

All Ears With Abigail Disney
Season 2 Episode 2: Maria Hinojosa
Air Date: October 22th, 2020

ABIGAIL DISNEY: Hey, Maria.

MARIA HINOJOSA: What's up girl. I mean, this is great, but you know, I'd kind of love to be having dinner with you face to face, close up, you know, like super close up the way we would be like, so tell me what else is going on.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: Yes, right because, oh my god, this has been fucked up times. In 20 minutes, a timer's going to go off and I'm going to have to take some bread out of the oven. But other than that, we should be fine.

I'm Abigail Disney. Welcome to All Ears, my podcast where I get to go deep with some super smart people. This season I'm talking to "good troublemakers:" artists, activists, politicians, and others, who aren't afraid to shake up the status quo. We'll talk about their work, how they came to do what they do, and why it's so important in hard times to think big. You can't think about solutions without being a little optimistic and, man oh man, I think we need some optimism right now. So join me every Thursday for some good troublemaking.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: So my guest today is a whirling dervish, a Slayer of dragons, a towering hero in a tiny five foot package and a decent, generous, gracious, kind woman. You might have seen or heard her work on PBS, CNN, NPR, and lots of other places. To say she's a pioneer is weak tea when you look at how many spaces she was first to walk into, and how many stories she brought to light that would otherwise never have been known. She also generates stories with her company, Futuro Media, a nonprofit that produces radio TV, film content from a person of color perspective. She's also got a wonderful new memoir, *Once I was You: A Memoir of Love and Hate in a Torn America*. Maria, it's just beautifully written and I'm really enjoying the heck out of it.

MARIA HINOJOSA: Oh, well thank you!

ABIGAIL DISNEY: She is the very, the essence of what John Lewis calls the good troublemaker, because she's been demanding better representation and deeper stories for everyone from the institutions she works for all along. So, welcome Ms. Maria.

MARIA HINOJOSA: Oh my god. That was a beautiful introduction. Thank you, sweetie. I really appreciate it.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: Intros are sort of my specialty. I imagine that translates into a great obituary style, so if you're ever looking for one.

MARIA HINOJOSA: You go there so quickly, my love.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: Well, it's a pandemic. That's actually my first question. How's your pandemic going? I know you were sick.

MARIA HINOJOSA: Well, I got COVID very early on. I basically had a fever and just ridiculous body ache for like, you know, intensely two weeks, but basically almost a month. And so every day, you know, I'm like, okay, I'm healthy, we're healthy. We're alive. My extended family is healthy. Okay. And I go into a state of panic because of democracy. So all in all a pretty 20, 20 kind of experience.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: Yeah, yeah. The book that you just came out with, and I saw you got a nice review in the New York times, too. It's really gorgeously written and you just kind of want to eat it up, but it's also timely, so timely. And I'm wondering if you can just start us off where your family starts off in the book coming here from Mexico, it's quite an amazing story.

MARIA HINOJOSA: So my dad was a nerdy, geeky guy from Tampico. Scientist, medical doctor. He ends up recruited by the university of Chicago. And my mother and

the four kids, I'm the baby. So my mom was really excited about coming to the United States. Unlike my father who was much more trepidatious, she was like, oh my god, the country of all possibilities. So that morning she got dressed up, oh my god.

With like a petticoat skirt. She had on her pearls, she wanted to look fabulous. And my mother always was like drawing attention to herself. I wonder where I got it from. So, you know, but she was like, I want you to see me because I'm going to be attractive. And I'm going to have these four great looking kids. Right. She was carrying me in her arms and my sister and my two brothers were holding hands. We get out of the plane in Dallas, go into immigration. And there's this immigration agent that I remember her describing him, like, he was so tall. I remember her talking about him, like the Marlboro man, you know, tall with blonde hair. But he didn't look nice. This guy had like a scowl on his face and he was looking over our bodies. I remember her telling me about this, specifically, like he was looking over our bodies and she was like, was he matching the green card with our faces?

Well, actually, no, he was looking over our bodies. And in my case, I had been with a blanket that had created something and it's on my skin and he saw this and he said, you must have the German measles. We're going to have to put you into quarantine. We're going to have to take her. And he said those words to my mother. And that's when she just was, she went into a state of panic. And she started screaming at him. The way the story had been told was that she said to him, sir, I am the wife of Dr. Raul Hinojosa! And you can call the president of the University of Chicago, and you can ask him because he has brought my husband here! And when I would tell this story, I'd be like, and then my mother, you know, tiny, tiny five foot, you know, she's stood up to the immigration agent. And it was like, waaa! That's where Maria Hinojosa gets her big voice, waa! You know?

And then we know now Jeff Sessions, Stephen Miller, Donald Trump, Steve Bannon basically just decided to come after babies and children and mothers who were not born in this country. That's when my mother calls me all of a sudden. I'm in an airport as per

usual and she's crying. I was like, que pasa, ma? Pero, que pasa, ma? Because of course, it's your mother crying. What's the matter who died? And she's like, Oh my god, mijita. I realized that, you know, I'm just feeling for these mothers. You know, I realize I just, it could have been me and I was a little bit like, mom, I know you're feeling for them. We all are, you know, but what are you talking about?

