

# OPINION



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## SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

# Nonprofit aids Hispanics during pandemic

**S**EASIDE — Consejo Hispano is a community-based nonprofit whose mission is the equitable integration of Hispanics into the broader social and economic fabric of the lower Columbia River community.

Born and raised in Costa Rica in a bicultural and bilingual home, Jenny Pool Radway, the nonprofit's executive director, immigrated to the United States as a teenager. She attended Ripon College in Wisconsin, where she graduated with a bachelor's degree in political science and Spanish and a minor in classical studies. She also holds a master's degree in human services and a master's degree in Latin American economics and politics from the Universidad

de Salamanca.

Prior to joining Consejo Hispano, Pool Radway lived in Denver, Colorado, and Salamanca, Spain.

We spoke with Pool Radway in late July about efforts to reach the Hispanic community in Clatsop County, the pandemic, immigration and what's next for the nonprofit.

**Q: How do you reach out to the community, especially the southern part of Clatsop County?**

**A:** We cover Clatsop, Columbia and Tillamook counties in Oregon and Pacific County in Washington. That's because we don't have a lot of culturally specific and culturally responsive organizations, other than us in those areas. And so people know us and call us for any number of things. And just know that if we don't have the answer, we'll help them get in touch with the resources or the answers that they need.

We have our Facebook page, of course, and we have several WhatsApp groups, but primarily, it's still word of mouth, of people saying I need help. I'm a Spanish speaker. It doesn't matter if they're in south Clatsop County or in Nehalem or where we're at. They'll call our office and get assistance from us.

**Q: What are the major issues in the county?**

**A:** Recently, with the high heat, we received calls around worker rights and how people can advocate for themselves at work when it's super hot. Things that are always ongoing are helping children register for school or translation services.

The last two weeks, for example, we've been in Cannon Beach, doing surveys so that the county has information on how to help the Latinx community with the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding that they're receiving. So we've been doing surveys with community members when they're at the soccer field.

We also had a COVID vaccination clinic last month on June 30 at the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce, and we're going to have the follow-up next week.

**Q: What kind of turnout did you get for that?**

**A:** We had about 80 adults come. They didn't all get vaccinated, but they showed up to learn about them. We thought that was a pretty good turnout for a Wednesday evening.

**Q: So in a way you represent an opportunity to reach out to a neglected or underserved audience?**



Attendees at a Consejo Hispano event.

*'I THINK WE HAVE A GREAT STAFF. WE'RE A GROWING TEAM. AND WE'RE RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF OUR STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS RIGHT NOW. BUT I THINK THAT, YEAH, WE HAVE GREAT THINGS HAPPENING IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS.'*

Jenny Pool Radway | executive director at Consejo Hispano

**A:** Absolutely. We are a trusted resource for the community members.

**Q: During the COVID-19 pandemic last year, I know that there was a lot of concern about the worker conditions in Astoria and elsewhere. Did you share those concerns?**

**A:** We did and we still do. There are still a lot of issues, not just at the canneries, but for farmworkers in general. And for people who work in the tourism industry and the restaurant industry as well.

**Q: What are the kinds of worker issues you might see, specifically in the tourism and restaurant industry?**

**A:** Not enough protection, in terms of getting hand sanitizer, face masks, enough PPE (personal protective equipment) supplies that they need. In different parts of the county, we have people, someone will call their employer and say, 'I'm asymptomatic, but I've tested positive for COVID' and the employer will still let them come to work.

And while our community members recognize that that is not what should be happening, they also don't have a choice because they need to feed their families and keep a roof over their head. They don't want to lose their employment.

**Q: Is there still an issue with immigration status and fears of deportation?**

**A:** Absolutely. A lot of community members didn't want to get vaccinated at first because of concerns of what questions were asked when you got your vaccine.

**Q: So they were reluctant to do so?**

**A:** Absolutely. Until we explained that that was not something that would get them into any trouble. That still plays a big role in our community.

**Q: Did the same thing happen last year with the census? Did you find that**

**people overcame their concerns about possibly the information being used in a way to harm themselves or their families?**

**A:** I don't think we overcame the issue then. Mostly because we were still under a Trump presidency and people didn't know what the election results would be. A lot of people did not participate, and we're definitely undercounted.

**Q: So our census numbers are going to be underreported?**

**A:** Absolutely. A lot of people are not technologically savvy, because they don't have a lot of experience or technology at home, like a laptop to use. They don't want to use their phone, because they're afraid that it might be tracked, even though it's not.

It's hard to reassure people when there's a doubt. And we were in the middle of a pandemic, so we couldn't really bring laptops to them to complete it.

**Q: Did you find Latinx people, especially under the Trump administration, returning to their home countries?**

**A:** No. People hold out hope. They think if I go back, and then somebody else gets elected who sees things more favorably, it will be much harder for me to come back. It's a hard journey.

**Q: Do you see more people coming into the U.S. now that Joe Biden is president?**

**A:** No.

**Q: So the fear of a quote unquote "immigrant tide" is not happening here?**

**A:** I don't think the Oregon numbers have changed. I couldn't speak to other places in the country.

**Q: A federal judge ruled that Deferred Action for Childhood Arriv-**

**als, a program that allows certain immigrants to temporarily avoid deportation and receive renewable work permits, is illegal and ordered the Biden administration to stop giving permits. Is that of concern?**

**A:** Absolutely. There's about 60,000 people who are, not locally, but 60,000 people who are stuck in, you know, limbo because their applications were being processed and we don't know if they're going to continue to be processed or what's happening there.

We did see an increase locally once there was an administrative change in the White House that we had a lot more people applying for DACA.

