

# Chamisa: A Journal of Literary, Performance, and Visual Arts of the Greater Southwest

---

Volume 1  
Issue 1 *Identity, Culture, and Art in New Mexico*

Article 28

---

2021

## “Even if You’re Not Going to Plant, Use Your Water’: Forging Identity Through Cultural Practices”

Rafael A. Martínez  
*Arizona State University*, [r.martinez@asu.edu](mailto:r.martinez@asu.edu)

Froilán Orozco  
*University of New Mexico*, [forozco@unm.edu](mailto:forozco@unm.edu)

Nancy C. Canales-Navarrete  
*University of New Mexico*, [nancy.canales17@gmail.com](mailto:nancy.canales17@gmail.com)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/chamisa>



Part of the [Digital Humanities Commons](#), [Oral History Commons](#), and the [Photography Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Martínez, Rafael A.; Froilán Orozco; and Nancy C. Canales-Navarrete. “Even if You’re Not Going to Plant, Use Your Water’: Forging Identity Through Cultural Practices.” *Chamisa: A Journal of Literary, Performance, and Visual Arts of the Greater Southwest* 1, 1 (2021). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/chamisa/vol1/iss1/28>

This Literary and other Creative Work is brought to you for free and open access by UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Chamisa: A Journal of Literary, Performance, and Visual Arts of the Greater Southwest by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [disc@unm.edu](mailto:disc@unm.edu).

---

## **“Even if You’re Not Going to Plant, Use Your Water’: Forging Identity Through Cultural Practices”**

### **Cover Page Footnote**

We would like to thank the Pecos Valley region and in particular to the families, community organizations, and individuals who are central to the development of this collaborative project.

## “‘Even if You’re Not Going to Plant, Use Your Water’: Forging Identity Through Cultural Practices”

Compiled and curated by Rafael A. Martínez, Froilán Orozco, and Nancy Canales-Navarrete

The Humans of New Mexico project, founded April 2016, utilizes oral history and photography as community-based educational platforms to document the living circumstances and complex issues that affect diverse New Mexican communities. This photo essay, compiled from the Humans of New Mexico *Pecos Valley Series*, captures the lives of people from the Pecos Valley of Northern New Mexico. The most interviews and oral histories collected by the Humans of New Mexico project occurred in this region of Northern New Mexico. The *Pecos Valley Series* underscores how planting represents culturally-grounded and artistic expressions of Northern New Mexico that forge human identity, cultural practice, and community. In this sense, community members engage in *artivism*.<sup>1</sup> The authors and compilers of this educational project have captured community members responding to change and transformation through long-held and recently adopted regional cultural practices. The phrase “use your water” stems from the longer declarative statement, “Even if you're not going to plant, use your water” and underscores a local emphasis on action for the sake of subsistence and human expression. For many in the Pecos Valley, planting represents an essential part of living. By working the land with their hands, local residents experience an intimate connection to the land that produces sustenance integral for survival. As such, planting simultaneously allows people of the region to engage creatively with the land in the ways they choose to design their gardens and farms.

The Pecos Valley is wedged between its sister cities of Santa Fe and Las Vegas in Northern New Mexico. The region was originally inhabited by indigenous Pueblo and Plains communities who later came under Spanish rule. The colonizers established land grant communities, recognizing the area’s agricultural past and future agricultural potential. The Valley, as many of the participants in the series commonly refer to the area, is composed of various elements that contribute to the character and cultural legacy of the region including, but not limited to: indigenous roots and traditions, *pueblitos* (towns) that remain from historical land grant communities, and people transplanted to the region. The Humans of New Mexico “Pecos Valley Series” spans a two-year period (2016–2018) and is comprised of eleven oral histories. This essay, “‘Even if You're not Going to Plant, Use Your Water’: Forging Identity Through Cultural Practices,” focuses on five oral histories from the series that frame the themes of identity, farming, and activism as, both, cultural practices and activism. These themes and topics are prevalent and relevant in defining the Southwest historically and contemporarily. The Pecos Valley serves as a microcosm of the greater Southwest, offering ways to tease out important lessons and community-based solutions to living and surviving in rural localities.

