

Policy 360 – Episode 80 – Transcript – The Forced Return

Gunther Peck: Hello everyone, and welcome to Policy 360. I'm Gunther Peck, and I'll be your host this time. I am a historian who teaches a course at Duke called Immigrant Dreams, American Realities. And I also direct the Hart Leadership Program at the Sanford School of Public Policy. I have two guests today, who's stories illuminate the compelling historical, ethical and political challenges unfolding today on the US-Mexican border, and across our nation.

Gunther Peck: Maggie Loredó was born in San Luis Potosí, Mexico, and she migrated to the United States with her family when she was two years old. Her family was undocumented. After her high school graduation in 2008, Maggie was forced to return to Mexico.

Gunther Peck: Welcome to Policy 360, Maggie.

Maggie Loredó: Thank you.

Gunther Peck: Adriana Figueroa was born in Mexico City and raised in New Jersey. She immigrated to the United States at the age of 5, and also returned to Mexico when she was 18, in order to continue her education. This is only her second time on US soil since she left. In fact, it has taken her 12 years since the time she was deported, to visit her family in the United States.

Gunther Peck: Welcome to Policy 360, Adriana.

Adriana Figueroa: Thank you, glad to be here.

Gunther Peck: Adriana, we'll start with you. Why did your family come here when you were a young girl?

A Figueroa: Wow. My story is like the story of many others. My family came here. My parents were very young when they had me. They were only 19 and 17. So they were practically still teenagers, young adults. And they had me, this baby that they had to protect; they had to take care of. And, unfortunately in Mexico the opportunities are not as available to you as in the United States.

A Figueroa: So my dad was the first one who came to the United States and then, later on after he got a little bit settled and was able to save some money and so forth, he sent for me and my mom to come. So that why when I was 5 years old I came here; just to get a better life, to have an education that he didn't have. My dad only finished high school. My mom didn't finish high school. She finished, I guess middle school would be the equivalent here. That's why for them, education is very important. That was their dream and mission, for me to continue and get a higher education. Which is what I did and that's why I went to Mexico, to continue that. I said, "They sacrificed so much for me to continue that, and I'm gonna be the first one in my family to go to college."

Gunther Peck: That's very powerful. Tell me a little bit about what it was like to be in high school, or elementary school, in the United States when you were invested at that point in an education. Did you feel like this was the best place for your education?

A Figueroa: Yes. Honestly I would have loved to go to college in the United States. I'm here at Duke and I see these beautiful buildings and I see a lot of "dreamers" now that were able to go to college for Doctor, and I'm so happy for them; at the same time, sort of nostalgically thinking I wish I would've had this opportunity as much as a lot of other people who are now in Mexico.

A Figueroa: My parents, what was it like here? In the United States it's very interesting, where you live is where you go to high school. In Mexico it's not that way. You can apply to go to a better high school, even if it's across town.

A Figueroa: We moved to Linwood, New Jersey from Brigantine, just because the high school was better. That's how much my parents wanted a better life and a better education for us. We moved to Linwood, and in Linwood there's not a high Latino population, because to be honest in the United States, in reality where you live and opportunities you have are equivalent. So we had to move to get better opportunities. That's how it is in the United States.

A Figueroa: When I went to Linwood it was interesting because I was the only Mexican in my high school at that time. The immigrants raised there are very different. For example, my sister was first generation born here. She was able to go to Delaware University, on a scholarship for soccer.

A Figueroa: That was another problem in my parent's life because they have this one daughter who couldn't go here but is still continuing her education in Mexico, and their other daughter here. That's just different opportunities for being born in different places.

Gunther Peck: I want to turn to Maggie, but a quick follow-up about what education still means to your parents. Were they part of your decision to leave, obviously they were but what was that like; when you had to leave home?

A Figueroa: To this day I think it's the hardest decision I've ever made so far in my life. To leave, and I imagine it's what they had to do as well when they left Mexico Their families, their lives, their everything.

