DOIRA Immigrant Integration Sponsorships Overview

In 2015, the Denver Office of Immigrant & Refugee Affairs (DOIRA) started the Immigrant Integration Mini-Grants with the simple intention of bringing diverse communities together. We asked the community to bring forward their most creative ideas for community bridging, learning, sharing and understanding. Denver organizations, neighborhood groups and passionate individuals responded to the call and produced impactful events and activities bringing together newcomers and receiving community. Since 2013, we have grown and scope but remain dedicated to funding projects that are community crafted and implemented.

To date, DOIRA has provided more than a hundred mini-grants. In 2020, twenty-three organizations were awarded $1,000 each. Due to the pandemic and the implementation of statewide social distancing restrictions, organizations had to reimagine their activities. A summary of the organizations awarded mini-grants can be found here.

Summary of Programs

Asian Pacific Development Center

Dear America...

The Asian Pacific Development Center hosted a virtual video event that highlighted the immigrant, refugee, and 1st generation experience in America. The virtual event was a display and narrated letters by a performance reader, written by immigrants, refugees, and 1st generation immigrant/refugee Americans entitled "Dear America...".

Stories were shared by anonymous and non-anonymous writers who expressed the significance of sharing their story through storytelling narrative. Outreach to community organizations like Gathering Place, African Community Reach, Servicios de la Raza, Immigrant and Refugee Center of Northern CO, Denver Rescue Mission, Lutheran Services, the Adult Education Class at Asian Pacific Development Center, and Asian American Student Services, Undocumented Student Services, and Latinx Alliance programs at the University of Colorado Denver, and individuals from diverse backgrounds to celebrate community integration.

Dear America... Video | Letters read by Franklin Cruz

- 14+ outreach and project partners
- 38 "Dear America..." letter submissions received
- 5 letters were read out loud by a performance reader
- 10 letters featured in two videos on the APDC YouTube Channel and Facebook page
- 38 total views on the first featured video on YouTube
- 42 views on the Victim Assistance Facebook
- 36 views of the 2nd video YouTube and Facebook

Letter Submissions Video | Dear America

“The experiences and background narrative shared by immigrants, refugees, and 1st generation immigrant Americans through storytelling increase and celebrate community integrations, stronger bonds in a community, and understand the divide and barriers faced by these populations that can be reinforced and have stronger sense of unification by continuing this event.”
Athmar Park Neighborhood Association

Community Support - COVID Relief

The Athmar Park Neighborhood Association supported multiple free community events including: five pop-up food distributions, three paleta in the park events, and a community mural. Pop up food distributions provided a box of fresh produce and a box of assorted pantry staples. We held these events at a local church and at the parking lot of KIPP Denver Collegiate High School three times.

The intent of our COVID response was to encourage positive community activities and we decided to give away paletas in the park. We did this three-weeks in a row and then intermittently. We borrowed a paleta cart from BUCU West and purchased paletas from Paleteria Zacatecas and gave away 150 paletas each day.

We experienced a surge of violence in our community culminating in the murder of three youth on Federal Blvd. We created a safety group with elected officials and residents and planned a peace march, ofrenda ceremonies, and community mural. APNA supported a photo mural project that depicted and celebrated the diversity of residents living in the area. The mural was on a fence and several hundred feet long.

During this horrible time, we were able to introduce some positivity and connection through Paletas in the Park. People flocked to our cart surprised and happy to hear we were giving away sweet treats to simply put a smile on someone’s face and let people know that APNA is here for the community. The mural project was an opportunity to bring the community together, to mourn and heal while still honoring the diversity and liveliness of the community.

- 2 boxes of food to over 1,000 families or 4,100 individuals
- 450 paletas to individuals at Huston Lake Park

“We have received an outpouring of support from our residents and partner agencies. Our partnerships with our schools, library, elected officials, and neighboring RNO’s has strengthened during this past year.”

Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR)

Mujeres de COLOR Radio

In light of Hispanic Heritage Month and the Welcome Immigrants & Refugee Week, we dedicated one radio show to centering the experiences of immigrants during the public health crisis. On 9/15/2020, our award-winning Spanish-language radio program “Mujeres de COLOR” (www.bitly.com/2RSWp88) hosted Perla Duran, licensed professional counselor, and Karla Alder, community leader in Leadville, Colorado. The show aimed to lift up the work COLOR and partners do to help integrate immigrant families into community life, including rapid response support. Guest speakers touched on the stigma of mental health among immigrants and addressed the challenges of helping children and youth during distance learning in the COVID-19 era, and offered practical recommendations for multigenerational, immigrant homes with varying degrees of technology access and familiarity.

As a therapist and an immigrant, guest speaker Perla Duran was able to provide practical recommendations for immigrant families juggling the challenges of the pandemic realities from the perspective of mental health, a highly stigmatized subject in immigrant spaces. In sum, radio listeners and social media followers heard directly from peers who advocate for the needs of immigrants in Denver and beyond. In addition to these topics, COLOR’s Gina Millan also promoted 2020 Census participation along with a call-to-action for eligible voters in the immigrant community to register and vote at the upcoming election.

- Reach over 40,000 views
- Connect with 155 listener callers
- Invite 15-30 guest speakers from partner organizations and the community at large, in addition to 5-10 storytellers on the air.
- The program’s growing popularity averages over 500 views and 5-10 calls per show.
- 7,900+ COLOR’s Facebook followers
- The Radio show on 9/15/2020 registered 726 views, with 1,630 organic reach\(^1\) and 246 engagements\(^2\).

\(^1\) Number of people that see the content without paid distribution
\(^2\) Any action someone takes include likes, comments, shares

“We emphasize that as immigrants we can integrate into social and political life in communities while we also contribute our cultural assets to the host communities, including our belief and value systems. We stressed that integration does not need to be limited by migratory status or language barriers, where COLOR and partners, including Full Circle represented by our guest Karla, help immigrants learn about self-advocacy and community advocacy.”
Commún
Food Share

Commún was able to provide interpretation for seven community meetings in three languages, (English, Spanish and Arabic). Commún held six focus groups with immigrant members of the Southwest Denver community who are experiencing food insecurity to better understand how to form and carry out our programs of food resiliency and community organizing. This work is intrinsic in Commún’s mission, working to build resilience through relationships and programs that foster a sense of belonging, center community voice, and realize equity. In order to meet the unique needs of the Spanish, Arabic Russian, and Vietnamese speaking community, Commún engages community members as experts in their own experience to design programming, hire staff, and co-create the organization as it grows. We also pay our volunteer team to attend essential trainings related to food safety and health in their native language.

- 10 focus groups total - 3 in Spanish, 1 in English, and 1 in Arabic
- Survey respondents included 3 Russian Speakers, 59 Spanish speakers, 2 Vietnamese speakers, 22 English speakers, and 4 Arabic speakers
- 300% increasing in volunteers speaking a language other than English or Spanish
- 95% of volunteers speak a language other than English
- 90% of participants speak Spanish
- 95% of our volunteers are immigrants or children of immigrants

“We are especially proud of the relationships we have built with those speaking languages other than English and Spanish, as we recognize that these communities can often be especially challenging to reach.”

Denver Housing Authority
Immigrant and Refugee Resource/ Job Fair

Denver Housing Authority hosted an Immigrant and Refugee Resource/ Job Fair. The event was outdoors on Thursday 9/24 with a limited number of 50 guest. Participants received resource books and printed out job leads. Businesses were not allowed onsite due to restrictions, but information was dispersed, and copies were made available for all attendees. Two guest chefs created recipes from Vietnam and Mexico and prepared 100 meals to give to the residents who attended the event.

The Denver Public Library was in attendance with the bookmobile. Free books were individually packaged and given out to participants. COVID resources and a list of job openings were handed out with a bag that included hand sanitizer, pens, snacks and resources.

The biggest impact was being able to give out food to residents of Denver Housing Authority. Clients have struggled during the pandemic, so this event allowed them to have a free meal and socialize.

