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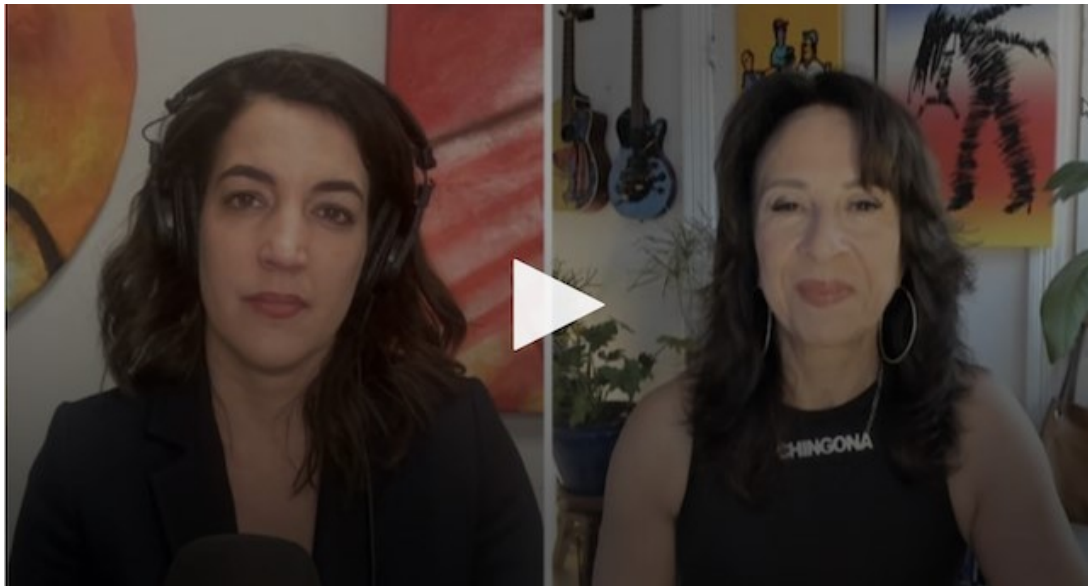
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By Amy Goodman, Juan González

26.12.2022

Interview with journalists María Hinojosa and Peniley Ramírez

Why do immigrants continue to die at the U.S.- Mexico border?



Sources: Democracy Now! - Image: Peniley Ramírez (left) and María Hinojosa (right).

Future Investigates Analyzes U.S. Lethal Border Policies and Drug Trafficking Trial of Mexico's Former Secretary of Security

Pulitzer Prize-winning independent media outlet Futuro Media recently launched an investigative journalism podcast called "Death by Policy" whose work reveals how the U.S. Border Patrol takes migrants trying to cross from Mexico into the United States through dangerous areas, such as Arizona's Sonoran Desert. The policy of "prevention through deterrence", which the Border Patrol has been implementing for many years, pushes people towards unsafe migratory routes and has affected thousands of deaths since the 90s. We talked about it with Maria Hinojosa, founder of Futuro Media and host of the new podcast of the program "Latino USA", which talks about Latino communities in the

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United States. Hinojosa draws connections between this immigration reality and the new immigration reform bill introduced in the U.S. Senate with bipartisan support. We also speak with Peniley Ramirez, co-host of the new five-part series "USA v. Garcia Luna," part of Futuro Media's "Death by Policy" podcast. The series looks at the story of Mexico's former Secretary of Public Security, García Luna, who will soon become the highest-ranking Mexican official with a judicial process in the United States for his alleged role in drug trafficking. "According to the indictment, this person worked for the Mexican government, for the Sinaloa cartel and cooperated with U.S. agencies like the DEA, all at the same time," Ramirez says.

