

# STATE

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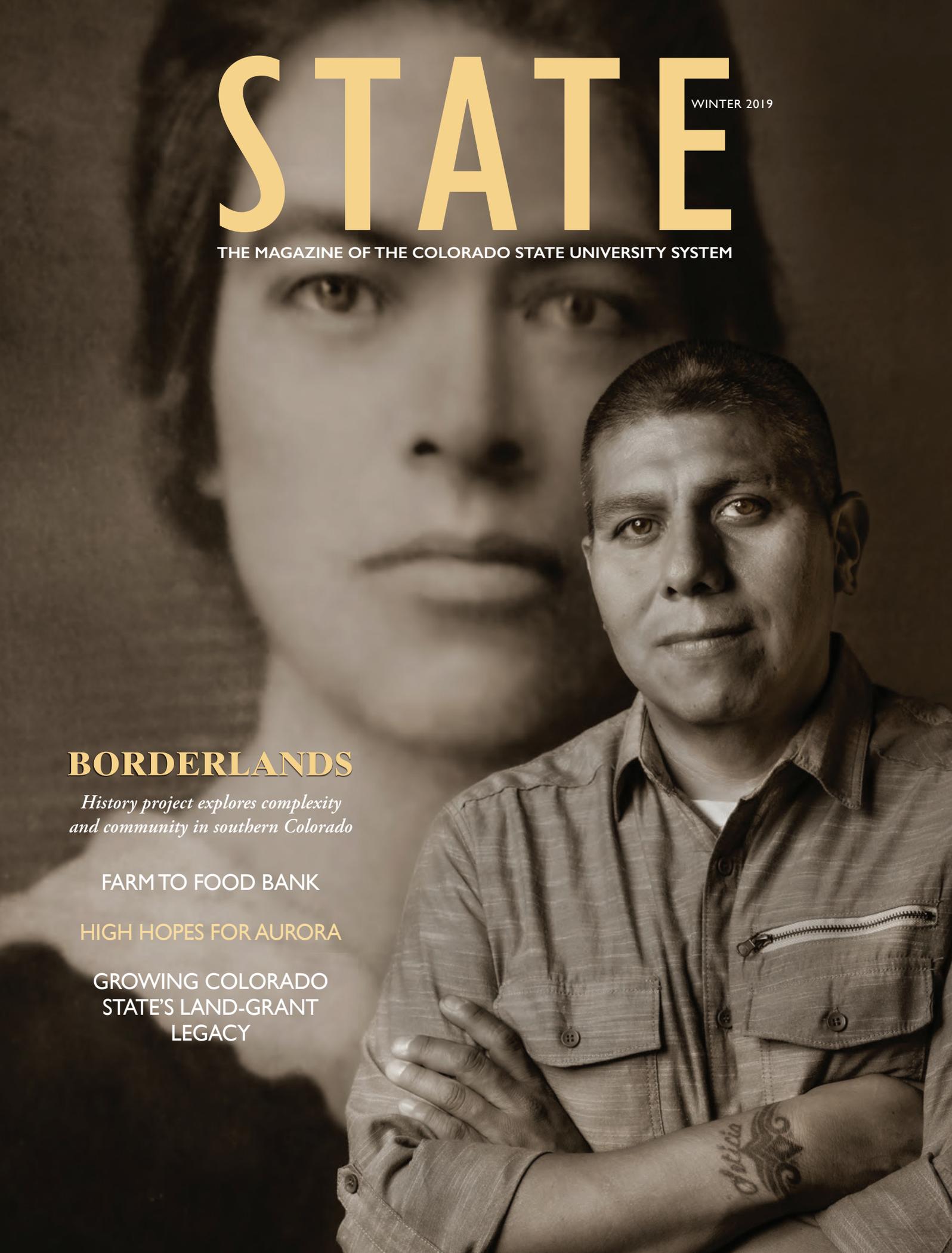
## BORDERLANDS