Clients were very excited to get out of their apartment.

- 50 clients attended the resource event
- 100 free meals were given out to the participants
- 50 clients received books and were introduced to the book mobile
- 50 clients received immigrant and refugee resources and COVID resources
- 50 client received job openings in several different fields

“We received so much good feedback from the attendees. They were already asking if the event can happen again next year. It got people out of their apartments who have been isolated due to the pandemic. Lastly, it celebrated culture which is needed now more than ever.”

Denver Housing Authority Sun Valley
Sun Valley Cookbook and PhotoVoice

The completed project of the Sun Valley cookbook is a professionally created cookbook that displays a glimpse into the diverse cultures of the families of the Sun Valley community. The Sun Valley community is made up of a large population of immigrants and refugees and there are more than 30 languages spoken. The cookbook features a variety of recipes from different cultures, stories of where they come from and what the meal means to them from each participant.
The Cookbook correspondingly displays other multicultural events that were hosted in conjunction to promote the cookbook and celebrate Sun Valleys diversity. The events focused on art, culture and food and helped to promote social cohesion while social distancing during COVID. The book also give insight to the history of Sun valley neighborhood and how rich the culture is.

Additionally, the Photo Voice project included 17 residents who were given cameras to document how their family adapted during COVID. The cameras were turned in and we conducted interviews with the families so that they could talk about the pictures they took and explain them in further detail. The final project was published in a journal to document how the Pandemic affected low-income families. To complete the project a partnership with Art Street included an art mural made of recycled materials created by 12 young people. The mural hangs on the back fence of the Sun Valley Grow Garden. The artist also painted the cement pads and picnic tables with vibrant colors that matched the art installation piece. The final product created a beautiful outdoor area for Sun Valley residents and for community members at large that are walking or riding by on the Platte River Trail that goes by the garden can safely socially distance and enjoy time in the outdoors.

- 30 languages spoken
- 17 residents participated in the Photo Voice Project
- 12 youth created a mural

Even with a global pandemic and racial tensions around us, the residents and staff displayed great resiliency. This project created a safe place, cohesion and rapport with team members and residents, and built trust and strengthened relationships by giving people the opportunity to focus on positive interactions between different cultures.

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**East Colfax Community Collective**

*East Area Plan (EAP) Civic Engagement Campaign*

East Colfax Community Collective used the funds to cover interpretation expenses for community meetings where they reviewed the content of the current draft of the East Area Plan (EAP) with leadership from the Congolese, Burmese, Karen and Rohingya Communities as well as individual breakouts with each of these communities to get their ideas on policies we should advocate for going into our meeting with the City of Denver on 7/14/2020. Their biggest accomplishment was creating a space for the refugee communities of East Colfax to have meaningful engagement and participation in the EAP planning process and through this campaign the ECCC has won significant improvements to the EAP to better serve the refugee community in East Colfax. Among the victories achieved through EAP advocacy is strong language in the EAP around better access to City Programs, funding for Community Navigation Support, and specific programs to support non-traditional businesses without a storefront in the East Colfax area. They also achieved improvements to ensure City proposals and programs in the EAP are accessible in languages other than English and Spanish to better serve East Colfax refugee communities.

The impact of ECCC’s advocacy is best represented in this [document from the CPD](#) that outlines many of the ECCC recommendations that were incorporated into the EAP. Many of our housing recommendations regarding down payment assistance programs, limited equity housing cooperatives, small business incubators, etc. came directly from these meetings with the refugee community.

