

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—**

## **Return of the Corn Mothers Pueblo Exhibition**

Sept. 15 – Nov 30, 2019

Opening Reception: Friday Oct. 4, 2019, 6:00–8:00 pm. Light hors d'oeuvres will be served.

Pueblo, Colorado – It has been hailed as a love letter in pictures- a tribute to women of the Southwest. *The Return of the Corn Mothers: Inspiring Women of the Southwest* a traveling photographic exhibition of extraordinary women will induct eight new women from Southern Colorado into the exhibition at the Pueblo City-County Library District Central Library, Rawlings Branch on Fri. Oct 4, 2019 at 6pm.

Sponsored in part by MSU Denver Department of Chicana/o Studies Journey Through Our Heritage program, and the Colorado Folk Arts Council the *Return of the Corn Mothers Pueblo 2019* exhibition runs from **Sept. 15 through Nov. 30, 2019**. The show features 48 museum quality portraits and stories of multi-generational and multicultural women from the Southwest, whose lives and work embody the spirit of community.

The opening reception is scheduled for Oct. 4, 2019 (6:00 pm) at the Pueblo City-County Library District Central Library, Rawlings Branch, at 100 E. Abriendo Ave. in Pueblo. The following Pueblo women will be inducted as Corn Mothers: **Dawn Di Prince, Charlene Garcia Simms, Rita Martinez, Elizabeth Aragon-Blanton, Alfiria Casaus Salazar, and Cynthia Ramu.**

The reception will include an opening blessing, photographic exhibition, refreshments, music by Denver Jazz great Freddy Rodriguez Jr., and oral histories by the new inductees. Other new inductees include **Lisa Saldaña** (Denver, Co.) and **Ann Redman** (Cheyenne, Wy). Ed Winograd, editor and Spanish translator of the printed Corn Mother Anthology, and Todd Pierson, exhibition photographer, will also present a brief history of the project.

In addition, there will be a book signing by the Pueblo Corn Mothers whose portraits, bios, dichos (life sayings), philosophies, and short stories of women who influenced these extraordinary women appear in the 2019 Corn Mother anthology.

## **HISTORY OF THE CORN MOTHER EXHIBITION**

The exhibition, and the anthology that goes with it, are based on the Pueblo myth of the Corn Mother, who represents growth, life, creativity, and the feminine aspects of the world. Todd Pierson, master photojournalist, has trekked for over a decade capturing the images of present-day Corn Mothers who have made significant contributions to their communities in the Southwest. This nationally recognized exhibit has traveled extensively to over a dozen universities and museums throughout Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Wyoming in the past decade.

The exhibition began in 2007, partly funded by a Rocky Mountain Women's Institute project grant. It originally included portraits and stories of eight women who were considered Corn Mothers in the Southwest. Motivated by the concern that as the region's populations grew, the history and stories of significant women who formed the foundation of their communities would be forgotten, the exhibition expanded to 29 women after receiving a 2009 Colorado Endowment for the Humanities grant. In 2016, six new women from the San Luis Valley were inducted for the Adams State University exhibition. With the 2019 induction that includes six Pueblo, Co. women, the exhibition now boasts an impressive 48 astounding portraits, as well as a full-color printed anthology that includes the women's pictures, biographies, philosophies, and life sayings, as well as a story by each honoree about her own Corn Mother (a woman who influenced and mentored her).

**Pueblo, Colorado Connection-**The exhibition made a brief visit to El Pueblo History Museum from August 2016 to January 2017 as part of the Salt Creek Memory project. At the time, there were plans to eventually add women from the Pueblo area to the project. After a two-year planning process, in the fall of 2018 the Pueblo community was invited to nominate women from Pueblo who had made significant contributions to the community and embodied the Corn Mother spirit. Enough funds were raised to add six women from Pueblo to the existing exhibition and to design and print a new anthology.

The expanded exhibition will be on display at Rawlings Branch Library from Sept. 15 until Nov. 30, 2019, with the opening reception on Oct. 4, 2019. The library's free and public Dia de Los Muertos celebration in early November. will feature altars and art exhibitions by some of the Pueblo Corn Mothers. Tentative events that feature storytelling by the Pueblo Corn Mothers to highlight the extraordinary legacy that women from Pueblo have left to future generations will be announced.

Dr. Ramon Del Castillo, professor and former chair of the MSU Denver Chicana/o Studies Department, has supported the project from its inception. He commented on the upcoming exhibition stating, “Women featured in the exhibit are caretakers of the world. It is important to hear the knowledge they have to share. It is an opportunity to honor women who give life and heal and nurture their families and communities. That this decade-long journey completes this phase of its journey in Pueblo is fitting, as it is here that the heart and spirit of the Southwest, in all its diversity, have converged for over a century.”

Sponsors for this exhibition include the Pueblo City-County Library District, the Journey Through Our Heritage (JTOH) program of Metropolitan State University of Denver’s Department of Chicana/o Studies, and the Colorado Folk Arts Council. All events are free and open to the public.

For more details on *Return of the Corn Mothers Pueblo*, contact Renee Fajardo, [efajard3@msudenver.edu](mailto:efajard3@msudenver.edu), 720-329-0869, or Charlene Garcia Simms, Hispanic Resource Librarian at the Pueblo City-County Library District, [charlene.simms@pueblolibrary.org](mailto:charlene.simms@pueblolibrary.org), 719-553-0234.

#### **Other Corn Mother Events**

**Thurs. Oct. 3, 2019 1-3 pm OSC Room 104 CSU Pueblo  
( 2200 Bonforte Blvd, Pueblo, CO 81001)**