---

<sup>1</sup> Chon Noriega is credited with coining the term, “artist” or “artivism,” to combine the practice of being an artist and activist. In this case, we are extending the term to represent agriculture and farming as an artform and cultural practice by the people of Northern New Mexico who combine agriculture and farming with their activism in the ways they work to preserve their water rights, lands, and traditions.

The selected stories from the *Pecos Valley Series* gathered for this essay come from interviews with the following people: Ralph Vigil Jr. (Pecos), Abel Aguilar (Pecos), Eileen Mulvihill (Villanueva), Jeanette Iskat (Coruco), and Nazca Armentha Warren and Phil Rothwell who were interviewed together (La Fragua). Humans of New Mexico was welcomed by the El Valle Women's Collaborative organization who then, by word of mouth, connected the group with the other interviewees throughout the Pecos Valley. These participants included folks with long historical ties to the region dating back hundreds of years and more recent transplants. Together, these people provide diverse perspectives on living in the Pecos Valley based on their relationship to the land, highlighting some of the complexities associated with placemaking. This essay includes an unpublished photography exhibit accompanied by transcribed interviews. These oral histories shed light on the participants' understanding of the ways in which agriculture as a practice connects people to the land, creates community, and fosters generational preservation. Additional photographs on all six participants are archived online and can be found at [www.humansofnewmexico.com](http://www.humansofnewmexico.com).

The "Pecos Valley Series" was inspired and influenced by the notion of what *Nuevo Mexicano* scholars' term, *Querencia* –a deep love for place and its history. Emphasizing this point, the late Chicano scholar, Rudolfo Anaya, wrote, "*Querer* is to love, *querencia* is love. For me, it is more than a sense of place: it is a special relationship to la madre tierra that produces our food" (Anaya 2020, xvi).

The "Pecos Valley Series" represents part of ongoing collaborative community-based educational efforts between Humans of New Mexico, the David F. Cargo Library (Villanueva), and *El Valle* Women's Collective (Pecos Valley).<sup>2</sup> The collaboration seeks to preserve cultural practices, oral histories and traditions, build community participatory art exhibits, and host storytelling events and workshops for Pecos Valley youth. In the interviews, Pecos Valley community members speak about the importance of passing on cultural practices such as farming to the next generation and building community programs and organizations that heighten consciousness through activism.

The narrative portion of the essay begins with an introduction of the six participants who provide the voices for the essay. Ralph Vigil Jr. and Abel Aguilar, long-time residents of the Pecos Valley with family history in the area, open the essay. Their introductions are followed by the more recent transplants: Eileen Muvihill, Jeannette Iskat, Nazca Armentha, and Warren and Phil Rothwell. In

---

<sup>2</sup> We would like to give special thanks to the following organizations and institutions for their support in organizing, connecting, and aiding in our interview process. The Center of Southwest Culture was responsible for introducing Humans of New Mexico to the El Valle Women's Collaborative. Shelley Smith served as official liaison to the El Valle Women's Collaborative and helped plan the majority of our interviews. El Valle Women's Collaborative welcomed our group into the community. The David F. Cargo Library collaborated with Humans of New Mexico and hosted some of the interviews. Ralph Vigil Jr. embraced our cluster with kindness onto his land and provided the Humans of New Mexico with a detailed history of the region. Finally, the overall community of the broader Pecos Valley always made the group feel welcome and willingly collaborated in our efforts to collect oral histories—with great appreciation and gratitude, we thank you.



these brief introductions, participants begin detailing their life narratives and connection with the land and agriculture in the Pecos Valley.

### **Pecos Valley Introductions**

#### **Ralph Vigil Jr.**

My name is Ralph Vigil Jr. I'm from here, from Pecos. I've lived here all my life. I was born in Las Cruces but been here, in Pecos, [and] raised on the east side [of] Pecos. I went to school here, Pecos High School. After High School, I went into [the] military for a short period, and after that I got into working in Corrections. Then after that, I started working at [the] Santa Fe County Assessor's office. Did that for a couple of years. I liked it so I went and got my real estate license. I was a broker for nine years, and I did that until the recession hit and the market crashed, and I had to find something to do so I started doing this (farming).



