

idea newsletter

From the **Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility** committee at Pueblo Community College

Healthcare justice defined

Healthcare justice, a multifaceted movement to ensure access to quality healthcare, calls attention to the ways in which racism, sexism, and poverty create barriers to medical treatment. With a focus on healthcare as a fundamental right, the movement considers factors such as lack of transportation

to clinics, inability to pay for treatment, housing instability, poor health literacy, and cultural biases that result in inequitable treatment among patients. The goal of the healthcare justice movement is to measure the impact of these barriers and create policies and laws that remove them.

Self-Reflection Activity: Subjective Social Status

Written by **Adam Zaleski**

Social Sciences, Education and Criminal Justice instructor

Not surprisingly, objective measures of socio-economic position (income and education) have consistently been found to be positively correlated with self-reported physical health outcomes and psychological well-being (Cundiff & Matthews, 2017; Navarro-Carrillo, G. et al., 2020). Higher SES equates to more positive health outcomes. However, what is surprising is that subjective social status has an even stronger relationship with these health outcomes and psychological well-being (Präg, Mills, & Wittek, 2016). The most frequently used measure of subjective social status is the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status that depicts social status as a ten-rung ladder. Researchers ask participants to rank themselves on this ladder relative to other people, either in their local neighborhood or wider society.

Objective reality matters but perceived relative rank among peers matters more to health. Additionally, the relationship between subjective social status and health outcomes is stronger for Blacks than Whites (Cundiff & Matthews, 2017). This is good news for minority groups that might find themselves on the objective bottom. While it is possible to change your objective reality of education and income, it is much easier to change your subjective perception.

Perceived social status can be increased by simply comparing oneself to those who are lower on the social ladder (downward comparison), which promotes gratitude and lowers stress. Conversely, consuming social media

(upward comparison), typically results in feeling deprived relative to others, fear of negative social judgement, and higher levels of cortisol which causes negative health outcomes (Dickerson & Kemeny, 2004). To combat this, complete the [MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status](#) and imagine yourself above the middle. Success with this activity can be increased by practicing daily gratitude and limiting exposure to social media. Your physical health and psychological well-being depend on it.

References

- Cundiff, J. M., Matthews, K. A. (2017). *Is subjective social status a unique correlate of physical health? A meta-analysis.* *Health Psychology, 36*(12), 1109-1125. doi:10.1037/hea0000534.
- Dickerson, S. S., & Kemeny, M. E. (2004). *Acute stressors and cortisol responses: A theoretical integration and synthesis of laboratory research.* *Psychology Bulletin, 130*(3), 355-91. 10.1037/0033-2909.130.3.355
- Navarro-Carrillo, G., Alonso-Ferres, M., Moya, M., & Valor-Segura, I. (2020). *Socioeconomic status and psychological well-being: Revisiting the role of subjective socioeconomic status.* *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*(1303), 1-15. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01303.
- Präg, P., Mills, M. C., & Wittek, R. (2016). *Subjective socioeconomic status and health in cross-national comparison.* *Social Science & Medicine, 149*, 84-92. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.11.044.

Spring 2026 edition highlights

This edition of the newsletter focuses on the topic of healthcare justice and celebrates our Black History Month events

Fighting for Health: The State of Healthcare Justice in Pueblo

Written by **Alysia Bellamy** | Social Sciences, Education and Criminal Justice instructor

Healthcare is a right, yet for many in Pueblo, it is becoming a luxury. As Medicaid “unwinding” continues and insurance costs skyrocket, the gap between the healthy and the marginalized is widening into a chasm.

The unwinding, the return to pre-pandemic eligibility checks, has hit Colorado harder --than most.

- **Statewide impact:** Colorado’s disenrollment rate reached 48%, significantly higher than the national average of 31%. Between 2023 and 2025, over 575,000 Coloradans lost coverage.
- **Pueblo’s vulnerability:** Pueblo County remains a high-needs area. As of fiscal year 2025, approximately 36.5% of Pueblo’s population (62,215 residents) is enrolled in Health First Colorado (Medicaid).
- **Systemic barriers:** The poverty rate in Pueblo stands at 14.6%, nearly double the state average. For Black and Latinx families, who make up nearly 47% of the region’s Medicaid pool, a single procedural error on a form can mean the difference between managing a chronic illness and an emergency room crisis.

For those not on Medicaid, the cliff is getting steeper.

- **The 101% increase:** Due to the expiration of federal enhanced tax credits (ePTCs), the Colorado Division of Insurance projects that average net premiums will double (a 101% increase) in 2026.
- **Impossible choices:** A family of four in Pueblo earning \$128,000 may see their annual costs jump by \$16,000 to \$21,000. When a deductible equals three months of rent, healthcare justice is sacrificed for survival.
- **The uninsured surge:** Experts estimate that 75,000 Coloradans will drop coverage entirely in 2026 due to these costs, further straining local providers like St. Mary-Corwin.