*History project explores complexity  
and community in southern Colorado*

FARM TO FOOD BANK

HIGH HOPES FOR AURORA

GROWING COLORADO  
STATE'S LAND-GRANT  
LEGACY





## BORDERLANDS *of* SOUTHERN COLORADO

**T**he most prominent landmark near Pueblo, Colorado, the mountain that inspired the patriotic song “America the Beautiful,” is Pikes Peak. Rising to 14,115 feet, it is named for Zebulon Montgomery Pike, a U.S. Army explorer who traveled through the Southwest in 1806 and 1807 on a mission of geopolitical reconnaissance, soon adding to the young nation’s lust for westward expansion. His accounts were compiled and translated into three languages for readers abroad. “Pikes Peak or Bust!” was the motto for prospectors during the Colorado gold rush.

BY COLEMAN CORNELIUS

*The Arkansas River, with headwaters near Leadville, Colorado, flows east across the Plains to the Mississippi River. A section of river in what is now southeastern Colorado once formed the border between Mexico and the United States. Photo: Courtesy of History Colorado*



Given Pike's footprint in the region, it wouldn't be surprising to find a full museum exhibit about him in Pueblo, maybe an extension of the commemoration at Pike Plaza on the Historic Arkansas Riverwalk. But you won't find one at the History Colorado branch downtown. Pike has his panel, to be sure; his sword and scabbard are even displayed. Yet the new permanent exhibit at El Pueblo History Museum avoids elevating figures from early U.S. history who traversed the region, Pike and the frontiersman Kit Carson among them. Instead, it considers why they came — and the ripples that followed.

The exhibit is part of a History Colorado initiative called Borderlands of Southern Colorado. Through interconnected displays and lectures at its museums in Pueblo, Trinidad, and Fort Garland, History Colorado presents southern Colorado as a region whose inhabitants have been affected across generations by historically shifting political boundaries and related strife. Borderlands, the project shows, have long attracted agents of territorial expansion and nation-building, entrepreneurs and industrialists, and people seeking new opportunities and improved quality of life. Borderlands of Southern Colorado explores the human implications of mutable borders, where nations, cultures, economic interests, and identities by turns clash and commingle to give communities their unique and lasting texture.

Three Colorado State University alumni, including two gradu-

ates of CSU-Pueblo, lead the Borderlands of Southern Colorado initiative as employees of History Colorado, an agency of the state Department of Higher Education that works closely with the CSU System. Above all, they hope to reflect the diversity of southern Colorado's residents, who often embody the blending of culture and identity found in borderlands and whose stories are rarely exalted in local museums.

"We're using borderlands as a lens to reveal the ways in which people from multiple places, perspectives, and traditions come together in these spaces. Sometimes they collide and sometimes they mix, but they always form new ways of being. We feel like that really represents southern Colorado," Dawn DiPrince, a CSU alumna and chief operating officer of History Colorado, said. "We think it's very important for people to see themselves at their community museum."

DiPrince, lead developer of the initiative, is a daughter of this borderland, the descendant of Italian immigrants who came to southern Colorado in the early 1900s to work in the coal and steel industry powered by the colossal Colorado Fuel & Iron Co. For years, CF&I owned the steel mill in Pueblo, driving expansion of Western railroads and industry. When DiPrince helped launch Borderlands of Southern Colorado with an academic conference in 2017, she wanted to illuminate the historical complexities of her own community.

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*Opposite: Pikes Peak is named for Zebulon Pike, who explored the region around Pueblo in 1806. It was earlier known as Sun Mountain in the language of native Mouache and Caputa Ute people. Above: Doña Bernarda Mejía Velásquez, a well-known healer, moved to Pueblo in 1912 after serving as a medical conscript for Pancho Villa's forces during the Mexican Revolution. Photography: Courtesy of History Colorado*



**EXPLANATION.**

The lines marked thus ..... show the limits established by the Treaties made between the U. States & G. Britain in 1783 & 1842  
The line marked thus ..... the boundary line, settled by the Treaty of 1846 with Great Britain  
The lines marked thus ..... the Treaty of 1795 with Spain  
The lines marked thus ..... the Treaty of 1803 with France  
The lines marked thus ..... the Treaty of 1819 with Spain  
The lines marked thus ..... the Treaty of 1848 with Mexico.

