

Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women

Indigenous Peoples' Rights

<https://www.csvanw.org/honor-the-voices-of-our-ancestors-and-exercise-your-rights/>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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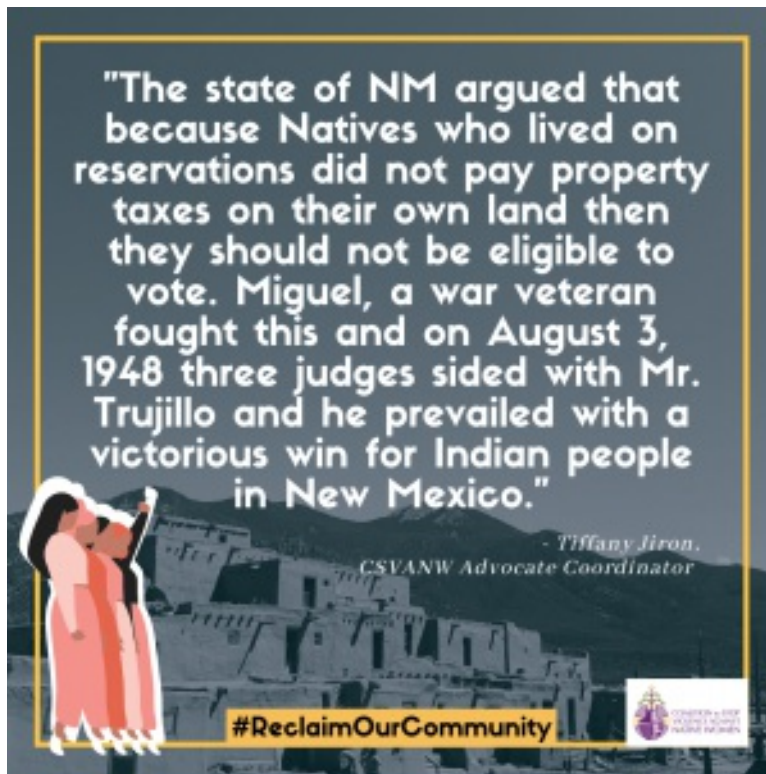
By: Tiffany Jiron, CSVANW Advocate Coordinator

As a young Indigenous woman growing up in Isleta Pueblo raised by my grandmother, I didn't talk much about registering to vote for presidential or state elections. I only participated in tribal elections every two years when our governors and tribal council members were voted in. As early as I can remember, I always heard members of my family say, What for? Why should we vote for the next president? They don't do nothing for us anyway. These congress men don't care about us. These are common and valid sentiments expressed amongst our Native communities, a result of many years of harm and distrust by the failure of the U.S. government to uphold treaty obligations and maintain healthy and respectful relationships with tribal Nations.



When I turned 18, I was allowed to register to vote for the first time in my own tribal community and I have to say I was so proud to participate. The poll workers at the Isleta Elder Center asked me for my tribal I.D. and from there I was an eligible voter. I felt like I mattered, and my ballot would make a difference. However, I never participated in presidential elections or state elections just like my family didn't. This was a cycle like many other cycles I intend to end. As a child I have witnessed domestic violence, substance abuse, experienced poverty, thoughts of suicide, feeling like I wasn't good enough or smart enough. I became angry about the truth of settler colonialism, genocide, theft of our lands and the violence I personally experienced and understood that this was not my fault. Now, as an adult, a mother, an auntie, a partner, I recognize that I continue to face and defeat the struggles of my own oppression and generational cycle of violence. I have prayed to our Mother for the strength to be resilient. I have prayed to have a voice to say stop I have prayed for forgiveness and prayed for better tomorrows. I never forget where I come from and keep my Pueblo faith close to me. As Native people we mustn't forget we have a voice. We don't have to continue to repeat the cycle of violence in our homes. We certainly have voices to say no more, we have the voice to pray, and the voice to take back our communities.

Since the arrival of settlers in 1492, Indigenous people on Turtle Island have experienced violence and it never ended. Up until 1978, non-natives were not prosecuted for the violence they committed on tribal lands and our native people never saw justice or healing. From the 1880s to the late 1960s the U.S. Government stole over 100,000 of our Native children and sent them to the 500 boarding schools across the nation to assimilate them into white society. The historical trauma of Native Americans caused detrimental harm but nearly 600 hundred years later, we have survived and continue to speak our languages and still engage in ceremony that is vital to our existence.



as tribal nations.

The global pandemic hit tribal communities hard and we did not have adequate resources to combat the first wave of COVID-19, and we recognize that we did not have adequate hospitals on tribal lands because we lack funding for healthcare, housing and education. Many of our relatives live in multi-generational homes, many of our Din relatives do not have running water, and the closest clean water, food, and necessities are several miles away making our people most vulnerable to contract COVID-19, which has been responsible for the loss of many lives. This angers me and makes me want to make my voice louder and clearer for my people. We are human beings. In fact, we are the first people of this nation and yet my relatives are living on the streets and unsheltered on their own homelands. The goal of our colonizers was to exterminate the lives of our Native people and the lineage of our children. This pandemic surely is proof that our systems are set up to fail and the U.S. government continues to show us the truths of broken treaties and promises of our ancestors. I was never influenced to make my votes count outside of the reservation, but I am more motivated than ever this year to change my perceptions on presidential and state elections because of the violence we as Indian people continue to experience. We must use any and all avenues possible to work towards transformative change because our lives are at stake.



I am also further inspired by the voices who have fought for these rights such as a Pueblo warrior who fought for our voting rights back in 1948. Miguel Trujillo Sr. of the Isleta Pueblo is a name you don't see in any exhibits, you don't see his statue anywhere, and you probably don't even know his name. Let me explain why he is an important part of this blog.

Miguel was a warrior not only in World War II, but also on the battlegrounds of the U.S. District Court of New Mexico in Santa Fe. After serving his country, Mr. Trujillo returned home and like many of our warriors who sacrificed to protect our lands, were not allowed to vote. The state of NM argued that because Natives who lived on reservations did not pay property taxes on their own land then they should not be eligible to vote. Miguel, a war veteran fought this and on August 3, 1948 three judges sided with Mr. Trujillo and he prevailed with a victorious win for Indian people in New Mexico. I am very proud to call this man a hero as he courageously used his

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- Tiffany Jiron,
CSVANW Advocate Coordinator



#ReclaimOurCommunity



voice.

Not having the right to vote and our voices not considered is violence. When there is no room nor no seat at the table for policy advocacy for the well-being of Native peoples lives, consent to our lands, our culture, and our bodies are threatened. We need our warriors to continue to fight for our rights. We need to honor our ancestors like, Miguel Trujillo, who fought for our rights. Use your voice, be a warrior to end the violence against Native people. My children matter, my niece matters, my mother matters, and my auntie and uncles matter, and my grandparents would have been proud of me for using my voice today. Continue to protect me, protect our lands and our resources. Our voices in all elections matter. Break the cycle of violence against Native womxn, men, and children. We are the movement.

Khudkem (thank you)!

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Rape Abuse Incest National Network: 1-800-656-4673 (HOPE) www.rainn.org
National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 (SAFE) www.ndvh.org
Strong Hearts Native Helpline: 1-844-762-8483 www.strongheartshelpline.org

We focus our work on communities and systems. We are not a direct service provider.

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