



National Commission on Hunger Round Table Discussion

June 24, 2015 ♦ 8:30 a.m.—10:30 a.m.

**Indian Pueblo Cultural Center
Albuquerque, NM**

Discussant Biographies (alphabetical order)

Veronica C. García, Executive Director of New Mexico Voices for Children

Before becoming executive director of New Mexico Voices for Children (NMVC), Veronica C. García, Ed.D., served for seven years as New Mexico's first Cabinet Secretary of Education. As secretary she advocated for the passage of many educational reforms including the state's Pre-K Act, Hispanic Education Act, programs that extend the school year for at-risk children (K-3 Plus), and rigorous academic standards that were recognized nationally. She also pushed for a comprehensive approach to educational reform by advocating for increased funding for programs such as school-based health clinics, breakfast in the schools, and elementary physical education. Her decades of work within the state's K-12 education system ranged from teaching in the classroom to principal and regional superintendent in the Albuquerque Public Schools, to associate superintendent and superintendent of the Santa Fe Public Schools. She also served as executive director of New Mexico Coalition of School Administrators.

She has received numerous awards including: the National Governor's Association Award for Excellence in State Government, New Mexico Superintendent of the Year, New Mexico Coalition of Educational Leaders Hall of Fame, and the Life Time Achievement Award in Education from *Hispanic Magazine*. She is a native Spanish speaker and received her doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of New Mexico. NMVC champions policies that improve child well-being in the areas of education, health, family economic security, and racial and ethnic equity. As executive director, Dr. Garcia fully integrated the organization's two major work areas—the KIDS COUNT program and the Fiscal Policy Project—which resulted in the creation of the *NM KIDS are COUNTing on Us* policy campaign, a blueprint for improving child well-being. She is a local, national and international keynote speaker having delivered more than a thousand speeches and addresses in her career. Her dissertation, "Ethical Relational Leadership: A New Framework for the Professional Development of Educational Leaders," has been used by many in the field. Dr. Garcia has written a chapter ("Education 2050") in the soon-to-be released book titled *New Mexico 2050*, published by the University of New Mexico Press.



Mandy Griego, Sustainability Officer for the New Mexico Field Office of the Department of Housing and Urban Development

Mandy Griego serves as the Sustainability Officer for the New Mexico Field Office of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. In this role she provides support and technical assistance to advance the principles of sustainable, livable communities across program areas within the Department and to constituents throughout New Mexico. The Partnership for Sustainable Communities, a collaboration between HUD, DOT, and EPA, is founded on the principles that communities should provide transportation choice, promote equitable, affordable housing, enhance economic competitiveness, support existing communities, coordinate policies and leverage investment, and value communities and neighborhoods.

Ms. Griego also serves as the local federal co-lead for the Urban Waters Federal Partnership, a collaborative effort of 14 federal agencies spearheaded by the EPA, which strives to reconnect communities to urban waterways. The Middle Rio Grande was designated an Urban Waters location in June 2013. As the local federal lead, Ms. Griego has worked to engage stakeholders in tribal, state, and local government, NGOs, and community members to align federal government programs and investment, expand partnerships, build local capacity and find innovative ways to communicate the environmental and economic potential of safe and clean urban waters.

Ms. Griego began her career with HUD in 2001 as a graduate intern, and was selected for the Public Housing Revitalization Specialist in 2002 under the Outstanding Scholars hiring program. She maintains a portfolio of Public Housing Authorities across New Mexico serving approximately 8000 families with \$40 million in annual funding. She also serves as the point of contact for special initiatives including Smoke-free Multi-Family Housing and the Veterans Assisted Supportive Housing (VASH). She is a member of the Local Federal Campaign Committee for the Combined Federal Campaign. Ms. Griego holds a B.A. in Psychology, minor in Economics, and an M.B.A. with concentrations in Policy & Planning for Governments and Non-Profits and Organizational Design and Development, all from the University of New Mexico.

Travis McKenzie, Executive Director of Grow the Future

Mr. McKenzie is the Executive Director of Grow the Future, an organization which works to cultivate community, leadership, and education through sustainable agriculture and inter-generational mentorship. He was a co-founder of Project Feed the Hood with the SouthWest Organizing Project and is currently a board member of SWOP. He worked as a Program Specialist with Schools and Community Partnership Department APS and with the UNM Service Corps. He is currently partnering with Lorenzo Candelaria and Dora Pacias



working at Cornelio Candelaria Organics promoting food justice and health literacy education.

Louise Pocock, Staff Attorney at the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty

Louise Pocock is a staff attorney at the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty. The Center is dedicated to advancing economic and social justice through education, advocacy and litigation. Specifically, the Center works to ensure that New Mexicans have full access to public assistance programs, including food assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Jennifer Ramo, Executive Director of New Mexico Appleseed

Jennifer Ramo, an attorney and life-long public servant, joined Appleseed's extensive network as executive director of the New Mexico Center. Ramo has a lengthy background in promoting social justice and equality for underserved communities. While employed at the White House Office of National Service, she helped to establish the grant-making program at AmeriCorps*VISTA, a network of national service programs that impel Americans to meet the nation's critical needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment and ran an earthquake relief program after the Northridge Earthquake.

Since its inception in 2009 New Mexico Appleseed has authored the nation's first Breakfast After the Bell law that ensures 116,000 low income children can access breakfast every morning, helped create the Food Access Navigator program within the Navajo Nation recently funded by the USDA for 2.4 million dollars, and rectified serious state and federal errors impacting over 120,000 low income children.

Ramo has a B.A. in Anthropology from the University of Southern California and received her law degree from Tulane Law School. She is also a graduate of the Albuquerque Academy.

Kelly K. Zunie, Cabinet Secretary of the Indian Affairs Department

Kelly K. Zunie is Cherokee and Zuni and is an enrolled member of the Zuni Pueblo. From age 12 to 17, she attended school in Sandy, Utah where she completed her high school education. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Statesmanship from George Wythe University.

New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez recently appointed Zunie as the Cabinet Secretary of the Indian Affairs Department. She became the first female to head that New Mexico state agency. She has worked for the Pueblo of Zuni. She has travelled throughout the



United States speaking and assisting with *West Wind Seminars* and *Face to Face with Greatness Seminars*. Ms. Zunie has served on the Board of Directors for the Indian Walk In Center in Salt Lake City, Utah and as a Business Analyst for Rocky Mountain Power in Utah.

Ms. Zunie has an extensive background in professional training and experience in critical issues facing New Mexico's Native American population, including public health, energy, and emergency management. She loves spending time with her family, reading, and traveling. Her passion is teaching others to attract the best kind of life that they can possibly imagine.