**NEW U.S. TERRITORY**

This map, held by the National Archives, was drafted after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed Feb. 2, 1848. It provides a sense of the vast territory ceded by Mexico to the United States, identified here as California, New Mexico, and Texas. The Arkansas River, which runs through Pueblo, Colorado, is shown on the northernmost edge of Texas. It had earlier carved the border between the United States and Mexico. The treaty moved the international boundary to the Rio Grande on the southern edge of Texas. President James K. Polk, a Southern Democrat, ordered the drafting of this map, and it represents his concept of how to divide newly acquired territory, a concept fiercely debated in Congress because of its implications for slavery and westward expansion, according to the National Archives. Like many maps of the time, this one is politically influenced and geographically problematic; however, it indicates the scope of new U.S. territory, the border's major shift from the Arkansas River to the Rio Grande, and the new wave of problems that followed.



*"We're using borderlands as a lens to reveal the ways in which people from multiple places, perspectives, and traditions come together in these spaces. Sometimes they collide and sometimes they mix, but they always form new ways of being. We feel like that really represents southern Colorado." —Dawn DiPrince*

"There's something really powerful about seeing yourself included in the collective narrative, and something equally destructive when you don't. When we're able to reclaim histories that have been erased, it strengthens communities," she said. "We believe in opening our arms very wide for an inclusive history."

Writings of the late Chicana feminist scholar Gloria Anzaldúa, who grew up on the Texas-Mexico border, helped inspire the History Colorado initiative. Among Anzaldúa's core concepts is the idea that borderlands, cut through by political boundaries, are geographic spaces where hybridity of all kinds emerges. The exhibit at El Pueblo History Museum includes the following excerpt from Anzaldúa's book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*: "A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition."

**S**outhern Colorado entered its arc as a borderland centuries ago, when Native people with overlapping homelands were the area's first inhabitants. From the 1700s, the region was claimed in succession by Spain, France, Mexico, the Republic of Texas, and the United States. Those claims were often violently contested. The Arkansas River, running through the heart of Pueblo, was a key part of the international border dividing Mexico and the United States before the Mexican-American War. Territorial disputes involving Texas triggered the war in 1846.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed in February 1848, ended the war with resounding effects: Mexico relinquished its claims to Texas and ceded more than half its territory to the United States. After gaining 525,000 square miles of new terrain, the United States extended west to the Pacific Ocean. The U.S.-Mexico border, earlier defined in part by the Arkansas River, moved to the Rio Grande along the southern edge of Texas. The region now known as southern Colorado, earlier squarely in Mexico, became part of the United States.

The Borderlands of Southern Colorado exhibit opened at El Pueblo History Museum last year with the rare display of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The National Archives loaned the document for just one month, requiring that it be sealed in a temperature-controlled glass case, with a guard posted nearby. Some museum visitors were overwhelmed with emotion while viewing the document that had dramatically impacted their families, José Ortega, exhibit curator, said. "The treaty had never been this close to the border it defined," he said.

By officially expanding the United States, the treaty fueled a new phase of the Indian Wars and provoked complex questions and pointed conflicts over property rights, financial holdings, and citizenship. Longtime regional residents with Spanish and Mexican ancestry – almost invariably on the losing end of those conflicts – distilled fundamental issues of citizenship and equality into a phrase repeated in heated debates even today: "We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us."

