



ON CÉSAR CHÁVEZ DAY, DOLORES HUERTA JOINS #CANCELTHECONTRACTAV CAMPAIGN TO END SHERIFF CONTRACTS IN ANTELOPE VALLEY

Historic civil rights leader draws a direct line from her historic work to the campaign in Antelope Valley to stop police violence & transform local systems of public safety.

Los Angeles, CA - March 31st, 2021 - Dolores Huerta, the historic civil rights activist and labor leader has joined community members in the Antelope Valley in calling on the region's cities and schools to cancel the contracts with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

"The safety and care of Black and Brown communities in the Antelope Valley should be our priority" said **Dolores Huerta, Founder and President of Dolores Huerta Foundation**. "This isn't the first time we've had to fight for our right to safety. In the 70's, we fought back against abusive corporations, growers and abusive cops. Today, we stand together again to fight against racist sheriff deputies who terrorize our communities. During this time of national criminal justice reform, Antelope Valley leaders have the responsibility to respond to the needs of the community. We've organized and won before, we can do it again. Our unity is our strength. Sí se puede."

The Cancel the Contract campaign calls on both the City of Palmdale and Lancaster, as well as its local schools, to cancel their contracts with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and reinvest those dollars into a new vision of community safety and meaningful services for students and the community.

The Antelope Valley has a long history of racism and law enforcement violence as early as 1890, which has only exacerbated into the present day. From 1990 to 2010, population changes developed, and these historically white towns turned into large majority-minority cities. In Palmdale, over 60 percent of the community is Latinx, while in Lancaster over 40 percent of the community is Latinx.

In the most recent (11th biannual) Settlement Agreement (SA) progress report, community surveys demonstrated that the majority of residents do not trust the Sheriff's Department. Down 25 percentage points from Year 1, only 52% of participants said that if they "witnessed a crime in their neighborhood, they would notify the Sheriff's Department." Broken down by race, only 39% of participants who identify as Hispanic/Latino or Black said they would notify LASD, and only 29% of Asian/Pacific Islanders. In [Palmdale](#), half of those killed by police since January 1, 2000 were Latinx. In [Lancaster](#), one fourth of those killed by police since January 1, 2000 were Latinx.

The Sheriff's Department is also out of compliance on 19 of the 23 SA requirements related to complaints. With in person complaints suspended due to COVID, it is unacceptable that the Department is providing the email complaint form only in English, and it is a violation of SA Paragraph 125. The recent Complaints Audit also tested how Spanish-speaking complaints would be treated, and found that not all calls received help, either at that time or via call back.

“Despite years of anti-bias training, the Antelope Valley Sheriff deputies continue to discriminate against Black and Brown residents, and my work has shown me the particular disparities in the Latino community” said **Ruth Sanchez, spokesperson for the AV chapter of the ACLU & Dolores Huerta Foundation and member of the coalition’s steering committee.** “Dolores’ involvement highlights the urgency of our cause. It highlights that this is a problem that has gone on far too long, and it is time to reimagine community safety.”

“We’re proud to be a multi-racial, multilingual, and multi-generational coalition. We’re not only coming together to point out the problems; we’re coming together to create new solutions for all who call this community their home” said **Waunette Cullors, of the WOW Flower Project, and co-chair of the coalition’s steering committee.**

“There has been a collective awakening of people across this valley and across this country who recognize that the current model of “juvenile justice” pushes more students into cells rather than classrooms and college campuses, without acknowledging the underlying factors enabling these issues” said **Giovanni Pope, youth activist, Lancaster Commissioner of Social Equity, and member of the coalition.** “It is now time for a new era of empowering students to envision a future for themselves, rather than an unjust system determining what a young person’s future will be. We are part of a legacy of people-powered movements, like Ms. Huerta’s, to create conditions for thriving in our communities. Let’s do this!”

Specific list of campaign demands:

1. Cancel the Antelope Valley Union High School District contract with the LA County Sheriff’s Department.
2. Call for the California DOJ to open a civil rights investigation in to the historical and ongoing state violence and white supremacist activities in the Antelope Valley.
3. Arrest the Sheriff deputies that murdered Michael Thomas in Lancaster in June 2020.
4. Demand the LA County Board of Supervisors comply with the [Settlement Agreement](#) and stop using County Counsel to thwart compliance.
5. Cancel the Palmdale and Lancaster contracts with the LA County Sheriff’s Department.

Visit cancelthecontract.com to learn more about the campaign and join the coalition.

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About Reform LA Jails:

Reform L.A. Jails represents a coalition of citizens, community leaders, businesses, and organizations fighting to permanently reduce the population of people cycling in and out of jail. That starts with recognizing how mental health, drug dependency, or chronic homelessness issues are exacerbated by incarceration. As COVID-19 bears down on our County Jails, endangering the lives of thousands of Angelenos, it’s more important than ever that we demand care, not cages.

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