

Introduction

The 1917-1918 Influenza Epidemic was one of most deadly infections, killing approximately 50 million people. The Recovering the US Hispanic Literary Heritage program has collected, preserved, and digitized Hispanic newspapers from that era, which allows us to gain a better understanding of life during the 1917-1918 epidemic. During the 1917-1918 influenza epidemic, many media outlets and documents were heavily censored because countries involved in World War I, including the United States, did not want to decrease public morale toward the war effort. The only country that allowed for mass publication and reporting on the subject was Spain, one of the few countries that remained neutral during the war. Since it was the only country reporting on the illness, media across the world coined the derogatory term, “Spanish Flu.” This heavy censorship resulted in little documentation of the illness, the spread, or precautions taken, severely limiting public knowledge of the influenza. Furthermore, the information published was broad, scarce, and undermined the severity of the epidemic. Most of these publications did not take into consideration how flu affected different communities, especially People of Color. Because US Hispanic publications were written in Spanish, they did not experience the same level of censorship.



100 soldiers become ill at Camp Funston in Fort Riley, Kansas. Flu activity spreads through US, Europe and possibly Asia over 6 months .

March 1918

Second wave hits and begins at Camp Devens, outside of Boston. NYC Board of Health adds flu to reportable diseases. Requires all flu cases to be isolated at home or hospital. By end of September, 14,000 flu cases reported at Camp Devens and there was 757 deaths,

September 1918

Flu resurgence as soldiers return from the war and during the war the U.S. military went from 378,000 soldiers to 4.7 M. Committee of the American Public Health Association encourages stores and factories to stagger opening and closing hours to avoid overcrowding.

November-December 1918

Influenza nearly eradicated as reported cases drop in the United States. There is still a high number of cases in Europe.