Figure 1. Rafael A. Martínez, “Ralph Vigil Jr. on His Land in Pecos, New Mexico,” 2016

#### **Abel Aguilar**

I’ll tell you about the town I grew up [in], Grants, New Mexico. It's about seventy miles west of Albuquerque, that’s where I grew up. That was a mining and exploration town but ultimately it turned out that it was not a healthy place for me. Then I moved to Santa Fe. I was there from eighty-four [to] nine-four, [and] in nine-four, I moved back out here [to Pecos Valley].

#### **Nazca Armentha Warren and Phil Rothwell**

My name is Nazca Warren and I grew up primarily in Las Cruces, New Mexico. I also spent time in Chicago and Mexico. Las Cruces is definitely my hometown. I’ve lived in El Valle [Pecos Valley]

now for about five years. We live in La Fragua, which our postal code for the whole valley is Ribera, but this is La Fragua. La Fragua is a name or an antiquated name for a blacksmith (Warren, 2017).

My name is Phil and I have been in the [Pecos Valley] for the last five years. I was born and raised in the Detroit area and I escaped! To me growing up, that's really an important part of leaving where you are from. It can be really oppressive in the sense that you get boxed into an identity. It's great forme to be in New Mexico. Definitely a better fit. It's a lot 'freer' out here, and I appreciate it (Rothwell, 2017).<sup>3</sup>

### **Eileen Mulvihill**

I had seen the Pecos Valley in my early travels. I used to go from Urbana Champaign [Illinois] to California every summer. I would drive out with friends for a two-week vacation. And then my sister and her partner moved here, to Ribera, probably in the mid-'90s. I used to visit them. And this valley is just so incredibly beautiful. I'm a Pisces, I have to be on [the] water. I knew I had to buy a place that was on the river. In 1998, I discovered that I have a genetic disease. So, I moved here [Villanueva, New Mexico] in 2007 after I had a third episode with this disease. I had a stroke and so I was starting off all new. So, my first three years here, I was just recovering from that stroke primarily.



Figure 2. Rafael A. Martínez, "Eileen Mulvihill outside her home in Villanueva, New Mexico," 2017

---

<sup>3</sup> Nazca Armentha Warren & Phil Rothwell are husband and wife living in La Fragua, New Mexico within the Pecos Valley. They were interviewed together.

### **Jeanette Iskat**

There's something about New Mexico that really resonates with me. We came out here, my husband lasted about [silence]... definitely a much bigger culture shock for him, he had been in East L.A. his whole life and it just didn't work for him, so we got divorced and we're still friends. He moved back to L.A. and I stayed here. I now live in Coruco, down the road from Ribera. It apparently means “mite” in Spanish. It is so beautiful where I live but the name makes me itchy!

The participants in this essay reveal the multiple and diverse trajectories each one of them took in arriving to the Pecos Valley area. Every individual expresses a fascination with their connection to the land and building a sustainable future from it. In the next section, participants of the essay connect the local towns, villages, pueblitos, and their own homes to the broader identity of the Pecos Valley region that characterizes Northern New Mexico.

### **A People's History of the Pecos Valley and It's Traditions**



Figure 3. Rafael A. Martínez, “Villanueva City Limit Sign in Villanueva, New Mexico,” 2016

### **Abel Aguilar**

There's some real fascinating stuff [on] my mom's side of the family. My mother is from a town called El Pueblo. And the town she is from is called El Pueblo because on the other side of the river, adjacent from the town, is an old Indian ruin that was inhabited up until I believe the early 1800s and

at that point that pueblo got incorporated into Las Vegas Pueblo, which got incorporated into Jemez Pueblo. My dad is from a little town down the road, named Cena. The original name of the town was El Portecito. Later on, it got changed to Cena because a lot of people with that last name lived in the area and so they changed it. I believe the names started changing when the post office mail was being more and more [used] because the names were confusing. Villanueva used to be called La Cuesta and I understand that they changed it to Villanueva because they were always getting confused with the mail from 'Cuesta, NM' and 'La Cuesta.'

My fondest memories as a little child are from this valley. I was here from just a little after birth, probably from about a year and a half old 'till about los four-and-a-half years old and I can remember a lot of things. I always liked nature and the quiet and that's why I'm here. I could be, I could live in other places and work and make money and whatever, money is not worth, that's not everything. I have a lot of trades that I can do, but I am living here because of the quiet and tranquility and I feel at home.

