

Countering systemic erasure? Data justice for marginalized communities

Featuring Seciah Aquino, DrPH, MS
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California



This time on Code WACK!

What is “[data justice](#)” and how does it inform (and strengthen) health policies for [invisibilized](#) communities? ***What policy solutions are needed to reduce health disparities among people, especially marginalized Latinx and indigenous communities?*** What role does the **Latino Coalition for a Healthy California** play in advancing the health of vulnerable communities throughout the state? ***And what are the hopes and fears of these communities when it comes to their health and the upcoming presidential election?***

To find out, we recently interviewed **Dr. Seciah Aquino**, executive director of the **Latino Coalition for a Healthy California**. This is the second episode in a two-part series.

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Tell us some good news! What's a recent health policy win that has transformational potential?

"I'll highlight a very exciting campaign that started about two years ago and it began with a very honest conversation with our partners at [CIELO](#), our indigenous community partners. And we talked about the Latinidad movement and how it had invisibilized our Indigenous community members. How can we make sure that our indigenous communities are front and center, that they are receiving the resources that they need?

"And so was born our fight for data justice because for us as a public health advocacy organization, we make data-driven decisions. And guess what? Our Indigenous communities are not represented in the data. And so we began to explore ways in which we can explore the diversity and the richness within the Latino and Indigenous community through our data....

"So ... [SB 1016](#)* was born and what we're doing and asking is the [California] Department of Public Health ... to collect and disaggregate data at the Latino subgroup level. So if you're Guatemalan, you know, you would be able to indicate that. If you're Hondureño [or] Nicaragüense, you would be able to indicate your country of origin. If you are from an Indigenous nation, you would be able to mark Aztec, Mayan. ... And then after collection, we're asking for a report on public health trends at that level ... and that report would be provided to the legislature to make sound decisions with data in their hands.

"This is something that would dramatically change the way that we see the Latino and Indigenous communities in California." – **Seciah Aquino, DrPH, MS**

***Since this interview was conducted with Dr. Secia Aquino, Governor Gavin Newsom has signed SB 1016 into law.**

When it comes to disparities affecting Latino and Indigenous communities today, what issues do you see as the most pressing?

"... that is a big question. You know, at LCHC, we pride ourselves on translating community solutions into equitable policy and lasting systemic change. And I would say with our public health framing, we work on addressing the social determinants of health, right?"

"For us, when we talk about health it is not just health care, we're talking about housing, we're talking about green spaces, we're talking about nutrition, making sure that you have access to education and the right opportunities to keep growing as a person. At the end of the day, the biggest issue that is hurting the Latino and indigenous community is poverty..."

"...if we were able to address poverty, re-envision a new future, a new reality for our community members, we would be able to affect better change and, and change that would be sustainable, completely transforming those health outcomes." – **Seciah Aquino, DrPH, MS**

What's the coalition doing to address poverty among Latin and indigenous communities of California?

"...we have many different solutions and approaches to the work. We just launched a workforce institute for Indigenous and Latina communities. And ... the vision is really to transform the healthcare and public health workforce to be more reflective of what our California population looks like. We make up 40% of the population, but when you go to your clinic, when you go to the emergency room, when you access any kind of safety net program, you're not necessarily being seen by someone that comes from your community that has that cultural perspective."

"... our goal in this very specific program is to bring those community solutions that can then be implemented into policy and hopefully all these students that were training and the promotoras, community leaders that play a very strong advocacy role, whatever field they go into, supposedly

become an architect or you know, a businessman, whatever field they decide to go into, they will be carrying that social determinants of health perspective.” – *Seciah Aquino, DrPH, MS*

Helpful Links

[Latino Coalition for a Healthy California](#)

[CIELO](#), *Comunidades Indígenas en liderazgo*

[SB 1016](#), *Latino and Indigenous Disparities Reduction Act, CalMatters*

[Native Americans: A Crisis in Health Equity](#), *American Bar Association*

[Hispanic/Latino Health](#), *Office of Minority Health, U.S. Office of Health and Human Services*

[Research & Data Justice](#), *Coalition of Communities of Color*

[Misracialization of Indigenous people in population health and mortality studies: a scoping review to establish promising practices](#), *Oxford Journals*

Episode Transcript

Read the full [episode transcript](#).

Biography: Seciah Aquino, DrPH,MS

Dr. Seciah Aquino serves as Executive Director for the **Latino Coalition for a Healthy California (LCHC)** — the State's leading policy organization advocating for health equity in the Latine community. In her role, she is passionate to advance health justice for CA Latines through unity. Latines working hand in hand with fellow siblings from other systemically disenfranchised communities to advance a unified Health Equity Agenda. One that seeks sustainable systemic changes through policy solutions that will address the acute and long-term repercussions of health inequities. She strongly believes we must, as a collective -- own our power and harness our resiliency to achieve true justice.

Dr. Aquino is a proud immigrant from Guatemala. Through life experience, she has been blessed to learn first-hand how to stand up for the oppressed, how to provide for the needy, and how to speak up for the rights of the destitute. Dr. Aquino began her journey in public health as a promotora and, throughout her career, after that, has remained committed to creating a culture of health across the nation. For over 10 years, she has worked to advance health equity and social justice issues across non-profit, government, and academic sectors at multiple levels, including local, state, and national. Before her role as Executive Director, she served as Deputy Director at the Latino Coalition for a Healthy California.

Dr. Aquino holds a Doctorate in Public Health (DrPH) from Harvard University and a Master of Science (MS) in Global Medicine from the University of Southern California.

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