A Figueroa: When I decided to go back to ... It's funny, because you don't think it gets you, but it does. And you think you've grown up; surpassed it. Yeah, it was a difficult decision, but I made it for them. Just like I think they made it for us. It's their story as well. I know they're very proud, when they have my college diploma in their living room. So I think it was the right decision; it was the only decision I could make at the time. To continue. And now they're asking me, what about

my masters and so forth. And when am I gonna get my PhD. Yeah there's always more.

Gunther Peck: That's a powerful reflection about how you have actually stayed connected to your parents, in different countries. Both of you, in a way exiled from home. And how education is this kind of aspiration. This thing that actually holds people together.

Gunther Peck: Could you reflect as well, what it has meant to achieve your educational aspirations in Mexico? It's also an amazing story; that you have succeeded, exceeded what you might have thought you were gonna do as an elementary school girl in New Jersey. My question is really, how education continues to be a point of connection, for you and not just your parents but other.

A Figueroa: I think that's why it's also important for my parents, because education is power; knowledge is power. The more you're educated in different aspects, is how you can do something about it. And you have no choice because you know better. Once you know. And that's part of what makes us, as activists, act and voice. And say we know better, so we have to do something about it. If nobody else is gonna do something about it, we have to do something about it. So we have to get educated first, and we have to continue that. It's important because it's a way that we can get the power, just because of our circumstances and where we were born, we were denied.

A Figueroa: So that's our way of getting it back. At least for me and our family. And I guess a lot of people as well. A lot of deportees and returnees, that go back to Mexico and go to college, and say this was important for me, and this is the way I might get back to the United States as well. That's another thing; after I finished college, the university undergrad in Mexico, I did try to look at programs for my Masters here to see if I could get a student visa. That's a whole other story because it's so hard and because of all the requisitions that they ask. Basically you have to be very wealthy and be able to say I'm gonna be able to afford an expensive college. Which is another subject, but in the same thing it's a sort of economic oppression as well in that way. But it doesn't mean I'm not gonna continue in the future.

Gunther Peck: What you're also articulating is so, exemplary and useful for other students to hear. Because what you're describing as education is a kind of purpose; a purpose for life. It's something that's connected to engagement, and activism, and it's the antithesis of an entitlement. That is about power, and it's powerful. I imagine your parents are really proud of you.

Gunther Peck: Maggie, let me ask you a similar starting point, and if you could we can go back in time. I do wanna know why your family originally decided to come to the United States.

Maggie Loredó: In a very brief description, I was born in San Luis Potosí as you said, but my parents migrated. It's very similar to Ariana's story and I think many families have a very similar story, of my dad migrating first and then my mom following him with me. And going to get a better life for the family, because in Mexico and other countries we don't have that opportunity. Our parents didn't have that opportunity, and it's very sad that even when we go back, we find the same conditions as when my parents left the country in this case.

Maggie Loredó: I grew up in Texas and Georgia. I lived in Texas my childhood and then moved to Georgia when I was 9, northern Georgia. That's where I finished elementary, middle school, high school. In 2008, because I wanted to continue my education and because I hit the reality of what it meant being undocumented after 18. And especially in a state like Georgia; here in the south, very obviously conservative. And in 2008 the whole economic crisis as well, you were hearing more about raids and interior removals and everything was starting to be on the air. At that point the only option I had was to move to Mexico and hopefully find a way to continue my education, and eventually maybe one day come back home. That was my sort of my logic.

Maggie Loredó: We call it a forced return because at the end of the day it's systemically forced. Many people call it voluntarily. "Oh you were not deported, you voluntarily went." Yes, you didn't go through an administrative process, and obviously it's a different violence being deported. We definitely acknowledge that. But also returning in a forced way by the system is also a different process. Maybe more emotional, and maybe it's a longer process, but at the end it's that. So I went back to San Luis Potosí, to the town where my parents were born, in 2008. I've been in Mexico for a decade now.

Gunther Peck: Tell me more about what the experience was like? About, in a way returning to a country you didn't know. And how you became this activist, this remarkable advocate for yourself and for many people. Maybe start with the experience of return. Or of exile.

Maggie Loredó: It's very interesting because it's very different to nowadays. I look at Adriana, she went back before I did, she went back in 2005 to Mexico. I went back in 2008. I'm talking about a moment where nobody, absolutely nobody was talking about deportation or return, in Mexico but also here in the US.