Transcript – **Link** **to** **program**
video: https://www.democracynow.org/es/2022/12/16/por_que_siguen_muriendo_inmigrantes_en?jwsourc=cl

AMY GOODMAN: This is Democracy Now! Democracynow.org, the news program of War and peace. I'm Amy Goodman with Juan Gonzalez. Today we analyze the new Futuro Media research showing how the policies of the U.S. Border Patrol has created a deadly funnel that forces migrants to cross very dangerous areas, including Sonoran Desert. The investigation "Death By Policy" premiered on the Latino USA radio program. Its host is the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Maria Hinojosa. The series begins with a call made by a woman in the Arizona desert from your cell phone to the 911 emergency line United States.

LOURDES: Estoy hablando de emergencia.

OPERADORA DE 911: ¿Qué clase de emergencia?

OPERADORA DE 911: ¿Estás perdida?

OPERADORA DE 911: ¿Viene sola o con otras personas?

LOURDES: No, I just did.

LOURDES: ... I'm lost, I'm lost, hear help me...

911 OPERATOR: Wait for us, Lourdes.

AMY GOODMAN: That was a clip from "Death by Policy," the new podcast the Latino USA. and Futuro Investigates. The report also examines the work that They make volunteer organizations that tour the most important areas dangerous people searching for missing persons at a time when The death toll at the border continues to rise.

In the following clip we hear the Blue Armadillos, a Search and rescue organization for lost people in the area of Tucson in which the Border Patrol operates. Temperatures in this

Sector of the border are so extreme that a person can die of exhaustion in days or even hours. Blue Armadillos attend Desperate family members who have exhausted all search resources Conventional.

Gonzalo: We do it in a way that is in power, like returning a little peace to that family that is desperate looking for their relative.

If he was already alive, then how good, thank God. But if he was found dead, at least he returns to his country and his family knows where he is.

AMY GOODMAN: For more on the subject, we are joined by María Hinojosa, journalist Pulitzer Prize winner, founder of Futuro Media and host of Latino USA and the new podcast "Death By Policy", as well as "USA" versus García Luna", Futuro's first podcast series Investigates, which we will talk about later. Hinojosa is also co-host of the podcast "In The Thick" and just published the version juvenile of his autobiography "Once I was you". Also with us Peniley Ramirez, investigative journalist and Emmy Award winner. Ramirez is also co-host of "USA versus Garcia Luna" and executive producer of Futuro Investigates. Welcome to Democracy Now!

Mary, let's start with you. Once again, congratulations on these notable podcast and for its Pulitzer Prize. Let's talk about these new investigative series that he is producing with Futuro Investigates and particularly "Death by Policy"

MARIA HINOJOSA: For me it was very important and it is very important to focus on the fact that we are two Latina women immigrants to this country, that we are the ones who are leading the research team in the United States. We are the only team of two immigrant Latina women to manage a deep investigative journalism team in the United States. And, for that very fact, the first investigation is about deaths at the border. Why? Well, it's an issue that I, as a journalist, can't accept that this, these deaths, become normalized, like "well, people die in the desert." This for me was like such a profound thing that it bothered me, it bothered me. And then I started thinking, "Now that I have this investigative unit, I want to investigate why people keep dying at the border." If the Border Patrol, the "Border Patrol," says they're rescuing lives, that the Border Patrol has the most dollars for their work of any *other law enforcement agency*, I don't know how to say it in Spanish. But then, how is it possible that people continue to die? If this country is the most advanced, most modern, smartest, most humane country, why is it that people keep dying? Those deaths, we realize, don't have to keep happening. And look, this is a story that I have, I bring with me from deep, because I'm a Mexican immigrant and I've been crossing the border for decades. My team, I want to say thank you very much first to

Peniley Ramirez, my co-executive producer; Diane Sylvester, who helped me launch this team; to the producers Julieta Martinelli and Roxanne Scott, who put themselves in the depths of this work, and our editor Karlita. Without them we would not have this deep work.

