



Journalist Maria Hinojosa, Charles Venator-Santiago, an associate political science professor at the University of Connecticut, attorney Kica Matos and journalist Julio Ricardo Varela talk about immigration during a live podcast taping of 'In the Thick' on Tuesday at Eastern Connecticut State University in Willimantic. Lisa Massicotte | Staff

Podcast focuses on immigration

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WILLIMANTIC — At least a dozen, if not more, people raised their hands in response to the question, “How many of you have lived in communities where ICE has picked up one of your neighbors or friends?”

The question was asked to high-energy students, faculty and locals by activist Kica Matos during the live podcast taping for the latest episode of “In the Thick” Tuesday evening at Eastern Connecticut

State University’s Fine Arts Instructional Center Concert Hall.

“This event was very successful,” Eastern President Elsa Núñez said following the event. “We had about 300 people here tonight talking about immigration and we had a lot of community members here join us, so that is very, very important.”

Matos is the attorney and director of the Center on Immigration and Justice at the Vera Institute of Justice.

She was joined on stage by Charles Venator-Santiago, who is an associate pro-

fessor of political science and El Instituto at the University of Connecticut, along with Lucas Codognolla, the executive director of action network “Connecticut Students for a Dream.”

They were all being interviewed by podcast co-hosts and award-winning journalists Maria Hinojosa and Julio Ricardo Varela.

The two are known best for their National Public Radio show “Latino USA.”

“In The Thick” from Futuro Media was

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launched in 2016 as a platform for discussions about issues with mainstream media coverage of people of color and minority populations.

The duo regularly interviews activists, politicians, advisers, influencers and journalists of color.

This latest episode taped at the university focused on Latino communities and undocumented immigrant populations in Connecticut as well as the power of youth movements.

Stories were shared of

how young immigrants were unexpectedly tracked down and detained by ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement).

“We’re living in this strange place, which is that Connecticut feels very free. You know there’s so much nature here, it’s so welcoming,” Hinojosa said to the audience.

“But at the same time, if I’m seeing all of these hands raised because you know people in your communities that have been taken (by ICE), I’m going to venture and say it’s to feel some-

thing like a police state. That you’re not really free,” she explained.

Some other discussion topics touched upon were how the state is impacted by stigma/stereotypes of Puerto Ricans and Latinos being perceived as criminals along with their economic contributions.

“There’s sort of this artificial persecution of Latinx who are contributing more to the economy who are living in somewhat segregated spaces,” said Venator-Santiago, who is also director of both the Puerto Rico

Citizenship Archives Project and the Puerto Rico Status Archives Project.

The podcast ended with audience questions along with the co-hosts and interviewees emphasizing the need for people of color, especially youths, to get involved in the local political government and turn out to vote for all local, state and national elections.

This latest episode of “In The Thick” will be available sometime next week online at inthethickshow.org.

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