Maggie Loredó: Arriving to Mexico, yes you know you have the citizenship paper and the citizenship status, and you know that you have rights in that country supposedly. You understand that that's not enough and that's not the only thing that a human needs. To have an ID, a photo that says that you belong to that country, because you figure out that having or owning those documents doesn't necessarily mean you belong there or you're from there. Or that you have rights there.

Maggie Loredó: A lot of the rights get violated, of Mexican citizens in Mexico, and also obviously people that get deported on return it's a different experience because we

haven't been there. We haven't been in the country for, I mean I left when I was two years so I really didn't have, not even the basic documents. Your social security number that you get when you're 18 or your ID that you get when you're 18. I didn't have all that.

Maggie Loredó: So first many of the communities you confront with the reality of being undocumented in Mexico as well. Because it's a whole different bureaucratic process to gain your identity documents. The first shock is, "how do I get my papers now that I'm here?" For example to get your ID you need two witnesses if you don't have another form of ID. You need to take those two witnesses with you, if you don't know anybody how are you going to do that? And during presidential elections, for 6 months nobody gets an ID. So if you get deported during that period ... if you get deported in January, it's presidential elections, nobody gets an ID until July.

Maggie Loredó: So what do you do without an ID? Obviously you can't work, you can't even access a building that requests an ID to go in. That's a big thing that we're advocating; identity documents. That's very important and it should be the most basic thing that a country gives you, but it's been very hard for many people that get deported or return.

Maggie Loredó: Another big thing is the culture shock, the trauma as well, of going back. If you were deported obviously they literally kidnap you and you get dropped off the next day. Without it ever being a plan for you. If you return as well, going back to a country where you just feel out of place, you don't know where to go, many times you don't speak the language the same way that they do. You're being targeted because you have an accent when you speak Spanish or you don't sound like you're from here but you look like you should be from here. Those are some of the main things I think I did the lack of identity documents. The trauma and how you deal emotionally. And then obviously trying to navigate the bureaucratic system in Mexico. A system that we don't know, but that you also need to look for a job, try to continue your education.

Maggie Loredó: In my case it took me 5 years to revalidate my US studies in Mexico, because Mexico didn't know what to do with me. They wanted me to come back to the US to get some documents, and of course I couldn't come back. I asked them for a solution and they didn't give me any so at the end it took me 5 years until I was able to get into college in San Luis Potosí as well.

Gunther Peck: In fact you couldn't get say, your high school diploma back -

Maggie Loredó: I had my high school diploma but it didn't count in Mexico, because I needed to go through a revalidation process. They were asking for official translations, but they were asking for a document, a special seal that I needed to come here, to Georgia to get. And because of the work we were doing with other allies and organizations we were able to make changes to the norms.

- Maggie Loredó: So now nobody needs official translations and nobody needs these seals that in 2008 were an obstacle for me. Now everybody should be able to revalidate by just presenting their diploma and the GED for the first time is recognized in Mexico last year. Before then they didn't recognize the GED. So many people were being deported or were going back with just middle school. Even though they had their GED, until last year because of the changes that we were able to insist and advocate, now anybody can revalidate their GED in 15 days.
- Maggie Loredó: It's still a big challenge to implementation and obviously it needs to be implemented at the state level, and the local level. But we're doing a lot of work, and there's someone specific that is working in access to social right, and she is making sure that she [inaudible 00:18:00] and whenever someone doesn't want to revalidate in one state, she'll then contact them with the law saying now this can be done. That's some of the work, something that we've accomplished.
- Gunther Peck: It's an amazing story. Do you think that your story, it's your story and it's become this ability. You have this ability to create a collective and then make policy changes. That's exemplary as well and also not a given. Is there a moment where you sort of understand this is something you have to do?
- Maggie Loredó: A dear friend of mine, Claudia Amado, she once said community is beyond the law, and it struck me. I was like, "What does she mean community is beyond the law?" And I was thinking about it and it was like you're right, when you're active in a community you can even make changes that maybe in the eyes of an attorney they'd say no there's no way legally, but as a community there are many examples along history that show you that yeah, the power that a community has, it can be beyond the law. And that struck me because 6 years later, after I left to Mexico I was able to ... for the first time on Facebook, I saw cover stories [about] Los Otros Dreamers, and was like what is that? I kind of identify with that title because at that point I did feel like I had been a "dreamer" in the US before leaving.
- Maggie Loredó: A researcher that was doing a cover story, 'Los Otros Dreamers' and that's how I got in touch with Doctor Jill Anderson, currently the co-director and co-founder of [Otros Dreams en Acción] with me, and I got in contact with her and I submitted my story, and that's how I was part of the 26 experiences that are in this book that was published in 2014.
- Maggie Loredó: But that's the first moment where I knew I was part of something bigger. That I wasn't the only one in Mexico with this experience, and that's been a pattern that we hear all the time. Like when you feel that you are not the only one, something clicks in there. So that was the first moment.
- Maggie Loredó: The second moment was when, because of the book I got an invitation from the University of California in Fullerton, to go and present the book along with Jill. I was able to also submit an application to get my V1-V2 tourist visa which is the visa every Mexican needs to get if they want to travel to the United States.