We cannot wait for policy to trickle down. Healthcare justice requires community power:

1. **Mutual aid:** We must move beyond charity to solidarity—organizing prescription deliveries, rideshares, and co-pay funds.
2. **Grassroots mandates:** Local groups like the Center for Health Progress (CHP) are essential. They provide culturally responsive guidance that state systems lack, ensuring our Black, Latino, and Indigenous neighbors aren’t left behind by complex bureaucracy.
3. **Policy advocacy:** We must demand state-level caps on premiums and a permanent extension of subsidies to prevent the “2026 cliff” from becoming a permanent reality.

Pueblo’s health is a collective responsibility. When the system fails the most marginalized, it fails us all.

References

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). *Social determinants of health: Know what affects health*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.cdc.gov/about/sdoh/index.html>
- Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing. (2025). *Health First Colorado and Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+) enrollment statistics: Fiscal year 2024-2025 report*. <https://hcpf.colorado.gov/department-reports>
- Colorado Division of Insurance. (2025, October 27). *Congressional inaction leads to an average doubling of health insurance costs for 225,000 hardworking Coloradans* [Press release]. Department of Regulatory Agencies. <https://doi.colorado.gov/press-releases>
- Colorado Health Institute. (2020, June 16). *An uneven burden: Food insecurity in Colorado*. <https://www.coloradohealthinstitute.org/research/uneven-burden-food-insecurity-colorado>
- Connect for Health Colorado. (2025). *2026 market impact analysis: Projected premium increases and the expiration of enhanced federal tax credits*. <https://connectforhealthco.com/about-us/reports-and-data/>
- Families USA. (2025, March). *Medicaid matters to Colorado’s 3rd Congressional District (CO-03)* [Fact sheet]. <https://familiesusa.org/resources/medicaid-matters-colorado/>
- KFF Health News. (2025, May 15). *Colorado dropped Medicaid enrollees, as red states have, alarming advocates for the poor*. <https://kffhealthnews.org/news/article/colorado-medicaid-unwinding-disenrollment-procedural-reasons/>

Resources

Books, Movies, Podcasts, Websites

**Click to check out our
recommended list**

Videos related to healthcare justice:

- [A Journey to Justice in Healthcare](#)
- [Intro to 5-Minute Moment for Racial Justice in Healthcare](#)
- [Working for Ethics and Justice in Healthcare](#)
- [Racial Disparities in Maternal Health](#)
- [Racism & Bias in Medication Prescriptions and Scientific Studies](#)
- [Structural Racism and Disparities in Child Maltreatment Reporting](#)

Panther Spotlight

Resha Pinto

Written by **Lisa Molina**
Vice President of PCC Southwest

For one Practical Nursing student, healthcare is more than a profession; it is a responsibility rooted in lived experience and a desire to serve.

After years working as a Certified Nurse Aide (CNA), Resha Pinto, a current Practical Nursing student at the Southwest campus, felt it was time to move forward in her career. She wanted to do more than provide basic care. She wanted to make a deeper impact.

“I realized I was needed in a bigger way,” she said. “Not just passing medications but helping patients have a better quality of life.”

Her motivation comes from witnessing healthcare inequities firsthand, particularly in rural and tribal communities. She has seen how often patients feel judged or unheard, especially in behavioral health settings where medication can become a quick solution that leaves deeper needs unaddressed.

“When people feel like no one is listening, they give up on their health,” she said.

Her commitment is also deeply personal. She recalls when her sister was diagnosed with chronic asthma and access to care became a struggle. With limited roads, unreliable phone service, and long distances to medical suppliers, her family often waited hours for oxygen deliveries. These barriers are common on tribal nations, where resources like water, transportation, and fresh food are limited.

“People know what’s affecting their health,” Pinto explained. “They just don’t always have the means to fix it.”



Beyond healthcare access, she points to everyday realities that impact wellness: limited water, transportation, food access, and refrigeration. Processed foods are often the only option, contributing to long-term health issues even when people understand the risks.

Despite these challenges, Pinto remains focused on solutions. In the nursing program, she values learning practical skills that can be applied immediately in emergency situations, such as administering IV fluids to hydrate unresponsive patients when medics cannot arrive quickly enough.

To her, making a difference begins with listening.

“It’s about bringing life back to people, when possible,” she shared. “Sometimes it’s as simple as offering stew or fry bread or helping reconnect them with family. You humble yourself. You give. You show how much you care.”

She believes advocacy starts with compassion and a conscious choice to serve.

“As healthcare providers, we have to train ourselves to listen and lead with empathy,” she said.

For students from rural or tribal communities considering healthcare careers, her message is one of hope.