### **Ralph Vigil Jr.**

The culture, the history. I mean we have one of the... it was one of the largest Pueblos at the time, Pecos Pueblo, it was called Cicuye [pueblo name] and Tewa [language name] and you know that's a big part of the history here. The Old Santa Fe Trail, the trading post, I mean there's just so much that's happened around here and to be part of that and to be carrying on the traditions that my great great-great-grandfather, Donaciano Vigil, brought. He was the first Hispanic territorial governor of New Mexico, so he was able to obtain this land grant on this side of Pecos, which we've mostly lost to [the] Forest Service. But, we're able to keep the irrigated lands down here and some of the land on the side of the hill there where I live. And it's just been great. I mean a lot of people don't embrace the culture, a lot of people forget about it, [and] move on.

### **Nazca Armentha Warren & Phil Rothwell**

The old town [La Fragua] was built across the river, and the river was on this side of the fields, and [then] there was a major flood. The old town was destroyed, then the river switched course. Now the town was built on this side of the fields, and the river runs on the other side. One day we just went across the river and we saw that there [were] so many shells of houses. History doesn't get told unless you live here [La Fragua] and there [are] not a lot of historical markers, and it's a shame because there [are] all these great stories.

Here is the history of the house [that we live in now] that I know [it] started in La Fragua. This house was built about one-hundred-and-ten years ago. It's really well done in the traditional style. It's been lived in constantly that whole time. The history of the house is interesting because it was used to make bootleg liquor.



Many of the people here claim that they come from the original settlers that came from Spain, so they all got land grants. On our deed to the house, it actually has the seal of Queen Isabella of Spain, because the laws of the land grants had not changed that much since then. There are really old families and they have really different outlooks than anywhere else I've lived in New Mexico. Here you see all these different bits of history and it all comes together to form a living history of the valley.

The contributors to this essay demonstrate that connecting to their local history has encouraged them to get involved directly in their community through environmental activism and community farming practices. In the next section they detail different programs, ideas, and approaches to cultivating community in their communal farming practices.

### **Environmental Activism and Community Farming Practices**



Figure 4. Rafael A. Martínez, “El Valle Community Center sign in Villanueva, New Mexico,” 2016

#### **Eileen Mulvihill**

My motivation around trying to start up a “Youth Farm-to-Market,” program [was for] kids to learn to love being on the land and working with the land and improving the land. I love teaching kids that they can make mistakes and that it's important to make mistakes because you learn when you're honest with yourself and it makes you think about doing things differently. This year we had

twenty-four kids that showed up for the “Youth Farm-to-Market,” and the things I get to teach them about how I do not like bullies, and I do not let bullies stay in the program. And how girls and boys can do the same things. Those are things that have been important in my life and I think because of that I am basically a very happy person.

### **Ralph Vigil Jr.**

Find something to do in your community to help preserve it. Learn something about your community, number one. Learn something about who you were, how your people came to be in that area, and then go from there. Dive into [it] and be part of it and learn to be part of that history; be part of making history in the area, leaving your imprint like your *ancianos* [elders] and leaving a mark for your grandchildren to be able to inherit something so beautiful and so rich in tradition, culture, [and] history. I mean we're such beautiful people with such diverse backgrounds that there's nothing to be ashamed of.

We need more kids teaching, farming [and] more attorneys that are willing to come out and help the small communities help defend the water rights. Always give back to your community, our community's given us so much. We don't even think about it, but I mean, I'm not just saying the people, but the land, the area, where you exist, your home. Take care of it, help beautify it, and don't destroy it. I see too many kids these days who don't care, they go and tear up the sides of the mountains, make messes, throw trash, litter, just making a mess. Why would you do that to such a beautiful place in your backyard? So always respect where you are in life and where you're from and always remember that. If you don't take care [for] this place, this place won't take care of you. And that has to be something that stays in their mind. And always go back, even if they leave, always go back and do something. Even if it's not big, just something to make a little impression that'll last forever that way people can see that you're setting an example for future generations, so we don't forget who we are.

One thing that my dad always said, ‘even if you're not going to plant, use your water, use your water Ralph.’ I remember growing up I used to hide from dad when it was time to clean the acequia. I hated it.





