



National Latino Research Center

California State University San Marcos

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A Quarterly Newsletter

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Oaxacan Community Workshop Aims to Educate Agencies in North County

The "Oaxaca Indigenous Community Workshop," presented by the National Latino Research Center, with the Coalition of Indigenous Communities from Oaxaca (COCIO) and the Oaxacan Indigenous Binational Front (FIOB), aims to raise awareness among local health care agencies, law enforcement, social service agencies, educators, and foundations about the large and growing Oaxacan indigenous immigrant community in North County San Diego. While there is a large demographic presence of Oaxacans in North County, local researchers have documented a divide, due to a lack of knowledge, between the Oaxacan community and health and human service agencies in North County. Many agencies have expressed a need to better understand Oaxacan indigenous immigrants. Community residents also cite how cultural and linguistic barriers negatively impact their relationship with local agencies.



The workshop will allow local experts and members and leaders of the Oaxacan community to discuss challenges and share information with an audience of health and social service agencies, city government, foundations and community groups. The workshop hopes to serve as a catalyst for dialogue that promotes the health, safety and well-being of Oaxacan families in North County San Diego. Dr. Bonnie Bade and Dr. Jorge Riquelme from CSUSM will be presenting their research.

Santiago Morales Ventura will deliver the key note address. Mr. Ventura is a Oaxacan human rights activist. In 1986 Morales was wrongly accused and convicted of murder and spent 5 years in prison. Not realizing that Mr. Ventura spoke the indigenous Mixtec language, the court had provided him with a Spanish speaking interpreter. Four years after Ventura's conviction, a reinvestigation of the case established convincingly that another man was the killer and that cultural and linguistic barriers contributed to a wrongful conviction. Ventura's conviction was overturned and he was released from prison. Mr. Ventura received a scholarship from the University of Portland, and graduated with a degree in social work. He now works for the Oregon Law Center as a community outreach worker.

The workshop is co-sponsored by The California Endowment, the California Mexico Health Initiative and the U.S. Mexico Border Health Commission. The event will be held in conjunction with Binational Health Week at the San Marcos Community Center, 3 Civic Center Drive, San Marcos, 92069 on October 15th, 2004 from 8am to 3pm. Parking at the Civic Center is free. Included in the \$20 fee are workshop materials, continental breakfast and lunch. Scholarships are also available.

For more information, contact Konane Martínez at (760) 750-3505 or go to www.csusm.edu/nlrc for registration information.

Greetings from the NLRC Director



Dr. González
NLRC Director

Welcome to a new academic year! I hope that your summer has been pleasurable. I am very pleased with the NLRC's accomplishments during the past year. In particular, we strengthened our partnerships with community organizations. This year, we will be making a push to get more faculty involved with the NLRC. Accordingly, we are sponsoring a get-together on September 28 for faculty to learn more about our NLRC faculty associate initiative.

This fall the NLRC will also be sponsoring workshops and presentations for the university and general community. The Bravo Foundation of Escondido and the NLRC co-sponsored a presentation by President Karen Haynes on September 22. On October 15 the NLRC is organizing a "Oaxacan Community Workshop" for professionals and health care providers.

In addition, NLRC staff will be presenting at the Rotary Club of Escondido, Latin American Studies Association conference in Las Vegas, and the American Public Health Association conference in Washington, D.C. During spring, in collaboration with the Kellogg Library, we are organizing an exhibit by Latino artist Malaquías Montoya from UC, Davis. We will also be continuing our Latino speaker series. I wish you a great start this semester and I hope to hear from you during the year.

NLRC Accomplishments

- ◆ **Awards:** Dr. González was selected for the 2004 CSUSM President's Award for scholarly and creative activity. Dr. González is being honored for his contribution to the mental health assessment of Latinos and the integration of students into his research. Congratulations Dr. González!
- ◆ **New Contract:** The NLRC was contracted by St. Jude Medical Center to provide technical assistance and program evaluation services for the West Fullerton Asthma Prevention Project funded by The California Endowment. The NLRC actively works with numerous asthma coalitions throughout Southern California (see article on Community Action to Fight Asthma in this issue).
- ◆ **New Grant for Upcoming Conference:** The NLRC has been granted \$10,000 by The California Endowment to support the Oaxacan Community Workshop that will be held on October 15, 2004 in San Marcos.
- ◆ **Media Coverage:** The featured article in our last issue, *Al Norte de San Diego*, a project to collect oral histories from Latinos in Escondido, has received great support and attention from the media. Over the summer, several articles were published in the North County Times and San Diego Union Tribune.
- ◆ **New Partnerships:** The NLRC has partnered with the City of Escondido and numerous community organizations to develop campus-community projects in the Mission Park area of Escondido. In June, the NLRC co-hosted a *Neighbor to Neighbor Dinner* with the City of Escondido to seek guidance and participation from residents. The partnership is currently seeking funding for a variety of community development projects identified by residents and community partners.
- ◆ **New NLRC Report:** NLRC researcher, Konane Martinez, recently completed a report on Border Health issues that will be published this fall by The California Endowment.
- ◆ **New Information Service:** The NLRC recently launched the *Southern California Asthma & Environmental Health Update*, a bi-monthly electronic newsletter with updates on new studies, funding opportunities and events in Southern California. If you would like to be added to the distribution list, please email us!



