

Código

Education & Leadership Foundation's Official Newsletter

Dr. Lizbeth Santana's "Humanizando Historias" Exhibit sparks meaningful conversations on the border & immigration

Since its inception, the Education and Leadership Foundation's (ELF) has been a leader in the community in advocating for the rights and opportunities of students and families, regardless of immigration status. With this knowledge, we have become keenly aware of the challenges that many of our clients are met with everyday and are inspired by their journeys that led them here.

With this in mind, it was fitting that ELF hosted a training at Arte Américas, Fresno's premier Latino arts institution, during the closing days of "Humanizing Stories." Created by Fresno's own Dr. Lizbeth De La Cruz, the exhibit guided the ELF team through a journey to her border wall project, from concept to execution.

The original project was created Tijuana's side of the border, showing the faces of individuals previously deported, despite having lived in the US all of their life and were, for all intents and purposes, were American.

The powerful installation included QR codes linked to video testimonials from the individuals featured in the mural, including veterans of war who risked their life for a country that ultimately disposed them; a fact that many visitors of the exhibit were not aware of. The exhibit also included a moving, immersive seaside tableau, depicting the contrast of a 4th of July celebration, with fireworks overlooking makeshift graves in the border.

The ELF team was deeply moved by the installation and was invited to participate in a protest sign making activity. The team created designs featuring messages of solidarity for the immigrant population, support for DACA recipients, calls to keep families together, among others.

To conclude the visit, the ELF team and Board of Directors participated in a training led by Ms. Coreen Campos on leadership, accountability, and collaboration. 🌱



ELF team member showcases his protest board design



Board President Ámbar Álvarez Soto speaks to ELF team



ELF team observes installed replica of border wall portrait



Advocacy

‘Rooted in Community, Rising as Leaders’ Summit Brings Fresno Youth Together for Learning and Action

This past June, the Education and Leadership Foundation (ELF) coordinated and participated in a youth-centered summit titled, “Rooted in Community, Rising as Leader,” at the Fresno Center, featuring interactive activities, meaningful conversations, a Know Your Rights workshop, and special performances.

Local dance artist Tsim Nuj delighted attendees with a special performance, which featured his practice of movement and engaged participants. The performance celebrated community, identity, and belonging (Photo 3).

To culminate, there was a viewing of the short film ‘Birth of a Mind’ (2023), a movie about the way parents impose certain beliefs upon their children through the conversations they have. Following the screening, participants engaged in a Q&A with the film’s writer and director, Daren Dien, sparking important questions addressing culture, assimilation, stereotypes, and discrimination. The youth were particularly interested in the question,

“What does it mean to be American?” (Photo 2)

Gustavo Gasca Gomez from the ELF reflected on the event, expressing admiration for youth and their interest to make their communities rise, “It’s inspiring! When planning the event, we hoped they would connect with the content but I’m most impressed with the way they connected with one another.”

The event was part of the Stop the Hate program, which is dedicated to spreading awareness of racial violence and discrimination prevention, and advocating for resources for victims and vulnerable communities.

This event was made possible by the Central Valley Stop the Hate Collaborative members, which include ELF, The Center at Sierra Health Foundation (funder), Everyday Impact Consulting, The Fresno Center, the Jakara Movement, and Stone Soup Fresno. 🌱



Getty images

Immigration

The Time to Naturalize is Now: Proposed Fee Changes Could Create New Barriers to Citizenship

On June 23, 2026, the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced an increase in fees for the process to become a naturalized U.S. citizen. The proposed change would increase the cost by roughly 75%, raising costs to \$1,280 if the process is completed online, or \$1,330 by paper. Additionally, it would remove any fee waivers or reduced fee options.

This proposal could disproportionately affect lower-income families. If you are a lawful permanent resident and have been considering applying for U.S. citizenship, now may be the best time to begin the process. Current fees and fee-waiver options remain in effect while the proposal is under review and you could save money by doing it now

ELF offers consultations for those interested in seeing their options for naturalization.

Contact us to schedule an appointment, visit one of our community events, or attend our Walk-In Wednesdays, held on the first and third Wednesday of each month, for a free consultation.

Please note that these fee increases are proposed and not yet in effect. Following the public comment period, DHS may decide whether to issue a final rule and, if confirmed, the new fees could take effect later this year, though no final effective date has been announced. 🌱



Labor Rights

Your safety matters: Protections for Agricultural Workers in California

According to California's Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA), more than 700,000 seasonal workers labor in the state's agricultural fields. These workers help feed communities throughout California and beyond. Because of the nature of their work, they are often exposed to direct sunlight, extreme temperatures, pesticides, and other hazards that can cause serious illness or injury if proper protections are not in place.