The phrase resonates with many people whose forebears have

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*Opposite: George Bent and his wife, Magpie, a Southern Cheyenne woman, were children of the borderlands – culturally entwined and entangled in ferocious conflicts that ensued between Anglos and Native tribes after the region that is now southeastern Colorado became part of the United States in 1848, opening the gates to further westward expansion. Magpie was the daughter of a prominent chief, Black Kettle. Bent was born at Bent's Fort, on the Arkansas River east of Pueblo, to a Cheyenne mother, Owl Woman, and a well-known white tradesman father, William Bent. After fighting in the Civil War, the younger Bent unsuccessfully battled alongside and negotiated for the Cheyenne and Arapaho people. He was with Black Kettle in the peaceful Indian encampment that was decimated during the Sand Creek Massacre of 1864.*

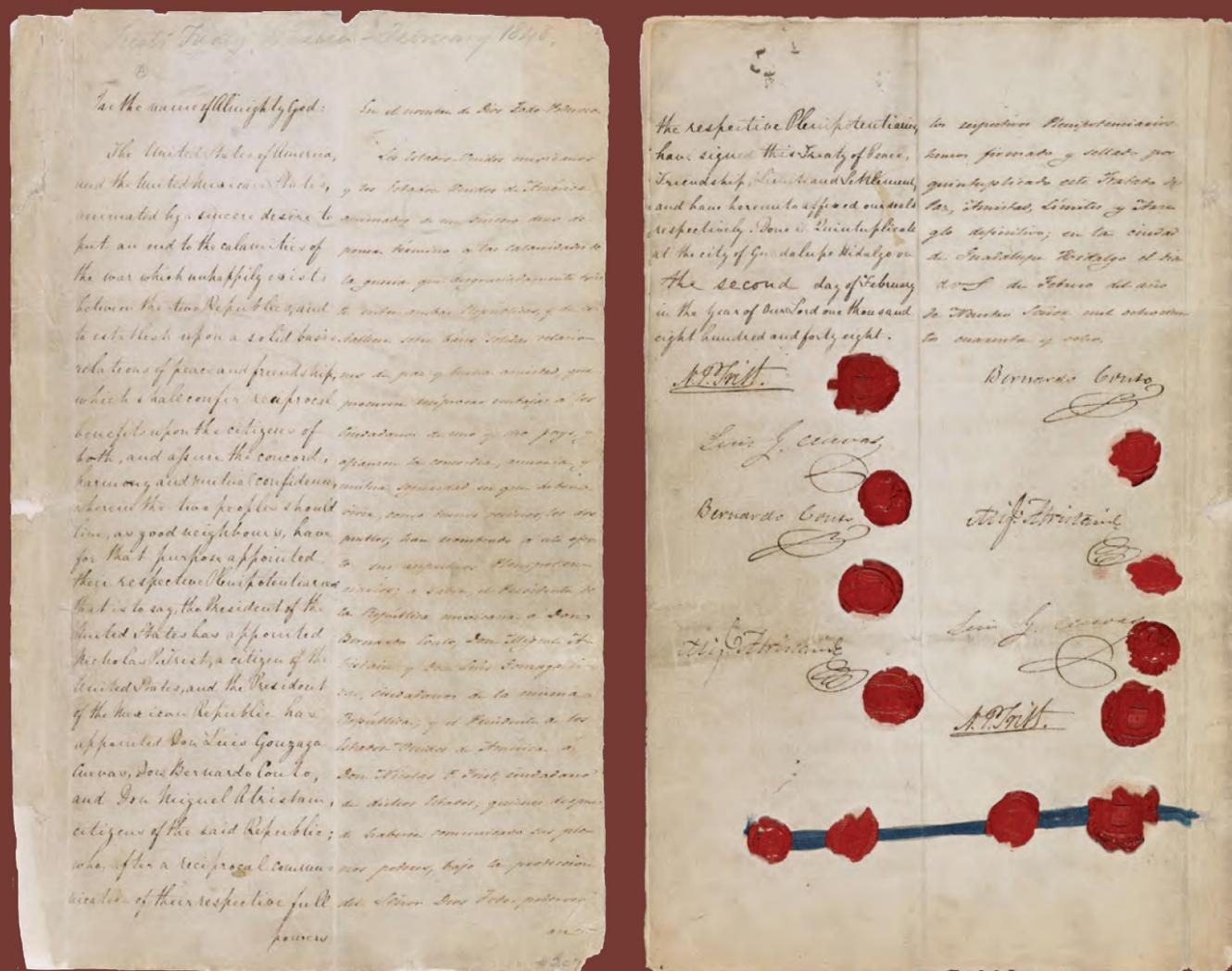
*Above: Many families living in what is now southeastern Colorado had been citizens of Mexico before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo moved the U.S. border south, dramatically expanding U.S. territory. The change gave rise to a phrase that is well-known across the Southwest: "We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us." Photography: Courtesy of History Colorado*