Obviously you have to prove that you are not a liar, in the eyes of the US embassy. But I was pretty privileged and lucky that the agent had a good night's sleep and she was in a good mood, that she gave me a visa for 10 years, in 2015. That's when I first came to the United States after almost 8 years of living in exile in Mexico. I was granted a 10 year mobility, which now I use quite frequently to come back and forth between my home and Mexico.

Maggie Loredó: But that's when it really clicked. In 2015 in California it was, "Okay now I have this visa. Now I have this mobility. Now I'm in a privileged position." Because there's tons of friends of dear loved ones in Mexico that are no different than me, but they can't be with their families and I was able to be at the - when my nephew was born, he was born right like a month after I got my visa, so I was able to be at that moment with my family.

Maggie Loredó: I was like, "What am I gonna do now? Will I just, okay I have a visa now, bye?" Or do I have a bigger responsibility and a bigger commitment to do everything I can. And that's actually where Jill and I decided to found Otros Dreams en Acción and that's what we did. But that's basically when it clicked; when I got my visa, when I gained this mobility and when I realized I was in another and that I needed to do something.

Gunther Peck: Let me follow up on this really powerful idea about still being a "dreamer," or being one of the original "dreamers." I'm wondering, as the other "dreamer," as one of many other "dreamers," are those dreams about nation, or are they about something much bigger? Because I think, this connects to a harder question: where home is. What home is. So my question I guess is really out how your sense of yourself as a "dreamer" threads your way through everything that you're doing.

Maggie Loredó: That's definitely a big topic in a deeper discussion, but we talk a lot about, obviously we know where the "dreamer" term came from. Obviously we know that it was from the dream 2001 and it's amazing and it's very inspirational to have observed and been a part to some extent of that struggle when it started in 2001.

Maggie Loredó: How they became politically active, many students and many young people fighting for the right to be in their home and the right to continue their education and be here. Which is very encouraging, right? But also being in Mexico, it takes a big shift and it's a very different perspective and a different angle. In Otros Dreams en Acción, it's hard to label people and I think many of the times that's what we want to do, especially in the academia. Who are you, this concept, this term.

Maggie Loredó: But we acknowledge that there are returnees, deportees, many identify as "dreamers," many of us don't identify as "dreamers," because of the same political little box that means to be a "dreamer" in the United States and how you're in a privileged position but obviously there are so many requirements to be this extraordinary straight A exceptional person. And then you get into the

conversation of the deserving and the non-deserving or the good versus the bad. But also you criminalize your parents in some way because of the requirements in order to qualify first for the program, I mean the dream act and the DACA (later).

Maggie Loreda: But in Mexico it's being abused. The term "dreamer" is being really abused and neglected by the government and by the new guy would say because it's trying to portray the "dreamer," the Mexican. We need to do something. We the government in Mexico need to do something for the "dreamers" because they're these straight A students that are gonna come save the economy of Mexico. But then that invisible-izes the other realities like all the other people that could not go to college because they had to have two jobs or because their parents were also working day and night, and they didn't have that access to gain that education. Many people that were in maybe gangs or have addictions, many people who are not as young as 20 or 30 but now they're in their fifties. But they also grew up in the US and they also lived here. But when they go back to Mexico they don't have the same, they're not looked at the same way a 20 or 30 year old who went to college.