- The ECCC held a series of 10 preparation meetings between March 4th and July 14th to ensure the Refugee voice was represented in our meeting with the City of Denver

“Our continued commitment to keeping our neighborhood whole and continuing with multi-lingual spaces over zoom, while at the same time providing that one on one support in individual language breakouts, has meant all of the difference in terms of ensuring the refugee voice is represented in the EAP planning process.”
**Extreme Community Makeover**

*Go: Westwood*

The Go: Westwood project took place on Saturday, September 26, 2020. Over 100 volunteers participated in a socially distanced and safe volunteer project. Instead of hosting a kickoff and block party, as in typical years, all the volunteers were kept in groups of no more than 10 people and just stayed at their project site the whole day. Thus, they met at their project location, worked on the project, had lunch brought to them, and left the project when they were done. Residents and volunteers completed clean-up projects at two businesses, two homes, and cleaned five alleys, while also removing graffiti.

- 100 volunteers attended despite the pandemic
- 380 volunteer hours logged
- 60% comprised of residents of Westwood
- 6 employees from Denver Parks and Recreation brought manpower and trucks
- 6 officers from Denver Police Department ensured a safe experience and participated
- 4 projects (2 commercial, 2 residential), 5 alleys cleaned

“The residents were engaged in joining the projects, taking pride in their community, and participating with their families and kids, while teaching the next generation how to serve the community.”

**Hope Communities**

*Tent Topic Fall Festival and Block Party*

Hope Communities provides a program at our East Colfax Hidden Brook property called Tent Topics, which utilized the large outdoor garden space at this location for food distribution, outdoor resource navigation and community partner participation. Held weekly, Tent Topics provides over 100 food boxes to individuals living at Hidden Brook as well as the surrounding East Colfax neighborhood.

Due to the impact of COVID restrictions, Hope was unable to execute the full block party as planned. Instead, Hope utilized the Tent Topic format for a fall festival. Community partners were invited to attend, restaurants within Mango House provided ‘grab and go’ food celebrating different regions and ensured that attendees had the resources they needed to navigate the cold weather months. 73% of our clients at this site are refugees and this was an opportunity to check in with individuals and families during, what was likely to be, the final outdoor event we hold for the year.

More than 85 families participated, receiving fresh foods, pantry items and supplies, and were excited to receive hot meals. Community partners in attendance included Spring Institute, Denver Public Library, Fax Partnership, Emily Griffith Opportunity School and Denver Votes.

- 74% of residents at East Colfax Hidden Brook property are refugees
- 5 organizational partners attended
- 6 restaurants from Mango House provided food
- Provided food boxes to 85 families
- 100 individuals received hot meals

This event allowed Hope to: bring a wide array of community partners together in tents throughout garden; support local restaurants; offer needed supports in one convenient location including food, personal protective equipment, access to books, educational resources, translation and community integration supports for immigrants and refugees, voter registration, and community safety networks; provide a welcome interaction for many who have been combating social isolation and depression as the COVID crisis continues.

**International Heritage Cup Denver**

*International Heritage Cup Denver Soccer Tourney*

The 2020 International Heritage Cup Denver took place Sept. 4-6, 2020. Even with the Covid-19 pandemic in the background, we were able to bring together different immigrant, refugees and welcoming communities together for 3 day soccer tournament. We continue to strive to use soccer (The World’s game) as a tool to bringing all these communities together for a weekend of fun and getting to know each other better. This year, the following teams participated in the tournament; Team Colombia, The Gambia, Team Nigeria...
Colorado, Team DR Congo, Team Ghana, Team Argentina, Team Mexico, Team Honduras, Team Dallas Nigeria, Team Liberia, Team Senegal, Team USA and many other Hispanic teams.

- 16 teams participated in the tournament
- 12+ different countries represented
- Over 30 players on each team played and brought their family members
- 6 volunteers

“Despite having Covid-19 in the backdrop and a lot of restrictions put on the teams to make sure everyone was safe. Teams and individuals were still excited and very happy that the tournament took place and they were able to interact with each other. The main contributing factor to our success this year, was all the individuals that participated and did not complain at all about all the restrictions. They still made the best of the situation.”

