

Why did you move into this new position at the Sierra Club?

From the time I saw the job description, it was very clear that the Sierra Club was trying to break that paradigm, that Sierra was trying to address the inequities by, one, hiring people of color with that expertise and two, training and empowering people of color to speak about this history. Sierra Club

is revising its own history. It is an organization that was founded by John Muir, who was pretty much the beginning of the problem.

What's lost when these spaces don't include people of color and those from underrepresented communities?

One thing that's lost is stories and the loss of different values. I feel like in the white conservation movement, either it's about the recreation — just having fun — or the science. Those are two very important values. They're important. They matter. I use them, but they're not the only two values. I also want values about people relating to food, people relating to their own places of origin, people relating to their family several generations back.

If there's a dominating culture that doesn't value those stories, that doesn't value that richness, then it's not only lost, but its existence is also erased. I feel like — for a lot of Indigenous communities — that is where they are. They have to explain where they come from. They have to explain their origin stories, they have to explain their values, because white people have erased all that so much that they think Indigenous people don't exist.

Why do you advocate for merging the social justice movement with the conservation movement?

It's very difficult to address things like climate change and think that technology or only Western science is going to give us the answers, if we don't include traditional ecological knowledge of people who have lived in a place for centuries and know how to locally address some of those challenges. When we don't include other people and other knowledge, we limit ourselves, especially in the conservation world.

You've been outspoken about the lack of diversity in the environmental movement. What missteps do you see as it aims to become more inclusive?

I've seen so many missteps. One thing is generalizing, and thinking that when you meet one person of a certain identity, that one person represents everybody. Thinking that because I'm from Mexico, I know everybody, and I have the answer on how to get Latinx people to our events or parties or outings, as if the same formula works everywhere.

The other one is thinking that just translating things, at least in my case, in Spanish, means that everybody will understand what the hell we're talking about. When I worked on a wilderness campaign, I first had to learn what the word "wilderness" means. The word "wilderness" does not exist in Spanish. We say nature — we can say "natural area" — but in Spanish there is not the concept of wilderness. So even if I found a way to translate it, the concept is not translated. And so people think that just because we're going to have brochures that are in English translated in Spanish, that will help reach other populations. It's not.

Another mistake I see very often is that organizations and directors think that the goal is diversity. Diversity is not the goal. It's not just having a board meeting with people from all over the place that can speak different languages. Diversity is a product of equity. Diversity is a product of a system that allows people to feel comfortable at that table. The idea that everybody's

narrative matters, that everybody's stories take a precedent and have the same weight.

How do you advocate for making the outdoors more welcoming to different groups of people?

Being welcoming and meeting people where they are. There's no embarrassment, there's no shaming. We're here to enjoy the leaves in the trees and the birds.

I don't use gear. I don't have a special backpack. I don't bring special pants. I dress very normal, so that other people can relate. I don't bring granola bars anymore; I bring oranges and bananas and some peanut butter sandwiches. People relate with what they see, so, like, I can bring some pupusas, or I can bring quesadillas.

Because white people make it seem that in order to go hiking, you have to have the Clif Bar and the Luna Bar and a specific drink. So basically, what I'm doing is breaking all sorts of stereotypes that people have about hiking.

Also, offering outings in a way that people don't feel constrained — something with the least amount of barriers. If they don't have transportation, I try to provide the transportation. If they don't have the pass for the national park, I have a pass for the national park. Just trying to accommodate all my audiences on their level, for them to have a good time, for them to want to do it again. ✨

"When I worked on a wilderness campaign, I first had to learn what the word 'wilderness' means. The word 'wilderness' does not exist in Spanish."

Sergio Avila leads a group of local residents as they set out on a nature walk in the Midvale Park neighborhood in Tucson, Arizona, as part of an effort by local organizations to encourage healthy lifestyles, enjoyment of the outdoors, and a greater sense of community. **Roberto (Bear) Guerra / HCN**

Heard Around the West

Tips and photos of Western oddities are appreciated and often shared in this column.
Write betsym@hcn.org or tag photos #heardaroundthewest on Instagram.

BY BETSY MARSTON

WASHINGTON

A torrent of tumbling tumbleweeds stranded a half-dozen travelers on New Year's Eve near Richland in eastern Washington. Winds of up to 50 mph sent the huge plants rolling until they almost engulfed the cars. *Oregon Live* reports that the highway was shut down for 10 hours while transportation workers evicted the tenacious Russian thistles.

