

Decommodifying health care and housing



IN THIS EPISODE

What are the primary drivers of poverty in America? *How has the commodification of medicine affected health care?* What's behind immigrants' fear of accessing programs established to provide them lawful services?

For these answers and more, we spoke with **Maribel Nuñez, executive director of [Inland Equity Partnership](#)**, an economic justice coalition working to reduce poverty for the most vulnerable in Southern California's Inland Empire. From the front lines of this struggle, Maribel is here to break it all down for us! *This is the second of two episodes.*

WE DISCUSS

Talk about the resistance advocates encountered when working to expand California's Medicaid program to undocumented elders.

"...there's still this whole thing about immigrants, like, 'oh, they come to our country, suck up our resources.' ...it's race as well, but in regards to the elders, there was this additional kind of analysis that needed to be done, how it connected to long-term services. And so there was more hesitancy because the fear was the cost. How much was it going to cost to fund our elder community? ... So I think it's just about ageism, it's about race, about immigration...because the resources were there..." – **Maribel Nuñez**

What are some of the reasons that simply expanding Medicaid is not enough to guarantee appropriate, competent care?

"...[California is] one of the states that is on the bottom of doctor reimbursements, whether it be general or provider or specialists, we're at the bottom of that list. And so then you're not going to have that many providers that will provide the services, especially when you look at mental health or other types of specialty services, especially in the rural areas... And then the ones that do [provide services], you know, sometimes they're just not culturally competent with some of the needs and issues and trauma, you know, all these things that happen when you try to come to the United States. ...Or language right, too..." – **Maribel Nuñez**

It's said America has one of the highest rates of poverty in the industrialized world. What do you see as key to solving America's poverty problem?

"We see two primary drivers of poverty: **health care and housing**. And we're all about decommodifying those programs. And so with health care, we see that California, single-payer Medicare for All decommodifies - takes the for-profit system out of the equation. And it's an inclusive system for all.

We're all about inclusivity, intersectionality, bringing communities as one community, not different communities. ...It's just cheaper, less overhead. When it's inclusive, people know where to go and they don't have to figure out if that's a clinic I can go to, or can I go to this one? The providers, right? One payer system, it's all the same. Not, '*oh, you have this insurance or you have that insurance.*' So we're all about inclusivity and equity for all..." – **Maribel Nuñez**

Helpful Links

[Inland Equity Partnership](#)

[California is expanding Medi-Cal — but hundreds of thousands of immigrants will still be left behind](#), *Cal-Matters*

[Uncompensated Care Costs Fell in States That Recently Expanded Medicaid](#), *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*

[Paying doctors more—now will they treat more poor Californians?](#),
Cal-Matters

[2022 Changes to the Public Charge Inadmissibility Rule and the Implications for Health Care](#), *Kaiser Family Foundation*

[3 Cs: Corporatization, consolidation, commodification](#), *American College of Physicians, President's Message*

[Perpetuating Commodification of Suffering: How Social Determinants of Health Framing Prolongs Historical Racial Inequities](#), *Women's Health Reports*

Episode Transcript

Read the full [episode transcript](#).

Biography of Maribel Nuñez

Maribel Nuñez is the executive director of [Inland Equity Partnership](#) and [Inland Equity Community Land Trust](#). She is the daughter of Mexican immigrants, and the first generation of her family born in the U.S.

She leads projects that engage underrepresented people in the political process and in finding the voice and courage to stand up for their rights.

Her workshops acquaint people with relevant political issues and equip them with effective advocacy strategies.

In 2011, she was part of the team working with [League of United Latin American Citizens](#) (LULAC) to get congressional, state, and local school redistricting done in western Riverside County. To date, the project has registered nearly 6,000 students, a success resulting from Maribel's attention to detail and commitment to civic engagement.

In 2019 she helped co-found the Inland Equity Community Land Trust, to develop and steward permanent affordable housing in Riverside and San Bernardino counties through a community land trust, (formerly [California Partnership](#)).

Working with Inland Equity, she helped organize a coalition to pass anti-poverty measures like Health4All Kids, repealing the Maximum Family Grant, lifting the Lifetime Ban on CalWORKS and CalFresh benefits, passing Homes for Homeowners Not Corporations (SB-1079) and helped pass eviction moratoriums at the state and local level.

She also serves as a board member of [Healthy California Now](#), a California single-payer coalition. She is a true leader who works for improving our communities and strongly represents those who do not have a voice.

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