Figure 5. Rafael A. Martínez, “Ralph Vigil’s family greenhouse in Pecos, New Mexico,” 2016

### **Nazca Armentha Warren and Phil Rothwell**

It was hard at first to understand how to live ‘rurally.’ Both of us coming from cities, we have had to do a lot of shedding of our layers and understanding what that looks like. I think we are now really making these connections with folks like El Valle Women’s Collaborative and the Farmer’s Collaborative. Those things are really essential to rural living. I see the value in it because the community is important. True self-sufficiency is impossible. We need each other. It’s just so important to know where your food comes from and to be a part of nature and to know the land. It’s just so expansive and beautiful here [Pecos Valley]. We want it to be an agricultural venue for all of us.

My neighbor down the road has his own field, but he’s just one guy out there working hard, and he needs help. He has been here for generations and he knows what he is doing in his own style. My style might be different from his [growing] vegetables, but I would like to learn that style and really respect it. Find the way to help him if he does need help. It’s strange to ask for help or to be given help, but through something like that it’s really wonderful to have somebody who helps. We can each be economically viable while also having that for our neighbors and friends as well. There’s such a demand now for organic food, which around here it’s not organic it’s just the way it’s always been done. The fields are all there, most of them are not getting worked, but they could be. Encouraging that type of farming is really great because then you wouldn’t have to commute, you just work in the valley. I think that the *El Valle* Women’s Collaborative primarily brings women together, which is important. They are all so talented and bring so much to the community. A lot of us are outsiders, and we are trying to reach out to people at large, not because we want to change what’s here, but we

want to be a part of it. We want opportunities for everybody. We want opportunities for ourselves, we want opportunities for our neighbors down the road who have lived here for generations. There's just an exchange that happens that really grows out of the heart out of this place (Warren, 2017).

I feel like we are really in this important page in history where people have really become disempowered in so many ways. We are disempowered to provide our own food. We are disempowered to provide for our own house. Everything is being outsourced to Monsanto in the food industry to big pharma in the western medical establishment. Our power is in community organizing, [it is] being outsourced to [the] government thousands of miles away and I think we are all suffering as a result of that. But there is this resurgence to be the person of the renaissance now, [it] means to be able to provide your own food. To know how to heal yourself from minor illnesses. To be more or less to be able to be a self-sufficient person. Even in that passive way, community building can be about thinking about what society you want to live in. What would your part in that society be? And then do it (Rothwell, 2017)!

### **Abel Aguilar**

The people in this valley, in the past, used to be interdependent and they would support one another, through the farming community. Any way that you could help your neighbor, people were doing that. My grandfather's mother raised poultry, that was her specialty and she would trade poultry for vegetables [and] other things. My grandmother, she farmed, so she had lots of vegetables that she would trade and the story has been told by many elders in this valley that during the time of the depression they had almost no clue that there was a depression because this was an inter-dependent, a very self-reliant place. Everyone helped each other out. There was a community grinding mill, there were all kinds of things that everybody could use when somebody needed to build a house or work on a house. If [a] house burned down, everybody would show up, you know, the way it should still be.

### **Eileen Mulvihill**

I started being treasurer of our acequia. I knew that we had thirty-four small farms along our stretch of the acequia. At the time that I got here, only five people were using their water. Now, it's up to about eleven. But we still have so much land that is not being used. We are at risk of losing the water rights. I felt like I had to try and get involved in bringing the acequia back.

The women's collaborative [*El Valle Women's Collaborative*], has been a very new experience from the point of view of working mostly with women. As a scientist, as a molecular biologist, I'd say I was outnumbered by men eight-to-one. So, most of my career, I worked in a man's world and I kept getting fired. Because I didn't like things that were happening and told people [laughing].

I like the energy that the women have [in *El Valle Women's Collaborative*], the willingness to know that they can work hard, but also take care of each other. So, I wish that the women's collaborative



spirit can infiltrate the two community centers here [in Villanueva, New Mexico]. I feel like it's starting to happen down in Ribera, but it was starting to happen here in Villanueva, but then it stopped.