Maggie Loreda: So for us I think we definitely ... anybody can call themselves what they want and we respect that, but we also know that everybody should know what it means to carry the label of being a "dreamer," so that you can say, "Well yeah maybe I identify as a "dreamer" but I know the context behind it." I think that's very important and we want to continue to advocate in Mexico for them to think about it. About the term.

Gunther Peck: I love the way you are also capturing the complexity of not only the term "dreamer," but the way it has been used, somewhat cynically. To, in a way separate out, and as you said it beautifully in effect, to find the undeserving. But in the hands of "dreamers," so called, or others who don't consider themselves "dreamers," it's both a kind of strategy and an idealistic assertion of something at the same time. I think is really, really powerful and to separate out the dream act as a sort of unfulfilled promise. To the good men and women on this continent, and what people are doing with the term I think is really important. And it is about context as you say. Do you think in Mexico, do Mexican youth and young men and women view dreamers skeptically or scornfully even? Is there hostility because they were not considered Mexican in some way. In other words, is dreamer shorthand for something American?

Maggie Loreda: I think it happens not just with "dreamers" but with anyone in Mexico. I think right now, part of the work that we do is try to be part of the population or the communities in Mexico and acknowledge all of the movements and all of the struggles that the people in Mexico have been fighting for. Because it creates divisions and definitely when Mexicans that lived outside of Mexico go back, they are seem many of the times as sort of the failures. The ones that left the country and didn't stay and fight for the country, and now they're coming back as failures. Now they're coming back to get jobs, but they feel that they are so much because they speak English, they feel superior but they're coming and

they're trying to take off spaces at universities, but it's also because of the same inequality and the bureaucracy and corruption that exists in Mexico that a big percentage of the population is living in poverty.

Maggie Loredó: So when other people come and they're also trying to get a piece of the cake, obviously the ones that are there are like, wait, you haven't been here, So in order to fight that discourse, obviously if you go and you're like, "Oh I speak English, I graduated from this university and I want a better job and the government should give me a better job because I know this." Obviously that's gonna create tension and misunderstanding among the society and the community. So we instead say yes I lived in the US – and it hasn't -- but Mexico should acknowledge my experience because when they create policies or programs they're now considering that we're not the same as someone that grew up in Mexico. They need to acknowledge that experience and they haven't. But not in a bad way; in a way that it's necessary for them to create programs that will actually meet the requirements and the needs of the community that is coming back. But we do have to say to the community and people in Mexico that we're part of it.

Maggie Loredó: And we also need to be part of other topics; I'm not just a returnee, I'm also a woman living in Mexico and I fear of my life every day in Mexico. And I'm also part of it so what other things are happening in Mexico that I need to be part of, and I think that's a way to say you should get to know me, I want to get to know you and I want to be part because we're both living in Mexico now. To contrast that message.

Gunther Peck: There's this morale witness in what you're saying, and the way you act, that seems to be present wherever you are. Key part of what makes change possible. This is a question that I'm uncomfortable asking because I think it is often used by the kind of chauvinistic approaches to the nation. Let me just give a quick aside - I have never felt more American and more out of step when I lived abroad, and for a couple of years in Greece, And then my return to the United States was really wrenching, because I did not feel like I fit. I couldn't understand ... this is not home, the way I understand it. And I'm wondering, what does American-ness mean to you at this point. Do you consider yourselves more American or not?

Maggie Loredó: I don't know, I don't think I consider myself Mexican or American at all, We're like this third hybrid thing that is being made out of combining both. But I do think that just taking part of saying that, of course I'm immersed in this nation, nationalistic vision sort of thing. That's why it's very complicated for me when they ask me where I'm from, because I have to go into the subject of what does it really mean to be American or Mexican? I don't think I want to use that. But I think we are this third hybrid thing that was formed out of parts of being, growing up in this country, the United States, the good and bad things of it. But we're formed that way.