“Healthcare gives you so many ways to help people,” she said. “As you continue your education, your impact grows. You’re empowering your patients to stay alive. You’re making a positive difference.”

Pinto’s journey reflects the heart of healthcare justice: meeting people where they are, honoring their experiences, and serving with purpose. Through her education and dedication, she hopes to be part of a future where every patient feels seen, heard, and cared for.

This semester, we celebrated...

Women’s History Month

To amplify women’s voices, connect across generations, and celebrate the power of writing to inspire change, the Southwest campus celebrated Women’s History Month with an evening of community storytelling and creativity. On March 20, in collaboration with ZU Gallery in Cortez, an open mic night featured four local women authors. The event spotlighted women’s contributions to the literary arts.

The Pueblo campus honored Women’s History Month by hosting a trivia event with prizes on March 10. The PCC Library hosted a monthlong in-person and virtual read-in highlighting works by female authors.

This semester, we celebrated...

Black History Month

The IDEA Committee sponsored Black History Month celebrations in February at the Pueblo, Southwest, and Fremont campuses. Thank you to everyone who planned and attended events throughout the month to help us amplify and honor the many accomplishments and contributions of Black Americans.

Fremont campus

Gretchen Loader, a Fremont campus Associated Student Government student, created “Who Am I?” posters that depicted influential Black figures from American history. These were placed in a high traffic area on campus. Behind the depictions were brief descriptions of each figure.

On Feb. 19, the Black History Trivia Contest took place. Students competed for awesome prizes while staff and faculty competed for fun. Drinks and Cajun food from Homer’s Gumbo Pot were served. Student Faith Bilbey was the winner, winning an overnight trip to the hot springs of her choice.

A series of books were purchased and made available for students to peruse during the event. To encourage students to engage, several of these also held clues for the trivia contest. Titles included *African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle & Song* edited by Kevin Young, *Kindred* by Octavia Butler, and *A Child’s Introduction to African American History: The Experiences, People, and Events That Shaped Our Country* by Jabari Asim.

**BLACK
HISTORY
MONTH**

PCC Southwest

PCC Southwest honored Black History Month with a vibrant, monthlong celebration showcasing music, culture, and learning. On Feb. 6, the campus featured music from the African diaspora spanning the 1930s-1950s, followed by a Feb. 13 set highlighting the 1960s-1980s. The celebration continued Feb. 20 with hits from the 1980s-2000s, creating a musical journey that connected generations and underscored the lasting influence of Black artists.

On Feb. 16, Islandflavas catered a Jamaican lunch complemented by a cultural presentation from three Caribbean women representing Trinidad and Tobago, St. Lucia, and Jamaica — bringing stories, traditions, and lived experience to the forefront.

The celebrations concluded Feb. 27 with Black history trivia and a book drawing featuring *Kindred* by Octavia Butler; *The Farming of Bones and Brother, I’m Dying* by Edwidge Danticat; *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* by Beverly Daniel Tatum; and *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi. Together, these events fostered dialogue, community connection, and a deeper appreciation for Black history and culture.

Pueblo campus

In celebration of Black History Month, the Pueblo campus held a Black Educator’s Panel on Feb. 4, a movie night sponsored by the Associated Student Government on Feb. 18, and a luncheon with live music from Shades of the Blues band, delicious Cajun food and prize drawings on Feb. 26.



(Left) Leonard from the Shades of the Blues band performs during their performance on the Pueblo Campus Feb. 26.
(Right) Alysia Bellamy also addressed the gathering.

PCC Welcomes Nicole Simmons

PCC is pleased to welcome Nicole M. Simmons, the new Special Assistant to the President for Access Strategies and Initiatives. Nicole brings with her a deep commitment to access, equity, and belonging — values shaped by her experiences as a first-generation college graduate, an HBCU alumna of Xavier University of Louisiana, and a proud member of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.

Originally from Louisiana, Nicole's journey has always been centered on service, community, and creating pathways for others. Her professional foundation includes more than a decade of work in student affairs, inclusive leadership, and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion strategy, where she has developed and led initiatives that strengthen institutional culture, expand opportunity, and uplift underrepresented voices. Her background includes directing training and educational development, building campuswide equity programs, providing coaching, and guiding strategic decision making around inclusive practices.

When asked what brought her to PCC, Nicole shared that she felt drawn to an institution so deeply connected to the Pueblo community — one where access to education can truly change the trajectory of students and families. She believes PCC stands at an exciting moment of opportunity, and she is honored to help shape the next chapter of its work around belonging, accessibility, and equitable student success.

In her position at PCC, Nicole will support the development and implementation of college wide strategies that ensure students, employees, and community partners

experience PCC as a place where they are seen, valued, and supported. She will collaborate with leadership, faculty, and staff to strengthen programs that promote equitable access, build a culture of belonging, and advance meaningful community engagement.