International Rescue Committee

We Can Do It and A Single Step

Traumatizing displacement affects psychological well-being, increases vulnerability to mental health problems, and makes it more difficult to adapt to life in a new country. Although the opportunities in the U.S. are plentiful and can be exciting, the isolation, lack of English skills, and other barriers women may face, can make it challenging to rebuild their lives and serve as a positive pillar of strength for themselves and their families. The IRC in Denver’s Psychosocial Support Program (PSP) responded to this need by creating the WCDI! program aiming to help participants learn new ways to embrace their emotional and mental health and tap into the support they need to move forward. The program goal is to rebuild communities, increase holistic wellbeing through different mediums including fine arts and expressive arts. The program offers an opportunity for refugee women from different cultural backgrounds to meet, practice English, and learn a new skill taught by community artists. WCDI! is offered virtually this year due to COVID-19. 33 women from 10 different countries of origin and divided in two groups, meet weekly via Zoom for 90 minutes each meeting. The mediums used this year are storytelling, therapeutic art, therapeutic movement, horticulture, and herbalism. Meetings started in November 2020 and will run until April 2021.

Additionally, in August 2020, the Psychosocial Support Program at IRC Denver launched a new COVID-19 responsive program called “A Single Step”. The goal of the program is to serve highly vulnerable kids that need support with their English proficiency and to work on bridging gaps between them and their peers during remote learning. The program aims to provide a linguistic input that would compensate for the lack of natural input caused by the physical distancing circumstances. Volunteers meet online with the kids two hours a week and spend time together using English to help them gain confidence and language skills. The program is still growing. As of today, the program is serving 20 kids from 9 different countries of origin and is engaging 14 volunteers. We continue to receive referrals for this program and are actively recruiting additional volunteers. The IRC is providing training, resources, and continuous support to the volunteers. In addition, the IRC started a collaboration with the Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences department at CU Boulder. The collaboration will provide additional individualized support to the volunteers.

- 33 women from 10 different countries represented in We Can Do It!
- 20 kids from 9 different countries of origin and is engaging 14 volunteers

“In WCDI!, interns and volunteers participate in all the activities and share their experiences and ideas. Over time, relationships between the mentors and the clients strengthen. The latter are becoming more comfortable sharing with the mentors outside the meetings.”
The Koffi Togo Cultural Center Foundation was able to take advantage of one of the last warm days in October to host an outdoor, socially distanced event to bring music and dance to the Five Points community. Cleo Parker Robinson Dance hosted the event in their outdoor amphitheater space, which is also the courtyard of Bean Towers, a Denver Housing Authority retirement home. The event consisted of an outdoor West African dance and drumming class led by Koffi Toudji, followed by an outdoor performance of the Pink Hawks, an Afrobeat/Chicano Hip-Hop orchestra, playing original and future-traditional music.

This event was able to bring free music and dance into one of Denver’s most vibrant, diverse and underserved neighborhoods. The upbeat performance energized participants and passers-by, who were able to join in free of charge and without registering. Participants had a chance to move their bodies and exercise in a healthy, socially distanced way, and left with uplifted spirits, even if they only stopped to listen for a few minutes. Masks and hand sanitizer were provided for anyone who wished to stay, enjoy the music, or dance. This project also supported Cleo Parker Robinson Dance, one of Denver’s oldest dance centers and an essential Black-owned business and arts institution. Overall, the event was a reminder of the power of music, dance and the arts to unite and heal, even during this difficult year.

- 49 participants attended
- 5 community partners

“This event did bridge communities by showcasing the importance of immigrant representation in Denver through music, dance and art from Denver’s many cultures.”

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Levitt Pavilion Denver
Carlou D Streaming Concert

Levitt originally planned a large scale concert, catering to African Immigrants and Refugees, COVID 19, made it so that we were not able to go through with this original plan. Fortunately, through perseverance by Papa D and the African Leadership Group, our performer, Carlou D, was still able to fly out from Senegal, for some other events. Because of this, we were able to fold in a streaming performance by Carlou into our online “Levitt in your Living Room” series. The performance was filmed on Levitt’s stage on August 15th and was viewed by over 10,000 people.

Papa D was also interviewed on Denver 7, a sponsor of the event, earlier in the week to discuss African Leadership group, this concert and all the other events that took place.