It is urgent for me to use the power that I have. And thank you Amy for recognize the Pulitzer. Indeed, the Pulitzer gives us that Credibility of asking for more. And, unfortunately, we asked to speak with the head of the Department of Homeland Security, Alejandro Mayorkas, the same Cuban immigrant and refugee, we ask to speak with President Biden, with President Obama, with President Bush, with the President Clinton, and nobody gave us an interview. So, for us as Journalists, from whom do we claim these deaths, these lives? ¿To who? And that's a deep part of why we did this story for launch my team, our research team at Futuro Media that is called Future Investigates.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Peniley Ramírez, the United States has been implementing the policy for decades to build sections of the border wall around the main ones cities, thus forcing migrants to cross the border through the desert, which makes that crossing more difficult and many end up dying. In your research series you have traveled "The Devil's Way", tell us about that place.

PENILEY RAMIREZ: Well "Devil's Highway," as it is called in Spanish, it is an area in the Arizona desert, it is a very arid area where temperatures can reach more than 120 degrees Fahrenheit. And It is a place where the highest number of deaths have been recorded in the desert. In the southwestern United States, from 1998 to 2020, they have Killed more than 8,000 people trying to cross in the desert. Our reporters Julieta Martinelli and Jess Alvarenga went to the desert with the volunteer organization Armadillos Azules (Blue Armadillos, en English) and ventured to make the journey that migrants make to understand the difficulties and tremendous physical challenges involved cross the desert. We did a data analysis work with the Border Center organization and also Maria was with our reporter Roxanne Scott interviewing the Border Patrol there, and What we have found is that there are more and more difficulties, despite that the Border Patrol has a very large budget, Billionaire, volunteer organizations are responsible to search for migrants in the desert and also to identify the Remains of migrants who have been lost in the desert through DNA testing. One such organization is the Hummingbird organization, which does DNA testing. to people who are looking for those desperate migrants. And one of They are our central character of this research and the podcast that we did for the research,

a woman from Mexico who is called Elena González and that for many years she was looking for her mother.

Another thing we find important is that there is a big difference. between how they collect data from the Border Patrol, again, it has a multimillion-dollar budget, and others organizations such as Human Borders. It is much better the Quality of data on where these people died, where they died they found his remains, which are collected by organizations, not from the government, that are financed with their own funds, with respect to what they collect government agencies such as the Border Patrol. So, we see that A lot of this humanitarian work to locate people, to identify its remains and to account for the dimension of this crisis, they are doing it, not the U.S. government, but mainly volunteer organizations. And something that we also find in the Research, is the terrible way they treat some of the Desperate migrants from the desert calling 911 asking Help and they are left on hold, several minutes waiting, while they They are begging for help over the phone. Our reporter Roxanne Scott He obtained audio copies of several of those phone calls and what show it is terrible about how migrants are treated by operators and by the Border Patrol when desperate calls asking for help.

AMY GOODMAN: Let's go to another clip from "Death by Policy", in which we listen to Elena. Gonzalez, whose mother, Maria, traveled from the Mexican state of Veracruz to the United States, crossing the border through Texas.

Elena Gonzalez: Something must have happened for the reason that my mom doesn't come, no, no, she doesn't show up.

How can a person disappear from the world like this?

That's when my hopes were slowly falling.

AMY GOODMAN: Maria, tell us more about Elena and when you did this interview. ¿Was during the Trump or Biden administration? And, beyond that the speech on the Biden administration's immigration to be less racist, Do you think immigration policy has really improved?

MARIA HINOJOSA: For that The same reason is that I wanted to do this kind of work, because here There are like a lot of data, right?, many numbers, that each of those is A person, it is a life, it is the son or daughter, hijx, of someone. So, Elena symbolizes all this. Elena's mom leaves Veracruz promising Elena that she will make her the best quinceañera of all the village and Elena [sic] never returns. Not only there the problem that She doesn't come back, obviously, but the fact is that she didn't know what had happened. And this is a trauma so deep, so deep, that it's not just Elena the one who is suffering. She told us this