- Maggie Loreda: Claudia also says that we're like little Frankensteins, that we're made out of parts of the US and parts of Mexico and now we're trying to fight after becoming that. I think it's much more complicated, but I think I am this third thing that has parts of the US, parts of Mexico, and definitely after living here, going back to Mexico it was okay. I'm not okay with how things are in Mexico and I don't think I should be okay, but it's very different, the work and how you approach things in the United States than how you do it in Mexico. Of course you can get killed in Mexico. In the US you can also be shot here anywhere. But it's different, right? It's very different.
- A Figueroa: The short answer, I do consider myself an American. The short answer. As much as I would like to deny it, there's a part of me because there is sort of resentment towards this country that didn't want me, in a way. That's how I felt. And I do consider myself a Mexican and you have to be more Americans than the Americans and more Mexican than the Mexicans. Just to continue what Maggie said yeah we are sort of this combination of stories and parallels and I think we're privileged in that way because it makes us stronger. We have different views than what normal Mexican citizen would have or a normal American citizen would have.
- A Figueroa: I think it makes us more aware of what ... what we have as privilege, and for example I was telling you my sister was born here. She said to me, "I don't think I wanna vote." I'm like what! Do you know what I mean? As your big sister from Mexico calling you in 2008, you better vote. It's obvious that it's important for her to be engaged. If she didn't have her story with her sister being in Mexico and her parents being from a different country and being immigrants, maybe she wouldn't be that engaged as many young people unless things happened.
- A Figueroa: Things have to happen for you to move. Things have to happen for you be uncomfortable and that's how you're gonna move and then act and what Maggie said, with Maggie and Jill and without these organizations in Mexico, we wouldn't have a voice. That's why a sense of community is so important. Maggie was saying that when she saw the "dreamers" that's how I felt when I saw the book and I saw Maggie and I was like you know what, let's find our people and let's do something about it. And it is difficult. That's how how (?) made the changes and the policy changes for, for example documents in Mexico. The revalidation of your studies which is important. To cut down on that bureaucracy. But until we were vocal and saying we're here, it's coming back and there are more deportations every single day from the Obama administration on.
- A Figueroa: So that's why I think more people were talking about "dreamers" before. 2001, 2002, 2003, nobody heard of "dreamers" and nobody realized that yeah we existed because we were in the shadows. Because we weren't recognized. Because we didn't want to tell them that we were undocumented. We were afraid. So until we saw that there was other people, and that there was a big community of us and we were real and we were your neighbors, you know we

were your children's friends that were being sent back because we didn't have piece of paper. Which is sort of ironic.

A Figueroa: So yeah, I am American because I am invested in America. It's just that way. In Mexico, constantly checking the news, checking what's going to happen because I have family but not because only that but because it's part of me whether I like it or not. And I am invested in Mexico, and then the policies because I'm living it, and I'm living there and of course I wanna make, not just Mexico but the world work together bilaterally to make the world a better place. America is north, south, central. We're all Americans in a way, and so yeah. Short answer yeah, I am an American.

Gunther Peck: That's a great answer. It reminds me of something that I've thought a lot about but it's hard to grasp, articulate the way you just did. But I think the whole notion of citizenship itself often gets separated out from other categories and I think one of the things that is so powerful about both Mexican and US history is not only the way they've shaped each other, sometimes with conflict but more so on an aspirational level, what citizens understand to be citizenship rights at their core have been fought and protected, in some ways, figured out by non-citizens. There's no separating out the relationship between the two.

Gunther Peck: The way you are framing your American-ness or your Mexican-ness, your community and the rights you're holding up are actually something that's a tremendous benefit to both places.

Gunther Peck: Your stories, from my vantage they also really extend the so-called "dreamer" narrative to think about it I something that the stakes, the "dreamers" are the content of rights of two places at the same time. And it was before, during and after. The dream act was talked about. And that's a much longer and I'm hoping important story that is going on. There's education in what you're saying and also inspiration. Because it is a better way to think about citizenship. Why any citizen should care about what our rights look like, in one place or the other place.