CALIFORNIA

Who knew there was money in maggots? Maggot-farming was just about nonexistent a decade ago, reports *Bloomberg*, but now it's become "increasingly fashionable" because it uses organic waste that would otherwise end up in landfills. Jason Drew, chief honcho of AgriProtein, has been on a maggoty spree, recently selecting California to host one of his industrial-scale farms. The Jurupa Valley plant will be modeled on a Cape Town facility that raises black soldier flies on about 25 metric tons of organic waste daily. The flies' larvae, which go through several stages prior to maggothood, are harvested to produce 4,000 tons of protein meal a year. The place is buzzing: "At any one time ... there are 8.4 billion flies in the factory." Aquaculture is the primary market, with insect feed "eventually displacing fishmeal that's made from wild-caught fish and fed to salmon." But believe it or not, human consumers are also customers: A restaurant in Cape Town has begun serving dishes "including ice cream made from ground-up maggots."

MONTANA

Rocky Mountain goats are handsome beasts with massive haunches and a bold demeanor that probably stems from their predator-free lifestyle — unless you count hunters. But they're defenseless against a new enemy: climate change, which, according to Colorado State University wildlife biology professor Joel Berger, is melting glaciers and drying up the snow the goats roll on to cool off during sunny winter days. Berger, who is also a senior scientist with the Wildlife Conservation Society, co-authored a study on how human-



Sienna Gonzales / HCN

caused climate change causes heat stress and hypothermia in mountain goats. "They just don't seem to have the thermal flexibility that we see in some of these other large animals," he told *VICE*.

CALIFORNIA

There's a lot to admire about the Golden State, *The New York Times* reports, starting with its robust economy, the fifth largest in the world. Then there's the intrepid way its Legislature wades into controversy, banning the sale of foie gras, fur coats, alligator skin boots and those disposable shampoo bottles in hotels. You can also no longer smoke cigarettes in state parks — "even on a deserted beach" — or build a new house unless you install solar panels. But California really wins when it comes to making voting easier: "While

other states are purging their voter rolls, California has gone the other direction to encourage mail-in ballots." And now, for the first time, "ballots come with postage prepaid envelopes."

UTAH

Hog waste may be a huge and smelly pollution problem, but Dominion Energy, which provides natural gas to 1 million customers in Utah, Wyoming and Idaho, sees it as an unexploited resource, the *Deseret News* reports. Now, Dominion's director of gas development, Ryan Childress, says his company is partnering with Smithfield Farms, the world's largest pork producer, to become "the most sustainable energy company in the world." At Smithfield's 26 hog farms in Utah, anaerobic digesters will break down waste and produce methane, aka renewable natural gas. Childress calls the project a triple win: "clean renewable energy to customers, taking greenhouse gas emissions out of the atmosphere, and giving farmers a new way to make money."

MONTANA

A few miles from the National Bison Range — and much, much farther from the nearest ocean — a man in Mission Valley has begun what might be Montana's first shrimp-raising business. Jim Vaughan told the *Billings Gazette* that he got his first batch of white Pacific shrimp from his brother in Idaho, who learned about the business while working as a miner in Indonesia. (That brother's business, Cowboy Shrimp, ended with his divorce, but the idea — along with some starter shrimp — inspired Vaughan.) He buys baby shrimp, which come in bags of 10,000 nearly invisible juveniles from farms in Texas or Florida, and raises them in five huge 8,000-gallon covered tubs filled with 84-degree saltwater. They're easy to farm, needing only salt and circulating water, and he "uses a type of bacteria that eat the shrimp waste." A former cattleman, Vaughan says that shrimp are much more efficient at creating protein than cattle. He sells his shrimp live by the pound: "There's a lot of interest," he says. "I gotta turn the interest into sells." ✨

A close-up photograph of a brown, textured work pant, likely made of hemp or canvas. The fabric shows signs of wear and creasing. A small, rectangular, dark-colored label with the Patagonia logo is visible on the right side of the image. The background is blurred, focusing attention on the fabric and the label.

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#IAM THE WEST

MARIBEL ALVAREZ
Folklorist
Tucson, Arizona

I am a Cuban who identifies strongly with Mexican and Mexican American culture. I spend a lot of time looking at everyday life and culture in places that are not so obvious: backyards, kitchens, the front porch, places where people gather to tell stories. That's what I do. I love it when I get confused for being a member of an ethnic group that I'm not. To me, this is a celebration. I am 100% aware of fake appropriations, but I also love the invitation to play with others in their playgrounds, to taste their foods. I've never found that I have been unwelcome in a community that is different from mine, and it feels like each one of those communities has given me a little space to explore who I am.

Do you know a Westerner with a great story?
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