story, but there are thousands and thousands and thousands of people, because we don't know the true number of people dying in the desert, it is impossible, because the desert It's massive and because, frankly, the bones don't last that long. Is difficult in the desert. So, Elena signifies this hope of Keep searching until I can't take it anymore. Keep searching and searching and Looking. And that's where it becomes, not a story that has to do with it. in common with Mexico or with a Mexican family, but this is a history that has to do with the United States. Elena is coming here, continues in his search, connects with Hummingbird, Hummingbird does the work, Again, non-governmental, and realizes that they do have the remains. from Elena's mother. So, all this is a process that led her to a trauma. No need. This interview, yes, we did under the Joe Biden Administration; Obviously the verbal tone, as you put it You said, Amy, it's not the same under Biden and under Trump, obviously. What is President Biden's spokeswoman, she is the daughter of Haitian immigrants, refugees. So, there is another tone, but here we are talking about a Systematic, infrastructure, a structural issue. So, that's why I say it's time for Joe Biden and this Administration of saying "clean slate". The Border Patrol is not can reform. They are not, like my colleague, I correct her with all my love, because I know, because in Mexico you don't say billions, right?, they are multi, multi, multibillion, but in the United States it is trillions of dollars, Billion. So how is it possible that they have all this money and Are the deaths continuing? It doesn't curdle.

So, that's why it's time for Joe Biden to say "let's go end the Border Patrol, as it is known so far, this is It has to change, no more horses with ties to black people, Haitians, refugees. That's over. No more removing children. This It's over. I am Joe Biden, the president with the most heart, the one who understands that these immigrants and refugees are no danger to United States." That would guarantee him, I say, I could guarantee him the reelection. Because the time to attack immigrants... The immigrants are seeing with the losses of the Republican Party with Trump, they are true. And I think possibly that there is an opening to change this opinion. And I want our journalism, what we do with all pleasure with my partner Peniley Ramirez, can have some impact. I hope.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Mary I wanted to ask you about what we are hearing about the possibility that, in the run-up to Congress is renewed, This body approves immigration reform with the support of both Main parties, something we have heard on numerous occasions in the last 20 years. This time Senator Kirsten Sinema and Senator Thom Tillis has a draft of this bill that would include a Path to citizenship for the two million known people as "dreamers", but that would also include, according to The Washington Post, A

large investment in migrant expulsion operations and in Border Security. What do you know about this and what do you think about it?

MARIA HINOJOSA: Well To begin with, we have a saying that is "until we see, do not believe". And the emotional game that has occurred with politics and legislators and Congressmen and Senators before the lives of the "dreamers", who They are no longer young, they are people who are waiting to buy a house, they have business, they're going to send their own kids to college, this dialogue that if something is going to happen or if it is not going to happen, or if there is going to be A reform or no reform is so confusing and so harmful to the state mental of them, that first I take them into account and tell them "thinking of you", because there have been too many times this game politician. Both the Republican and Democratic Parties have Played with the mental state of immigrants and refugees in this country. Now, for me, if so, obvious that any reform, any openness to doing the truly right thing, which is that they are American in everything, they are part of the United States, already, that they have their citizenship... But at the same time, for me and always have That said, the reform must be total, it must not be "nothing more than you. They have these years and these...", but, because then we are separating families, brothers of sisters, cousins of cousins, mothers and children, fathers, grandparents. And why? Better a comprehensive reform [sic] total. And, of new, for me it's a time when the Democratic Party could and I should understand that, as Latinos and Latinas we are the population second to voters in the United States, though not, and migration does not It has to be the main thing they are thinking, but this would be a recognition of their political power.

AMY GOODMAN: Peniley, you two have launched this remarkable research series, "USA versus Garcia Luna". And they have already published the second podcast of the five that make up the series. The series analyzes the figure of the former Secretary of Public Security of Mexico, Genaro García Luna, who He will soon become the highest-ranking Mexican official to be tried in the United States. You have been working on this history for a decade. What should we understand about who this is? man and why will he be tried in the United States?