### **Jeanette Iskat**

Well, it [*El Valle* Women's Collaborative] started with some of my neighbors about 3.5 years ago. They just wanted a place to hang out so one of the women had a farm. It was like that for two or three meetings and then they just all decided that everyone was an activist, and everybody was a doer. They were like, 'we should do something around that,' 'I don't like the way that thing is in our community.' And it just took off from there. We had rented a building, and even though we had that, Martha was talking about the 'pay what you want' thrift store. People would come in; some folks would give us \$10 for a \$1 hat and some folks would give us \$1 for five garbage bags full of stuff. And some people were reselling it in Las Vegas in the flea market and there were a lot of conversations around that, like, 'is that okay?' And I'm like, 'yeah, they're making a living off of it right?' Part of this is supporting people to survive too. So, if they take that to Vegas they are just like a local version of a picker. Give them that power. So, it worked out really good.

We were spending a thousand a month and we were still managing to be open out here where the average per capita family income is \$16,000. The thrift store was the one that brought most of the community in. I would think in the entire valley you're looking under five-thousand people, and that's if I'm including [all of the pueblitos]. Some of them are super small and tucked in, there's something like seventeen little pueblitos in here. And that's including the people who are quasi-seasonal, who come in for the weekends.

### **Ralph Vigil Jr.**

I was fortunate that my dad already had the tractors. But I can see somebody starting that doesn't have any equipment, it'd be pretty costly. This piece of land, my family always farmed [it]. My dad has always done it after work, so it's always been part of us. I never really did it full-time until a couple of years ago, but we just really wanted to maintain the acequias—the water rights. Growing up with him, the biggest lesson I learned was the water rights and protecting them and using them. I mean my dad would plant but he wouldn't plant to sell, it was for home consumption or he'd give it away. But he always just planted to keep the water rights. And he was really instrumental in drilling that into my head and instilling those values into my everyday thinking. We used to do nothing but row cropping. Now, I'm doing raised beds, different types of high value type crops. We were used to planting our traditional crops; corn, bean, squash. Now we've moved into a whole different variety of crops, and drip irrigation, and different business models [and] turning it into a business.

Through the years, being in the Acequia Commission. I've had to be at the legislature, [and] in fact I'm the one who works the Legislature for the [*Acequia*] Commission and its efforts, as far as advocating for acequias and getting funding. I've been very fortunate that they listen to me and I

have several senators [who] understand the importance of acequias and water rights in New Mexico and they fight to protect it. When there's *acequia* issues they call me and ask what they should do and basically, I give them some advice and something that guides them in the right direction. I've brought them over here [to the Pecos Valley], Senators [and] Representatives.

I always try to stress the importance of our water rights. As far as urban, you know, the cities put a lot of pressure. People don't think that all the people in Pecos aren't affected. Yeah, we are, because the city and its efforts to grow they need water and the only water, as far as marketable water, is going to come from our acequias. And they'll start severing them from our lands and we'll start having problems over here for the guy down the stream who wants to irrigate and there's no water in the city anymore [because] we've sold it all. It puts a lot of stress, it puts a lot of pressure on us and we try to bring awareness to different policy makers that what happens in Albuquerque [and] Santa Fe, affects us here.

We're not for sale –that's one of the biggest things that I've stressed.

The participants of this essay discuss traditional and new ways of connecting with the land and involving their communities. Through environmentalism and community agriculture, people in Northern New Mexico preserve the ways people have been coming together to build community and survive in the region for generations. In the next section, the community participants share their future dreams and aspirations for the valley.

## Future Dreams for the Valley



Figure 6. Rafael A. Martínez, “Abandoned Elementary School in Villanueva, New Mexico,” 2016

### **Eileen Mulvihill**

I’m worried about the valley. I mean I’ve been a farmer now for almost nine years and just in those years, I can see climate change. Long time farmers in the valley say they don’t know what is going to happen.

We have to get a solar network established up and down this valley. We have got to have everybody riding bicycles or walking. We have to have a walking path or a bike path because twenty years from now there’s not going to be fuel for all the cars and trucks. So, I feel like we have to start working now, really hard. And it’s going to be hard, because I’d say most of the county commissioners and most of our legislative people really are not living in a real world.

**Nazca Armentha Warren and Phil Rothwell**

There is just so much heart and culture and love [in Villanueva] and open space. The push is more towards nature schools and schools where there is community. It is communities of parents getting together and raising their children together. I have been inspired by a lot of the families I have met recently who do home school, but I think that homeschooling can also be isolating. I would really like to see the valley have that opportunity to raise our children together. To not have to go that much further for middle school or high school to places like Las Vegas (Warren, 2017).