Video of performance
- Video was viewed by over 10,000 people

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Mariposa at the Althea Center for Engaged Spirituality: Embracing Wholeness
Immigration is an LGBTQ Issue: Love Across Borders

Mariposa at the Althea Center hosted “Immigration is an LGBTQ Issue: Love Across Borders”. Love Across Borders was a FREE hybrid series held on Tuesdays, September 8 - Youth, 15-Family, 22-Hope, and 29-Connections, online via Zoom and in-person at the Latinx-owned Raíces Brewing Co.

Each week’s program included “migration storytellers” sharing their personal experiences. One speaker on a work visa, another with their legal permanent residency, and others actively seeking asylum. Other presenters shared their models of hosting/sponsoring asylum seekers from Las Cruces, NM and Denver. We also hosted the legal director of NY-based Immigration Equality that gave a national perspective on immigration for LGBTQ asylum seekers. Three of the sessions were presented in English with simultaneous Spanish interpretation, and one was presented in Spanish with English interpretation with help from the Community Language Coop.

Althea Center’s YouTube Channel
- Partnered with 13 organizations
- 175 participants via Zoom, 53 attended live events
- Facebook Live reached *260+ English users, *542+ Spanish users
  (*Did not capture full analytics/reach)

“In spite of safe distancing guidelines at Raíces, it was still apparent that there was much interplay among different communities, with special interest and attention to the migration storytellers after their presentations.”
UndocuMonologues

The UndocuMonologues performance was held virtually with MOTUS Theater UndocuAmerica project and performance series. The performance consists of 3 undocumented community members telling their immigration story & experience, with musical interludes provided by 303 Storytellers, a Denver-based multi-racial acapella group. The theatrical performance was introduced by the RISE MSU Denver student organization by and for immigrant, refugee, asylee, and undocumented students, and also included an overview over the MSU Denver Immigrant Art Journal as well as a call for audience members to donate to scholarships and emergency financial assistance specifically for DACA & undocumented students. A “Call for Action” also provided the audience with ideas and resources on how to advocate for meaningful immigration reform. The event concluded with a Q&A with the performers, allowing them to share their dedication to the project and how they use art to tell an important and often-overlooked story.

Video of performance

- 85 participants tuned into the virtual event
- The musical performance was provided by 303 Storytellers, a Denver-based multi-racial acapella group with 1st generation immigrants.

The performances were powerful reminders of the undocumented experience in the U.S., and that it helped to build community, using art to deliver an important cultural message. It was impactful to hear how such inspirational, intelligent, influential young adults have to live in fear of deportation.

Mongolian Culture and Heritage Center of Colorado

Dream Yurt Virtual Project

The “Dream Yurt” is a touring project created in collaboration with the Mongolian Culture and Heritage Center of Colorado designed to eradicate social barriers through the power of art and community, and in place celebrate kinship across our differences. By engaging/challenging systems of power, the project aims to transform systems of structured oppression and displacement while celebrating diversity, promoting social activism, equal justice, and inspiring social change. Dream Yurt invites participants to make “votive wish ribbons” which gets attached to a 200 year old Mongolian yurt from the Silk Road.

We acknowledge the powerful, positive effect virtual and live experiences provide. Enter, our guide for creativity coping with quarantine. In healing response to COVID 19, the Mongolian Culture and Heritage Center of Colorado is utilizing the power of art and freedom of expression to launch Dream Yurt Virtual Project on Instagram @DreamYurtProject. We are inviting everyone to participate and be part of the free virtual community project.

- 47 posts on Instagram
- 50 followers

“DreamYurtProject is a call to action to help bring healing and hope into our communities, inspiring positivity into our world. Support DreamYurtProject by participating online.”