February 1919

May 1918

Hundreds of thousands of soldiers are deployed for WWI

October 1918

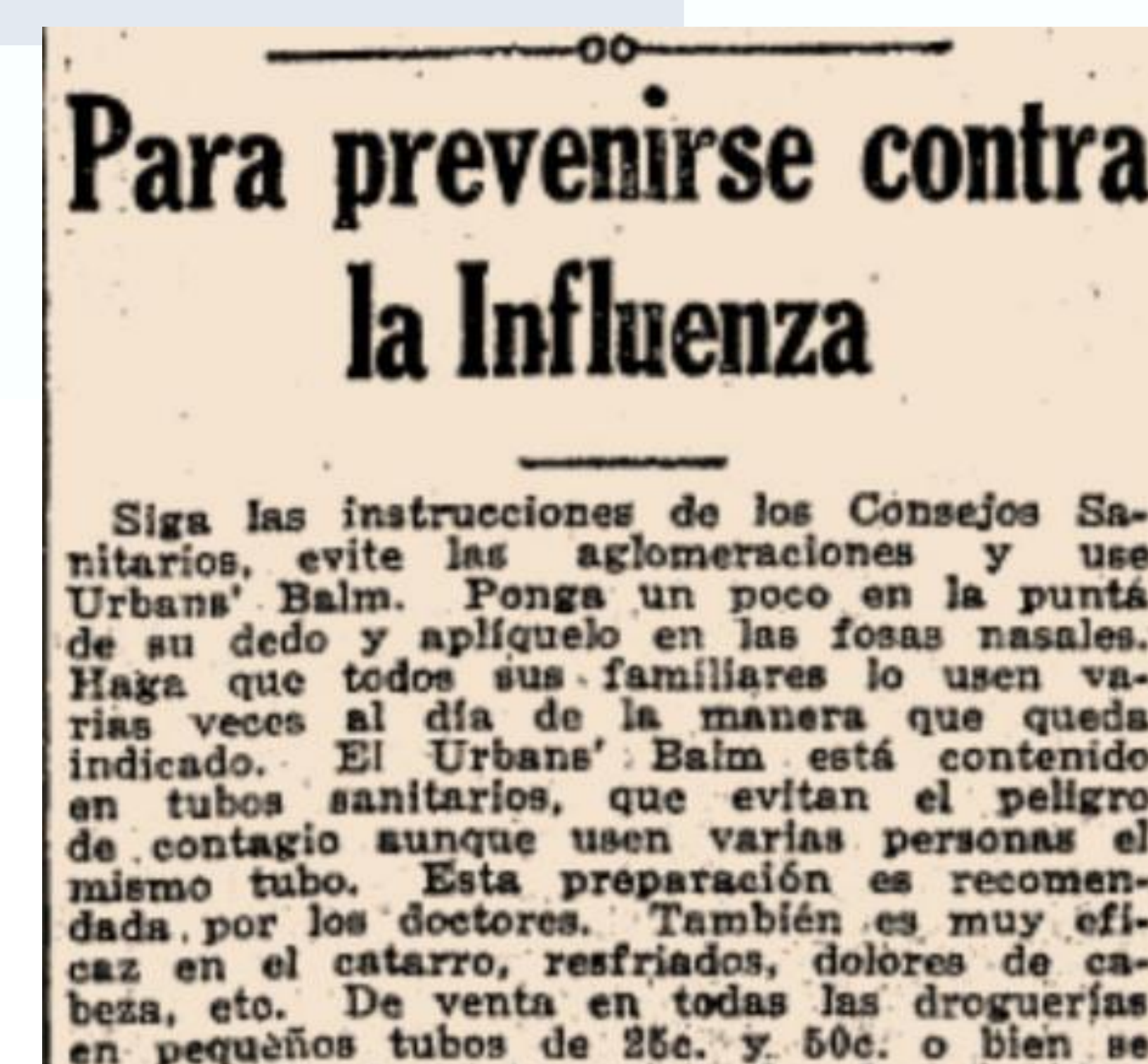
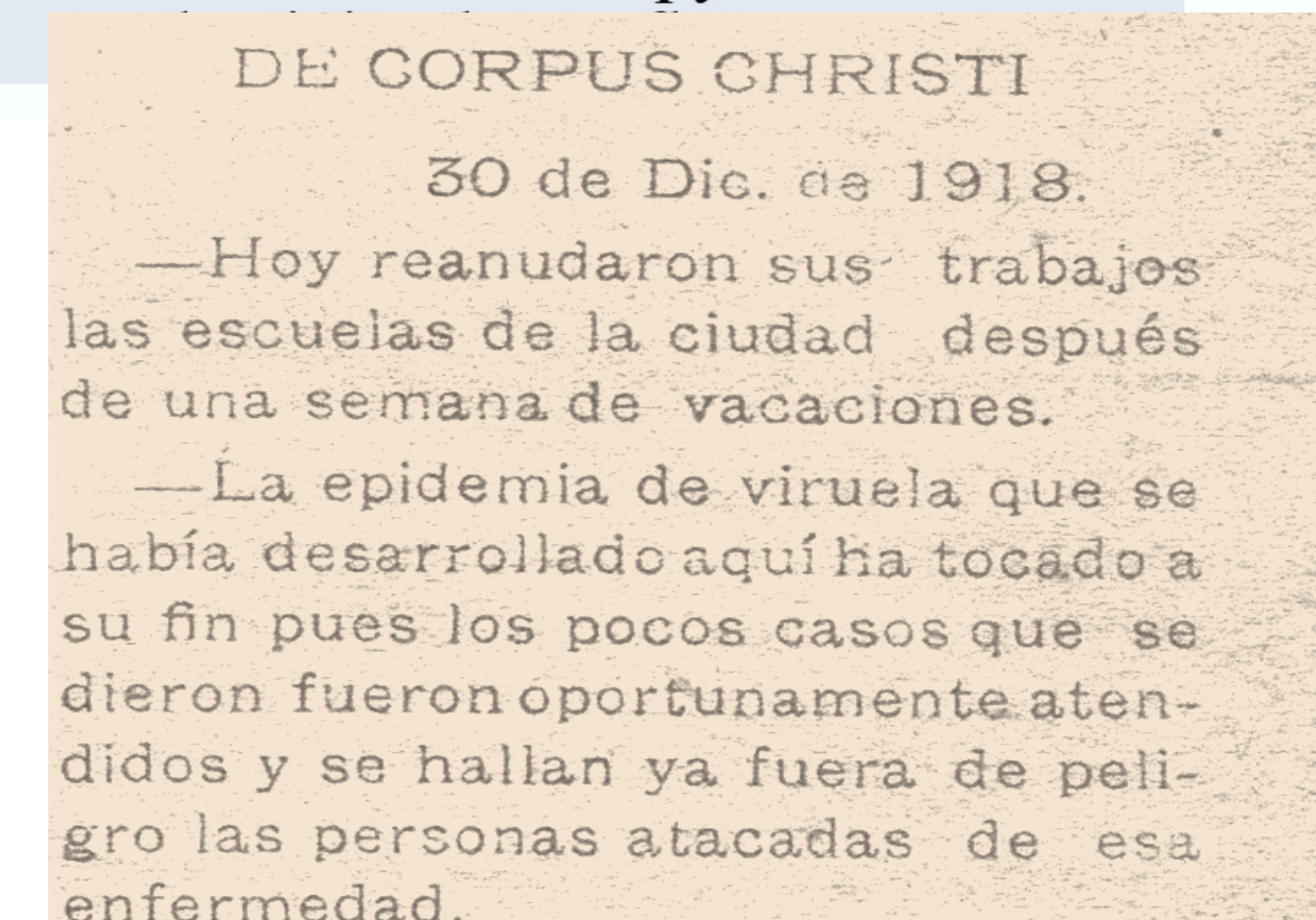
195,000 Americans were killed by the flu pandemic. Philadelphia was hit the hardest. Chicago closed public centers and prohibited gathering and San Francisco required masks for people serving the public. New York City reported a 40% decline in shipyard

January 1919

3rd wave hits. Cities once again shut down.

Objectives

- Create a collection of articles from the Spanish-language press related to the Influenza epidemic
- Digitize articles that highlight the Hispanic community's response to the epidemic
- Make these archival sources available to a broader public
- Create bilingual metadata to make the information discoverable and accessible
- Highlight parallels between the Influenza epidemic and the current COVID-19 pandemic (mandatory quarantines, face coverings, public unrest, increase in prejudice to a certain ethnic group, and lower income communities being the most affected)



Bibliography

"1918 Pandemic (H1N1 virus) Pandemic Influenza (Flu)". CDC. (2019, March 9). CDC.Gov. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/1918-pandemic-h1n1.html>. Accessed 25 Feb. 2022

"Hispanic American Newspapers (1808-1980)". Recovering the US Hispanic Literary Heritage. Readex, infoweb.newsbank.com. Accessed 28 Feb. 2022.