Community Partnership

Jerry Van Leeuwen from the City of Escondido talks to a group of Escondido residents at the June Neighbor to Neighbor Dinner, co-sponsored by the NLRC.

For more information on the projects listed above, please contact the NLRC at nlrc@csusm.edu or 760.750.3500.

NLRC Provides Technical Assistance to Asthma Coalitions in Southern California

By Sonia Taddy, Associate Director

Community Action to Fight Asthma (CAFA) is part of a state-wide strategic initiative of The California Endowment. The goal of CAFA is to support the creation and implementation of policies and interventions to reduce indoor and outdoor environmental triggers for school-aged children with asthma. The three-year initiative funds 12 asthma coalitions and four regional centers throughout the state. The NLRC serves as a Southern California Regional Center, providing support and technical assistance to asthma coalitions and community-based partnerships in Imperial, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego counties. In this newsletter, we feature two unique interventions that focus on reducing asthma triggers in the school environment and promoting healthy housing through community engagement.

Health, Housing and Civic Engagement

The NLRC has been working with the San Diego Regional Asthma Coalition (SDRAC) and Mid-City CAN (a community organizing agency) to address the environmental triggers of childhood asthma in San Diego.

Unlike many clinically-based asthma programs that focus on managing the disease, the Mid-City CAFA intervention is designed to educate and engage local residents to advocate for policies and regulations that make their community a healthier and safer place to live.

For a diverse community like Mid-City, this can be a daunting task. Characterized by high density and an aging housing stock, Mid-City is home to a culturally and linguistically diverse population of new immigrants and refugees. Many Mid-City residents are marginalized, afraid to complain, unfamiliar with the complaint process, or are unsure what to do to remedy community problems. However, through the CAFA project's community organizing and leadership training, local residents have learned about their rights and how to advocate for change. Not only are they learning how to identify and reduce environmental asthma triggers in their homes, but they are becoming more civically engaged in their local community.



Trash in an alley (Mid-City neighborhood)



A Mid-City resident collects information

At the onset of the project, the NLRC worked with Mid-City CAN and the SDRAC to develop a community survey that identified concerns, priorities, and perceptions of local residents. After more than 400 door-to-door surveys in English, Spanish, and Somali, excessive garbage and cockroaches emerged as the top housing-related concerns (full copy of the survey report can be found at www.csusm.edu/nlrc). Given the community's concerns about garbage and its link to increased rat and cockroach infestations (both known asthma triggers), trash became the main focus of the CAFA intervention in Mid-City.

During the past year, the NLRC has worked with community partners to deliver multilingual trainings for residents in leadership, asthma and environmental triggers, public speaking, media, tenant rights, policy and how to effectively advocate for improvements to substandard housing. Residents have met with agencies such as Environmental Services (responsible for public trash collection), Code Enforcement, and the Housing Authority to learn more about their roles and what they can do to improve Mid-City neighborhoods. Now in its third year, the Mid-City CAFA project is diving into the political arena as residents meet with local city council members and agencies to share their concerns and discuss solutions.

"We're not afraid anymore. The community is finding its voice."

Rukiya Mahada,
Mid-City CAFA Community Leader

"The CAFA Project has helped many residents take control and ownership of their neighborhoods," explains Kirk Arthur, Project Supervisor at Mid-City CAN. "In addition, new grassroots projects such as the Alley Padres have emerged and are advocating for cleaner and safer streets. Nothing makes a change in the community like grassroots involvement and organizing." For more information about the NLRC's work on asthma, housing, and community organizing, please contact Sonia Taddy at staddy@nlrc.edu.

Improving Indoor Air Quality in Imperial County Schools

By Dr. Arcela Núñez-Álvarez, Education Projects Coordinator

The NLRC works with the Imperial Valley Asthma Coalition (IVAC), a collaborative of diverse agencies and individuals committed to providing leadership in mobilizing resources, increasing awareness, decreasing asthma triggers, and promoting policy changes to reduce the burden and improve the quality of life of children affected by asthma in the Imperial Valley.

In November 2002, the IVAC and NLRC identified asthma triggers in schools as a top priority in addressing asthma. Coalition members began a challenging initiative of identifying available asthma data, contacting school personnel to join the anti-asthma campaign, introducing and implementing Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools, disseminating information to increase awareness, and supporting policy changes aimed at reducing asthma triggers.