In the short term, Nicole hopes to deepen connections across campus, listen to the lived experiences of students and employees, and identify opportunities to enhance accessibility and inclusion. Long term, she aims to help

PCC become a model institution — one known for inclusive excellence, strong community partnerships, and sustainable access strategies that support students from the moment they consider college through graduation and beyond.

Beyond her professional work, Nicole is an entrepreneur and baker who brings creativity, joy, and a little Louisiana flavor into everything she does. She is passionate about community engagement, mentorship, and celebrating the traditions that shaped her — especially the pride of being an HBCU graduate and a member of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.

Most importantly, Nicole wants the PCC community to know that her door is always open. She believes transformational work happens through relationships, shared vision, and collective commitment. She looks forward to learning from the Pueblo community, building alongside campus partners, and supporting PCC in expanding access and belonging for all.



Did you know?

The most famous health justice quotation, though often misstated, comes from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who said at a press conference in 1966, ***“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and the most inhuman because it often results in physical death.”***

His words were a call to action, and the healthcare justice movement today relies on a community-oriented framework involving policymakers, social justice advocates, and healthcare professionals.



Upcoming Events

- **Save the date for the Panther Block Party**, which will take place on Saturday, Sept. 12 on the Pueblo campus.



- The IDEA Committee is pleased to share that **renowned medical author and ethicist Harriet Washington** will present her talk, “*How Shrouded History Sabotages*



Our Healthcare Today: Lessons from the Past for a Brighter Medical Future,” on Nov. 4. The event will be free and open to the public and will take place in the Fortino Ballroom on PCC’s Pueblo campus.

Washington had been scheduled to appear Feb. 25 as part of PCC’s Black History Month events but severe weather prevented her from flying in.

Washington is widely recognized for her groundbreaking work examining the intersection of race, ethics, and medical history. Her 2007 book, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*, is a landmark study that earned the National Book Critics Circle Award for nonfiction

Her scholarship has influenced national conversations on medical ethics, including co-authoring the Journal of the American Medical Association article that led to the AMA’s 2008 formal apology to Black physicians. Washington teaches bioethics at Columbia University and has held prestigious fellowships at Harvard Medical School, Stanford, the University of Nevada, and more.

Copies of Washington’s book are available at the PCC libraries on the Pueblo, Fremont, and Southwest campuses, as well as at the Teaching and Learning Center site.

Our Mission

To foster and promote a sense of belonging among intersectional identities that values and respects the talents, beliefs, backgrounds, and ways of living in our world.

Our Members

Co-Chairs:

Lorna Jackson
Administrative Assistant,
Dental Hygiene

Aaron Lucero
Academic Excellence Administrator,
Medical/Behavioral Health Division

Advisory Role:

Nicole Simmons
Special Assistant to the President for
Accessibility Strategies

Committee Members:

Alysia Bellamy
Social Sciences, Education and
Criminal Justice instructor

Justin Brown
Instructional Designer,
Office of Academic Support

Miranda Caro
Academic Career Expert,
Arts and Sciences Division

Phillip Clark
CTE Outreach Coordinator,
Recruitment Office

Lori Cortese
Student Success Technology Director,
Student Support and Outreach

Jenny Dunnington
Academic Excellence Administrator,
Health and Public Safety

Cheryl Gomez
Dean of Medical/Behavioral Health

Ryan Gonzales
TRIO Upward Bound Career and
Academic Coach

George Hristovitch
Social Sciences, Education and
Criminal Justice instructor

Vernon James
Dean of Students

Julie Jimenez
Executive Assistant to the President

Ryan Johnson
Year to Career Program Coordinator,
Business and Advanced Technology

Rich Keilholtz
Social Sciences, Education and
Criminal Justice faculty

Kendall Kin
STEM Academic Career Expert

Alex Linden
Regional Director of Academic Services, PCC
Southwest

Kyle McAlister
Academic Excellence Administrator,
Business and Advanced Technology

Kim McCullah
Dental Hygiene clinical coordinator

Samantha Miller
STEM Career and Technical
Education Director

Sabina Modeste
Executive Assistant, PCCSW

Lisa Molina
Vice President, PCC Southwest

Ann Oreskovich
Fine Arts, Humanities and
Media Communications
Assistant Department Chair

Michelle Perez
Social Work student, Pueblo Campus

Brionna Rodas
First-Year Coordinator

Jimmie Romero
Career Services Director

Jeffrey Smith
Coordinator of Student Services,
Fremont Campus

Stephanie Testa
Administrative Assistant,
Pueblo Corporate College

Kari Yalotz
Business and Accounting
program coordinator

Adam Zaleski
Social Sciences, Education, and
Criminal Justice faculty



Questions or comments about the newsletter? Contact us at idea@pueblocc.edu