*Dianne Archuleta, an alumna of CSU-Pueblo, is an operations manager for History Colorado community museums. The Borderlands of Southern Colorado project includes a painful part of Archuleta's family history – one of her foremothers was an enslaved Navajo woman. She is pictured with exhibit photographs of two more women who reflected cultural complexities in a time and place of dramatic change: Josefa Jaramillo Carson, from an eminent family in Taos, New Mexico, was the third wife of frontiersman Kit Carson; Amache Ochinee Prowers, a Southern Cheyenne woman, settled in the 1860s with her husband, John Wesley Prowers, on the Plains east of Pueblo to run a cattle ranch and mercantile. Photo: Mary Neiberg*





*Beginning in 1942, millions of Mexican farm workers, known as braceros, were transported to southern Colorado and elsewhere as part of agreements between the United States and Mexico. Together, these pacts were called the Bracero Program. The program filled agricultural labor shortages during World War II. It ran under different names until 1964, becoming the nation's largest guest worker program. Photo: Courtesy of History Colorado*



*"A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary.*

*It is in a constant state of transition." — Gloria Anzaldúa*

lived in the Southwest for generations, said Ortega, a lifelong Pueblo resident who grew up in a family of Chicano activists and, as a working adult, enrolled at CSU-Pueblo to pursue a degree in history and Chicano studies. Pueblo's population of about 112,000 people is 52 percent Hispanic or Latino, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Yet, as Ortega has learned through his scholarship and personal and professional experiences, many people of color feel marginalized in southern Colorado communities they and their ancestors helped establish.

The Borderlands of Southern Colorado initiative is an important foray into truth-telling, Ortega said. "To represent ourselves is turning the tide, turning the narrative. We've had people come in and cry because it tells the story of themselves," he said, standing amid the interpretive panels, artifacts, and interactive media at El Pueblo History Museum. "There's no better way to tell the community story than to have the whole community in it."

Before graduating from CSU-Pueblo in 2016, Ortega helped establish a unique partnership between the university and the Smithsonian Institution, the world's largest museum, education, and research complex, based in Washington, D.C. The partnership, made possible by the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, allows CSU-Pueblo students juggling work and university studies to fulfill one-month internships at the institution's renowned museums, a notable opportunity for students whose personal and family responsibilities prevent them from completing standard Smithsonian internships, which span three months. Ortega was among the first five students to complete an internship, at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. The experience came shortly before the Borderlands of Southern Colorado initiative began and influenced his work as an exhibit curator, Ortega said.

His colleague Dianne Archuleta, who likewise graduated from CSU-Pueblo with a degree in history and Chicano studies, joined Ortega in the first cohort of students with monthlong internships at the Smithsonian. She, too, decided to pursue a bachelor's degree after having children and establishing a professional career in her hometown of Pueblo. As she advanced in her studies, Archuleta began to see herself and her family in texts and lectures — as Hispanos with deep roots in southern Colorado whose stories stood in the shadows of history, largely unwritten, untold, even unknown.

She remembered hearing years earlier about her great-great-grandmother, a Navajo woman known as Rosario Romero. Archuleta hadn't thought much about her mestizo heritage, her mixed Mexican and Indigenous ancestry. Her family didn't really discuss it, and the topic wasn't part of her school lessons in Pueblo. Now, diving into history and Chicano studies at CSU-Pueblo, she sought more information and realized her family's past was quietly shared by many people in the Southwest: Her Navajo foremother had been enslaved.