Muslim Youth for Positive Impact

MYPI Adopt-A-Family

Muslim Youth for Positive Impact Adopt-A-Family Program was able to partner with the Colorado Muslim Food Relief efforts and were able to hold a number of Food Drives for the community in the months of October and November of 2020. These food drives assisted hundreds of families all over Denver with basic food items like oil, rice, beans, lentils, and many other staple items. We had a huge refugee population that attended our food drives as well as other disadvantaged populations. We also currently have 7 refugee families who were identified by the International Rescue Committee that are participating in our Adopt-A-Family program this year. These families have been matched with a youth ambassador who supports and mentors the family throughout the year. They build relationships with their family and act as a community navigator to help them integrate into society and assist them in any way they can. Our youth ambassadors plan to continue to support their families in the coming months.

- 7 families identified for the Adopt-A Family Program
Our food drives brought so many different groups of people within our community together and the impact was phenomenal in so many ways. We had so many volunteers from all over helping to sort out the food, donations, and so many other items. We brought refugee families to connect with one another and were able to connect volunteers to these families. Just hearing their stories made a huge impact on each one of our volunteers.

New America School Lowry
Community Learning Center

A community offrenda was installed for viewing, students/parents were invited to take part in the Workshop and Online Performances. Su Teatro performance "Dancing with the Spirits" and flower workshop with Museo De Las Americas. Students were provided the history of Calavara Catrina by Jose Guadalupe Posada and his artwork to see the direct tie to some of the modern imagery associated with the holiday.

The performance by Su Teatro was beautiful and funny. It engaged students in dialogue and provided a place to discuss postmortem options. Colorado has natural in ground options and open air cremations. This is critical for students who are independent and those who may be dealing with a loss. Not only with the current pandemic but the laws and cultural practices around death might be different than where the individual is from.

Webpage pictures, videos and project documentation at Dia De Los Muertos and Walking with the Dead.

- 33 views to the video
- 16 views to paper flower video for students not able to attend the first workshop

Oromo Community of Colorado
Colorado Oromo Graduation

This event was planned to celebrate the graduation ceremony of the students from within the Oromo Community of Colorado. The objective was to encourage the graduates and motivate the lower grade (follower) students.

It was a huge encouragement for the graduates. For most of them this was their first graduation and this event gave them chance to celebrate with the community. The event also impacted the lower class students (followers) by giving them motivations. The families of the students were also further motivated to help their child in achieving educational dreams.

“We were successful in bridging within our community. The event was helpful in connecting the youngest (students) with the oldest (parents) members of our community. It also helped to close the gap between the kids who were born in here and those born in Africa but grow up in here. We also had few participants from other immigrant communities (Somali community) and therefore the event created an opportunity to get connected with those members of other immigrant communities.”
Servicios de La Raza
La Raza Youth Leadership Program

La Raza Youth Leadership Program taught Latinx youth about issues impacting the Latinx-Chicana/o community and identify solutions, to create individual and systemic change. The La Raza Youth Leadership Program cohort collaborated with the Gang Rescue and Support Program (GRASP) and Prodigy Coffee shop to co-create a community mural, called “Migration is Beautiful” on the north side of Prodigy Coffee shop. Alongside Committee members, Youth Alumni from 2019 and 2020 worked on the mural, over 2 weekends.

The mural project allowed the committee and the youth to create and strengthen their relationship within their community. The Prodigy Coffe House space allowed them to connect with like-minded people, who believe in social justice and respecting people regardless of race, creed, origin, or class status. Having a space to collectively co-create a mural that highlights the positive aspects of migration, allowed those involved to retell their narrative through art, creating art around migration. Often, the social norm is to disconnect people from their ancestral origin land or create a narrative of recent migration. However, untold stories of migration in past years is a human story. Now, those involved can continue to create images of how they view migration and beautify the city and county of Denver.

The 2020 cohort participants celebrated their graduation from the Youth Leadership Program, via Zoom. Each committee member delivered graduation bags to their home. The students were spread throughout the Denver Metro and Colorado Springs area. The bags were filled with gifts to the La Raza graduates, diplomas, serapes and t-shirts/sweaters.

Grasp Instagram Post

“You must not exploit or oppress a foreign resident, for you yourselves were foreigners in the land of __________.”

(quote on mural project)