Gunther Peck: So your story Maggie, about changing what "dreamers" and returnees, what documents they need in Mexico is a compelling story of its own. A movement story, where a community came together and has pushed and has made social change possible. If you could be that activist in the United States, if there was one policy change you'd want to start with for undocumented people, what would it be?

Maggie Loreda: That's interesting. There's one that after being in Mexico and understanding how and why we're living this big deportation mission, and I think for the community in Mexico that deported and return community in Mexico and in other countries, we talk a lot about family separation and we talk a lot about these bans or these bars which, bar is a legal term. But the community is being banned from the US, from their communities, from their families. Not only because they get deported, yes if you get deported many times depending on

your case if you have illegal reentry, you obviously have an automatic 10 year ban or 20 year ban or lifetime ban, because they're under the 1996 Ira laws that Bill Clinton signed in when he was president.

Maggie Loreda: But they did set the ground for this deportation machine, and a lot of things are in the changes to these laws which are obviously many misdemeanors became aggravated felonies and many people, it was easier for many people to become more deportable and it was more difficult for people to have a path to be legalized because of these laws.

Maggie Loreda: So the community is failing all these bans, and it would be interesting if we could start talking here in the United States of how would fix 96 look like. What would it be to retro activate these bans and as we were talking there are other specific situations, maybe someone that got charged for having marijuana in California and now that's not even a thing. How would his case, his or her case, be able to be retroactive. And for them to have an opportunity to gain this mobility between home and Mexico, the two countries. So I think I would like to hear more and more about fix 96.

Gunther Peck: Adriana, would you like -

A Figueroa: No I think Maggie ... What policies is that, there's so many but I think that is a big one. And just for the mobility now that I have it, for the people to gain, I understand the importance of it. And it's something that we want so bad. To be able to come back and those policies can change, then why not. And decriminalize a lot.

Gunther Peck: Obviously immigration is an incredibly powerful political issue right now. I do wonder how you engage people who do not agree with you. Either in the United States or in Mexico, but in the United States to those who would say, "well okay, decriminalize mobility but your sister should not be here in the first place. Your parents shouldn't be here in the first place." What do you say to that person, who protests your presence in the first place.

A Figueroa: To be honest, for me it's very difficult. Because you have to take a deep breath. You have to understand where they're coming from. And I understand that sometimes ignorance is a big part of it. There's a lot of disinformation. That there's this imaginary line, or let's say that they say oh why are you here in the first place, do it the right way. Do it the legal way. They don't understand all the barriers and that there's no right way or no legal way. And besides that, we're immigrants. We're all immigrants. At the essence of humanity we are all immigrants. We all came from other places. Your families most certainly came from other places. To deny my right to be here is essentially denying your right to be here as well.

- A Figueroa: So I take it from that place and I try to engage in a conversation. I welcome it in a way because those are the people that are gonna change and become allies later on and help us make this great change.
- Maggie Loreda: I definitely agree with all of that. We need to acknowledge our privileges. Think we need to acknowledge where we come from, and where we are, And try to sort of take a read at ourselves first, and be open and also inform ourselves more and not just from the media; from the mainstream which is what we see and we sort of build our narrative based on that. But that's also always being controlled by the system.
- Maggie Loreda: So I think we definitely need to meet more people, engage in conversations with your neighbors, with people in your community and get to know where they are. Where they come from and how they're here and how they're part of you as well. I imagine you'll find some very dear friends and loved ones that, they have a story and I think it's based on that where we try to construct other narratives.
- Maggie Loreda: And overall we're scared ad we fear diversity and we're always scared of the unknowns, and I think we need to start changing that narrative of diversity is not necessarily something bad. It can be something very rich and constructive in our communities. So I would say that but definitely I agree with everything that Adriana said.
- Gunther Peck: Thank you so much for those insights, and for being with me today, Maggie and Adriana.
- Gunther Peck: My guests have been Maggie Loreda and Adriana Figueroa. Maggie and Adriana were on Duke's campus as part of a series called Connect Politics, a leadership initiative for Duke undergraduates interested in political engagement. The initiative is run by the Hart Leadership Program.
- Gunther Peck: Thanks for joining me. I'm Gunther Peck.