As Archuleta learned, Rosario's given name in Diné, Ated-bah-Hozhoni, translated to Happy Girl. She, her father, hus-

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*Opposite: The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed in 1848, is a seminal document in the history of the American West, bringing new settlement, conflict, and cultural complexity to the region that includes southern Colorado. One of two duplicate originals was displayed at El Pueblo History Museum last year. Above: Vaqueros and immigrants introduced new traditions to southern Colorado's borderland, giving the region its unique texture. Photography: Courtesy of History Colorado*

band, two sons, and daughter had been attacked in a raid, likely in 1861. The men and boys were murdered, and the Navajo woman and her daughter were abducted. They were sold to Padre Antonio José Martínez, a Spanish priest in Taos, and were renamed. The Navajo woman tried three times to escape enslavement, but each time was recaptured, Archuleta learned through spotty records and a narrative published by a descendant of the priest. When slavery was abolished in the United States, Martínez gained legal guardianship of the Navajo woman, extending her captivity; after the priest's death, she became a servant for his family and had children with a Mexican laborer for the household. Census records suggest Rosario was 100 years old when she died in 1930 in Ocate, New Mexico.

"When I came across this information, it really changed who I thought I was," said Archuleta, who soon discovered that Native American slavery was a widespread but little-known part of Southwestern history, adding painful nuance to Hispanic identity. "I really am mestiza – half conqueror and half conquered. It's been a really difficult thing to process."

After graduating from CSU-Pueblo, Archuleta became an operations manager for History Colorado community museums and felt compelled to share her great-great-grandmother's story as part of the Borderlands of Southern Colorado project. "It's a different type of slavery that isn't usually discussed in our nation's history," Archuleta explains in an exhibit video at El Pueblo History Museum. "These types of resilient ancestors braved these conditions in order for us to be where we are today."

**N**ative enslavement is a critical missing piece of continental history, Andrés Reséndez writes in his book *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America*, a finalist for the 2016 National Book Award for Nonfiction. "If we were to add up all the Indian slaves taken in the New World from the time of Columbus to the end of the nineteenth century, the figure would run somewhere between 2.5 and 5 million slaves," Reséndez, a professor and historian at the University of California, Davis, writes. (He will be a featured lecturer at the History Colorado Center in Denver on Jan. 20.)

Other forms of survival and resilience are highlighted elsewhere in the exhibit at El Pueblo History Museum; for instance, in the story of Doña Bernarda Mejía Velasquez, who emigrated in 1912 from Mexico to Pueblo with her children and settled in the Mexican American enclave of Salt Creek. Doña Bernarda, depicted in a larger-than-life panel at the museum, was a renowned *curandera*, or healer; she delivered hundreds of babies and used traditional *remedios* to aid community members. To support her family, Doña Bernarda also was a baker and bootlegger. On the night before her death in 1971, she baked 17 apple pies, Vera Esquibel, her granddaughter, recalled.

"It makes me very proud to see her at the museum," Esquibel, who is 78 years old, said. "She was one tough cookie, my grandmother. She saved so many people. She's in heaven."

Another influential woman highlighted in the exhibit, María Teresita Sandoval, helped establish El Pueblo, the people's town, on the



*José Ortega is a lifelong resident of Pueblo who graduated from CSU-Pueblo with a degree in history and Chicano studies. He is an exhibit and collections coordinator at El Pueblo History Museum and a key contributor to the Borderlands of Southern Colorado initiative. Photo: Mary Neiberg*

banks of the Arkansas River in 1842. El Pueblo began as a trading post and small settlement; it was abandoned several years later, after an attack by bands of Ute and Jicarilla Apache. Yet, reflecting the dynamics of a borderland, Pueblo rose again, reconfigured, in 1859.

These and other aspects of regional history will be the focus of two Borderlands of Southern Colorado workshops in the San Luis Valley next summer. The sessions are designed for K-12 educators who, in turn, might incorporate such cultural complexities into their class lessons.

Archuleta, who did not learn in school about the shocking issue of Native American slavery, and had little inkling of her connection to it, encouraged a new and broader view of regional history. "Being able to identify yourself and your story means knowing who you are," she said, contemplating the exhibit at El Pueblo History Museum. "It feels very rewarding to have a young person come in here and gain a sense of who they are and where they come from." ♦