California law provides important workplace rights to help protect agricultural workers' health and safety.

One of these protections is outlined in the California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 8, Section 3457, which requires employers to provide:

-  **Cool, clean drinking water that is accessible at all times during working hours. Employers must also provide single-use cups or drinking fountains.**
-  **Access to clean, sanitary, and operational restroom facilities in good repair.**
-  **Handwashing facilities equipped with water, soap, and single-use towels. Employees must be able to wash their hands before eating and both before and after using the restroom.**
-  **The ability to drink water as frequently as needed without restriction.**

Because agricultural worksites can cover large areas, drinking water, toilets, and handwashing facilities must generally be located within a quarter mile or a five-minute walk of employees, whichever is shorter.

In the Central Valley, where temperatures often exceed 100 degrees during the summer months, access to water and shade can be lifesaving. To help prevent heat illness, CCR Title 8, Section 3395 requires employers to provide:



Cool-down rest breaks whenever temperatures reach 80 degrees Fahrenheit or higher



Shade that is located as close as practicable to the work area and provides enough coverage for employees to rest comfortably.

Report Violations and Unsafe Working Conditions

These regulations exist to protect workers and keep them safe on the job.

If you or a loved one works in agriculture and is not being provided with these essential resources, you have the right to report unsafe working conditions. Reports can be made anonymously. When one worker is affected, it is often a sign that others are affected as well.

All workers have rights, regardless of immigration status.

ELF is part of the California Workplace Outreach Project (CWOP) and can assist workers in filing reports, understanding their workplace rights, and connecting with additional resources.

For assistance, call (559) 291-5428 or visit our office at:

**Education and Leadership Foundation (ELF)
4290 Ashlan Avenue, Fresno, CA 93726**

For the complete text on CCR 3395 and 3457, please visit <https://www.dir.ca.gov/> 📄



Help Support Our Fellows

On August 16, 2026, the Education and Leadership Foundation (ELF) will celebrate the accomplishments of its Empowerment Fellows—college students who are giving back to their communities through leadership, service, and civic engagement—at its annual Fellowship Award Dinner. During the event, fellows will be recognized for their achievements and awarded scholarships to support their educational journeys.

Last year, ELF awarded more than 34 scholarships of \$550 each. With community support, the organization hopes to increase both the number and impact of these awards. Every dollar raised goes directly to supporting student fellows as they work toward completing their college degrees.

This scholarship is separate from the stipend they receive upon completing their respective cohorts.



**Scan QR
to support**

or visit elfus.org/sponsorafellow

Building relationships starts with sharing a table

Earlier in July, more than 120 immigrant-serving organizations, advocates, attorneys, community leaders, and regional partners from across California gathered in Sacramento for the Regional Network Hub for Immigrant Families Convening.

The convening began with an evening mixer, where participants broke bread, made new connections, and built relationships in a welcoming and intentional space before a full day of collaboration.

Through interactive workshops, facilitated discussions, and coalition-building opportunities, attendees strengthened cross-sector partnerships, shared promising practices, and developed collective strategies to better support immigrant families across California.

The workshop was appreciated by participants, who shared their thoughts on how this would impact their work:

“Building connections with other organizations in my region, gaining a better understanding of the RRN process, and meeting inspiring individuals were the most valuable aspects of the experience.” “The importance of connecting in person with colleagues and finding inspiration from other participants—especially young advocates.”

“Overall, it was a great event. It was thoughtfully executed, with a strong focus on fostering networking and collaboration.”

“Thank you for allowing us to attend—including my high school interns. It was such an incredible experience for them.”

ELF is grateful to everyone who joined in Sacramento and to our Regional Network Hub partners for helping create a space where collaboration could flourish. Together, we’re strengthening regional partnerships and building lasting networks of support for immigrant families. 🌱



We are excited to re-introduce our newsletter in a brand new look befitting of an evolving ELF.

The term Códice is the Spanish word for “codex,” an ancient manuscript that served as the predecessor to the modern book. In Mexico and Central America particularly, codices were primarily composed of pictorial narratives that documented the history, traditions, and achievements of their people.

Because our logo is inspired by a symbol rooted in the Mexico Indigenous culture, we felt that this term would be a fitting tribute, as it will share the happenings, successes, and resources that ELF has to offer the community.

We hope you enjoy this brief newsletter and invite you to stay tuned for next month’s edition. 🌱

Top photo: Participants show off posters designed by IG @nataliepbui; Bottom Left: ELF program manager, Linda Renland presents; Bottom Right: ELF team in attendance