**Q: Do you have any initiatives going on right now that you'd like to talk about?**

**A:** We have been working with the Oregon Worker Relief Fund for over a year now. It's an organization that was created because of the pandemic. And we've been able to bring in over \$1 million in the Clatsop County (area) in assistance. The numbers are pretty good. And we're really proud of that work.

**Q: Do you have any wish list of things you'd like to see in the county or locally for the population?**

**A:** I think I'd like there to be more access, more language access, and certainly more economic access. That's very broad, but it's because there's so much that falls under that.

**Q: Do you think Clatsop County has got a ways to go in terms of improving their outreach?**

**A:** Yes, but I think that they're willing to do it. And that's a huge piece of the puzzle.

**Q: Do you feel optimistic about where you're headed? Or do you feel that you've got severe challenges? What's your outlook?**

**A:** I'm very optimistic. I think we have a great staff. We're a growing team. And we're right in the middle of our strategic planning process right now. But I think that, yeah, we have great things happening in the next few years.

*R.J. Marx is the South County reporter for The Astorian and editor of the Seaside Signal.*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Political manipulation

In 1992, the sitting president of the African state of Kenya was facing a new election. In order to secure his reelection, he managed to effect several changes to the state's election laws.

They included shortening the period allowed for voter registration, and delaying the issuing of IDs to young voters to vote for the first time.

It worked. I wonder how effective that kind of political manipulation of state voting laws will work here, in our country's upcoming elections.

JULIA SNYDER  
Astoria

### Immensely proud

As a lover and protector of the Columbia River, I am immensely proud of my community for taking down the fracked gas monstrosity known as the Northwest Innovation Works methanol refinery.

Every year, we suffer devastating effects of climate change. Changing weather patterns, rising temperatures and more frequent tropical storms affect markets and trade. The idea that fossil fuel usage benefits our economy ignores the correlation between climate change and long-term economic downfall. This project

would have eroded Kalama, Washington's health, wealth and ecology.

Thankfully, we no longer have to worry about the effects of the proposed methanol refinery, because it has joined the slew of other dirty projects recently rejected by our community as we transition towards net-zero emissions!

I hope for continued climate leadership from our elected officials, and a transition toward sustainable energy. Thank you to the Washington State Department of Ecology, Gov. Jay Inslee and the activists and organizations who spent thousands of hours serving and protecting our community.

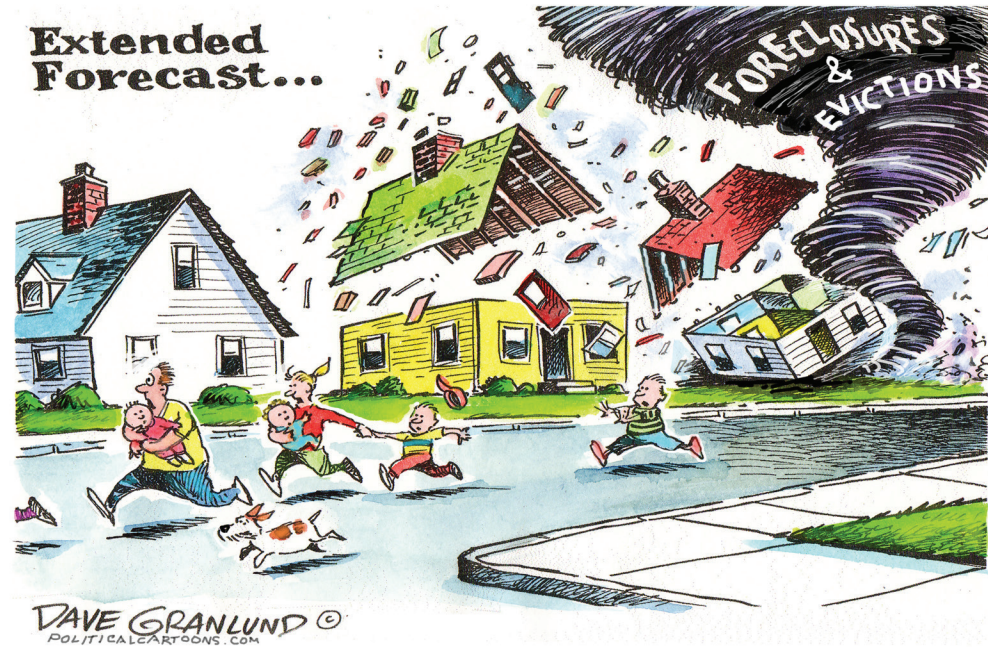
This is one more huge step toward a greener future!

LINDA LEONARD  
Kalama, Washington

### Deeply disappointed

I can't put into words how deeply disappointed I am with what has shaped up since President Barack Obama began his two-term residency at the White House. Racism was almost a syndrome of the past; now it is a major political ploy for the Democrat leadership.

It is a divide-and-conquer effort, being financed in large by the ridiculously rich oligarchs here, and in Europe, to change the shape of life as we know it — the life



our generation grew up loving.

The pandemic furthered their cause to control the populations of the West and in Europe. They truly do not want the pandemic to go away! Now President Joe Biden is describing our compliance as a "patriotic duty," bouncing the rules around like a tennis ball.

However, my primary complaint is against our feckless Republican Party. They simply do not know how to take a stand for our Constitution and represent the people who pay them. The Democrat Party and the oligarchs have enriched them to the point where they don't want to give

it up.

There are some hardworking Republicans who are trying to preserve our liberties, but I do declare, a good half of our representatives are no more than dead weight.

President Donald Trump was a bull in a china shop, but he inspired millions of Americans to vote for our right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness, the freedoms granted to us by our creator.

Yes! The U.S. is in serious trouble. We need leadership capable of guiding us.

WILLIAM SUTTON  
Astoria