Asthma is the most chronic common childhood disease, affecting 4.8 million children nationwide and accounts for one-third of all pediatric emergency visits. It is now the most common cause of disability among children nationwide and the leading cause of school absences, costing children their education and our schools hundreds of dollars in lost funding based on attendance.



Indoor Air Quality in Schools

Participants in the "Tools-for-Schools" training that was co-sponsored by the NLRC in Imperial Valley this fall. "Tools-for-Schools" is a program developed by the EPA to help improve the indoor air quality in the nation's schools.

Imperial County has the highest childhood hospitalization rate for asthma in California for children 14 years of age and younger. Asthma hospitalization rates increased about 12% annually in Imperial County during the 1990's. Imperial County's age-adjusted asthma hospitalization rate was 19.56 per 10,000 population during 1998-2000 compared to the Healthy People 2010 goal of 14 per 10,000.

The majority of those hospitalized for asthma were low income. Approximately 23% of the total population lives below the national poverty level, and 43.8% of children under the seventeen live in poverty. The median household income is approximately \$25,000. These economic circumstances and the limited resources in the county make addressing asthma difficult.

The IVAC has taken an important leadership role in promoting a greater understanding of environmental factors that play a major role in asthma. Through collaboration with school personnel, parents, health care providers, and researchers, the IVAC is working to accomplish the following objectives:

- ◆ Introduce programs in schools such as Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) "Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Action Kit" (IAQ) to reduce asthma triggers for school aged children.
- ◆ Increase knowledge among school aged children, their families, caregivers and service providers about asthma triggers where children live, learn, and play.
- ◆ Collect asthma incidence data to better understand the scope of asthma in Imperial County.

In 2004, the IVAC completed two environmental school assessments at Calexico Unified School District, invited a series of speakers to share information regarding implementation of IAQ Tools for Schools and an Asthma Friendly Flag Program in schools. Additionally, the NLRC, in collaboration with the IVAC, CAFA, California Breathing, and EPA facilitated an IAQ Training in El Centro to promote greater awareness of indoor air quality in schools.

For more information about the NLRC's work on asthma in Imperial County, please contact Arcela Núñez-Alvarez at anunez@csusm.edu. For helpful resources and information on childhood asthma, go to Community Action to Fight Asthma's website at <http://www.calasthma.org>.

Researcher Spotlight

Konane M. Martínez



My first experience in applied research occurred in North County San Diego. In 1999, I collaborated with Dr. Bonnie Bade on the first state-wide health needs assessment of agricultural workers. While in the field I came to understand the complex factors that impact the relationship between agricultural workers and local health care agencies. In particular, I noticed a disconnect between the community and local agencies. The experience was fundamental to my dissertation work which examines the relationship of Oaxacan indigenous transnational communities with clinical health care systems. The work is an ethnography of the Mixtec transnational community of Ixpantepec Nieves, Mexico. The research has taken me from North County San Diego to the Mixteca Baja region of Oaxaca.

I have been actively collaborating with local community clinics, working on projects in Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services, HIV/AIDS, breast cancer, agricultural worker mental health, and male reproductive health. I am currently organizing a “Oaxacan Community Workshop” that will educate local health care, social service, and government agencies about the large and growing Oaxacan indigenous immigrants in San Diego County. Already the event has gained local, state-wide and even international attention. The workshop will prove to be an important first step in creating a dialogue between the Oaxacan community and local agencies.

Working at the National Latino Research Center has provided an ideal opportunity to continue doing applied research in North County while contributing to the well-being of the region’s Latino communities. I recently completed a border health research project for The California Endowment. The research examined the most pressing needs agencies face in addressing health in the border region.

I see my research as “applied public health” anthropology. I try to combine methods from medical and applied anthropology as a way to seek out, as James Baldwin states, “the questions that have been hidden by the answers.” In addition to my applied work I have been actively involved with local Oaxacan organizations. Working with these organizations has strengthened my understanding of issues faced by Oaxacan indigenous communities and has provided me the opportunity to give back to the community that has given me so much.



Upcoming Events

NLRC Faculty Associate Reception

September 28 from 3:00 - 4:30 p.m.
Kellogg Library 4400, CSUSM Campus

Oaxacan Community Workshop

October 15 from 8:00 - 3:00 PM
San Marcos Community Center

NLRC Speakers Series Presents

Dr. Norma Ojeda, San Diego State University
Latinas’ Perceptions of Family Planning and Abortion
November 10 from 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Kellogg Library 4400, CSUSM Campus



CSUSM President, Dr. Karen S. Haynes and Dr. González
at the Bravo Luncheon on September 22, 2004