PENILEY RAMIREZ: Well, this man, Genaro Garcia Luna, was the head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which was the equivalent of the FBI. In Mexico. Then it was the Secretary of Public Security, which was the highest civilian rank in Mexico for public security. During those years, between 2001 and 2012 that he held these very high positions, was a very close ally of the DEA in Mexico and other US agencies, such as the

FBI and CIA, He received several awards from them. And what we know now for an accusation here in New York, is that in those same years he was working, the indictment says, for Joaquin El Chapo Guzman, the leader of the Sinaloa cartel, and helped during those years to traffic more than 50 kilos of cocaine, mainly to Chicago and New York, and received more of \$50 million in bribes from the Sinaloa cartel. In January The trial is going to begin, it's a very important trial. And Mary and I have made this series "USA versus García Luna" Just to explain why this is also a story It's not just a history of Mexican politics, and why now we can understand through this character, Genaro García Luna, How this U.S. anti-drug policy works abroad of its borders, how the United States chooses its allies, and how It maintains its allies, even though there are suspicions, as there were in the García Luna case, which could have corrupt ties.

We want to emphasize that it is a very important trial, that it is a trial that must be followed and that it is a character that also means the way the United States has designed, and exported to other countries, what they have called "the war on drugs" and that has meant, in the case of Mexico, more than 3,000 million dollars from the taxpayers of the United States that have gone to Mexico and used in Mexico supposedly to pay for equipment and to pay for police. And in the series we will find out what happened to that money and where it really ended up.

AMY GOODMAN: Penny, can you talk about why you've been working on this for a decade?

PENILEY RAMIREZ: Well, I I started investigating Genaro García Luna a few days before he was outside the Government of Mexico. We tell in the series that... I started with a Unjournalistic motive. I was just starting out as a journalist researched my career and had been assigned a history of finding out because he was traveling a lot to Miami. García Luna, as I say, was protected by the U.S. Government and one day after leaving the Government of Mexico, moved to Miami to a house of 3 million dollars, which, of course, was much more than he could have afforded with his middle-class salary as a civil servant. And since then, Since that first story I did in November 2012, I ended up. obsessed with the character of García Luna, as now María Hinojosa, my partner co-producer of Futuro Investigates and also host With me from this podcast, she has ended up obsessed with García Luna. During these ten years, I have tracked a very large network of companies. that was used to move money between Mexico and the United States and to other countries. Now we know that some of that money, say the accusations, could be money from the bribes of the Sinaloa cartel and another part would be government corruption, a

part of the millions. who came from the United States to Mexico for this war against the drugs. During those years I have worked on many investigations about of García Luna and in 2020 I published a book about him, about the case, which it's called "The Millionaires of War." It is a book that was published by Penguin Random House in Spanish and explains just why in this There are so many losers, there are many losers. Many victims, people who have had to emigrate and that is why this story connects to the Arizona story we were talking about. before and the story we did about the crisis at the border. And many of the migrants who have arrived in the United States It has also been as a result of this tremendous violence that unleashed the war on drugs in Mexico, which has left more than 360,000 killed by violence in Mexico since 2006. I I published the book in 2020 and now, in 2022, Maria and I are about to premiere this Friday the first two episodes of our series "USA versus García Luna". And we say that it is a series in which a crime Real, a story of "true crime" as it is called in English, is It is a bit related to a soap opera story, which sometimes seems more fiction than any real novel, than any fiction.

AMY GOODMAN: I encourage people to listen to this series. Peniley Ramírez and María Hinojosa, executive producers of Futuro Investigates. Many thanks to the two to come to the program. And, Maria, congratulations on the publication from the youthful version of his autobiography titled "Once I Was You."

MARIA HINOJOSA: Coming soon in Spanish for kids, Amy. So it's going to come out in Spanish coming soon that adaptation of "Una vez fui tú" for children, soon. Thank you Amy and Juan, we love you very much from Future Media. Thank you very much for all your support.

AMY GOODMAN: Thanks to both. I'm Amy Goodman with Juan Gonzalez. Thank you for joining us.

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REBELION 25.12.2022