**Ralph Vigil Jr.**

I think it'll pan out for this community, but it's just going to be one of those things where you're just going to have to keep working [and] working at it [to] get your message out and make it work. And especially for the youth, I really want to see the youth –the kids, the way I grew up, involved [in] agriculture, in our traditions and our cultures and our practices that we have done for centuries and really get back to that. Because, you know, there's going to come a time where people might have to go back to the land. And if you don't have those skills, I mean you'll be hurting; you'd be depending on someone else. I think our youth can definitely benefit from some sort of education in the agricultural field. Not only does it teach them about farming, but it also teaches them discipline, work ethic, business, hydrology, history, math, I mean there's everything that's involved in it. I mean writing, having to write proposals for grants, because I mean it's very difficult as a small farmer to have that startup capital to make it.

To the youth: embrace your history, embrace who you are, who your *ancianos* [elders] were. Embrace this region, this valley. Don't be embarrassed where you come from, we all come from an agrarian background, it's just some of us are more removed than others. Embrace it, I mean it's a beautiful history, it's a beautiful past.

**Jeanette Iskat**

It's been a challenge, and it comes back to trust. Trust and understanding that things move in their time here. You have to understand that you're coming in, no matter how good your intentions, your ideas are—and this is any community it's not just New Mexico—you have to have buy in or you're just over laying more imposition on other people. You have to ask and then listen for the response and truly hear it. And it really may not be the one you want. And then you have to see 'can I go forward or not? What's the best work I could do?'

**Conclusion**

“‘Even if you're not going to plant, use your water:’ Forging Identity Through Cultural Practices,” intertwines the collective stories of six individuals living in the Pecos Valley of Northern New Mexico and, in their own voices, details how agricultural practices connect peoples to the land and its history, while highlighting the importance of restorative cultural practices. Gardening and farming

are creative forms in which people create an identity connected to the land they live on. The ways people utilize resources helps enhance and improve their communities and, by extension, the environment around them. The relationships between an individual, the land, and the community impact a person's identity. People generate community by working with and supporting each other to build a better society. Communities across the Southwest are represented in Pecos Valley where a collective identity is formed through a shared history of cultural practices; these practices are rooted in farming and agriculture that connect people to the land.

## Bibliography

### Interviews:

Aguilar, A. (2016, 19 July), Oral Interview. 'Abel Aguilar/Villanueva', *Humans of New Mexico*.

Iskat, J. (2016, 15 August), Oral Interview. 'Jeanette Iskat (Coruco)', *Humans of New Mexico*.

Mulvihill, E. (2017, February), Oral Interview. 'Planting Seeds In The Valley', *Humans of New Mexico*.

Rothwell, P. & Warren, N. (2017, 4 March), Oral Interview. 'Living Rurally', *Humans of New Mexico*.

Vigil, R. (2016, 31 October), Oral Interview. 'Ralph A. Vigil II/Pecos', *Humans of New Mexico*.

### Secondary Literature:

Fonseca-Chávez, Vanessa, Romero, Levi, Herrera, Spencer R. *Querencia: Reflections on the New Mexico Homeland*. University of New Mexico Press, 2020.

Noriega, Chon A. *Just Another Poster?: Chicano Graphic Arts in California/Artes Graficas Chicanas en California*. University Art Museum, 2001.

**Rafael A. Martínez** is an Assistant Professor in Southwest Borderlands at Arizona State University. Rafael is the founder of the Humans of New Mexico project and the current advisor for the project. Rafael's teaching and research is centered in exploring the colonial legacies and contemporary immigrant rights issues in the Southwest.

**Nancy Canales-Navarrete** is an American Studies graduate of the University of New Mexico. Nancy is currently co-director of Humans of New Mexico. Nancy is interested in LGBTQ+ history, post-civil rights era in New Mexico and the southwest.

**Froilán Orozco** is a PhD student in the Language, Literacy and Sociocultural Studies in the College of Education and the University of New Mexico. Froilán is currently co-director of Humans of New Mexico. His interests are centered on curriculum development within Southwest education.