It could have been me, like what? And that's when she said, it could have been you. You could have been taken from me. Oh shit. I always thought, you know, that maybe I had just been like a fluke. That this immigration agent was like, you know, just crazy. No, I was part of a policy that was on the books until 1964 that basically said if you saw a Mexican coming into the country that did not fit the criteria, you could take this person. And in my case, they saw a rash on my skin and they were going to put me into quarantine. And that's when my mother lost it. And that's when she said on that phone call, she said, it wasn't that I was using my big voice.

She said, I went into a state of trauma and panic. And I started screaming at him in a tone I've never used with anyone before or since then and made a scene. And that's why they didn't take me.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: When I read that in your account. It hits me in my soul to think of being a mother and to have this big burly man say, okay, I'm taking her. How do we find a way to tell those stories so that people really get it in the gut?

MARIA HINOJOSA: I mean, I think first is that you have to let yourself feel it. I really needed to let myself feel what my mother was saying to me. Look, not all journalists who are not born in the United States cover the issue of immigration. You know, there are those who want to be entertainment reporters, economics reporters, business reporters, culture reporters, arts reporters, but there was always, yeah, why am I, you know, what is this thing with immigration? Why is it the first story that I ever reported and continues to be the primary story? And then when you hear something like this, you're like, whoa, now I understand. Now I understand why I do this.

And thank god I got the message to do this, right? That's part of, um, look, what really worries me is the amount of trauma that this country is getting prepared to live through, which is why I have said, um, you know, to Biden. Well, I haven't said it to him, I'm trying, and to Kamala. Which is, um, you need to start family reunification immediately, and guess what? It comes with the bonus of lifelong mental health free treatment. That's what this country must give to these people. And it's not, people are like, oh my god, how radical of you? No, no, no. What's radical is taking a child.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: I mean, for sure, there's no question.

MARIA HINOJOSA: *Exacto.*

ABIGAIL DISNEY: You know, the title of your book, which is *Once I Was You*, is so interesting because you start in the foreword by addressing someone that you make eye contact with in the airport one day.

MARIA HINOJOSA: So Abby, I'm writing a book is really hard. I don't like doing it. It's really hard. So when I was finished with the book, I was like, okay, here.

That's when my editor said to me, um, okay, great. Now we just need you to write the introduction. And I was like, what the heck? What? And my muse and friend, the great American writer of Sandra Cisneros, she told me, you know, you don't have to always write about the things you remember. Maybe you can try to write about the things you wish you could forget. Or that you have forgotten that you've wanted to forget

.
So when I had to find inspiration, I thought, okay, what do I want to forget? And I was like, this, I wish I had never seen it, but I did. I was in the McAllen airport at seven o'clock in the morning, and I am a hawk. I'm a journalist 24 hours a day, which means I'm always looking everywhere around me. What's going on? What's happening. So this particular morning, I saw that this little girl just sitting there. And usually, I know enough about airports, that little kids are always jumping around in their seats. They're getting

ready to get on a plane. They're jumping, and this little girl was catatonic. So that was the first thing that struck me.

Um, and then our eyes just kind of met. And I then I did like a pullback, a wide angle and I was like, Oh my god, she's one of them. And then I just, I made my way. I was like, this is why this is my chance. Get up, go sit next to her. There's nobody sitting next to her. Go sit next to her. Because they, these children are being trafficked as per the definition of a person who is being trafficked.

The definition is a must not have their documents. Must not know who is taking them or where they are going. Must have been told not to speak to anyone. Okay. These children are being trafficked. Um, and so I engage with her and then, Oh, poor baby. You know, I am able to deduce from the conversation that she had been held in that converted Walmart that they had, somehow someone imagined that that would be a good place to put 1500 children in a converted Walmart, we'll just put cages up. A Latino man, by the way, came up with that. So we need to be clear. Okay. And the people who were transporting these children were a Latino man and a Latino woman. And they said to me, we're just doing our jobs. And I was like, yeah, I've heard that before. So that's where the moment of at ending the introduction, I realized that I was saying to this little girl, as I was speaking to her traffickers, I was like, in Spanish, I was like, I just want her to know, I want these children to know that people in this country want to see them, that they're okay, that we care about them. That we know that they're not the enemy. We want them to be safe.

I was yelling this in the airport so that the kids could hear me. And then I wrote, I said, you know, I wanted her to hear me. I wanted her to know that I saw her. I mean, I was a child of privilege. I came in with a green card through the airport. I'm not being trafficked, but this notion of a could have been me, and this notion of in my life, I'm trying always to see myself in the other, um, almost like that's my ethos as a journalist has always been to try to put myself in your place. And then particularly with her. There was something that, and th

at line, by the way, we did not have a title for the book up until the very last minute. So the fact that we were able to land on this and that it, then it settled and now I love it so much, but it was a, it was, it was painful for a while.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: Well, it's a beautiful, um, three or four pages it's really quite haunting and it's kind of stays with you for the rest of the book. You know, I think, I think that that super power of being able to see yourself in the other comes in part with like, understanding that you're the other in somebody else's eyes. [00:13:48] That's my bread. I'll be right back.

MARIA HINOJOSA: Go, go!

ABIGAIL DISNEY: Oh, right back to work so, so there's a story you tell about 1968 in Chicago and that election. And once in a while, a story kind of like brings me back. Because I remember the 1968 election, I remember the Watts Riots, and I remember the assassination. I was watching TV when it happened.

And I mean like what a, um, troubling, you know, traumatic year for children to just be observers. But, but what you say about that election would never have crossed or entered my mind. And I wonder if you could tell me about the plans you were making during that election and how old you were, and what made you make those plans?

MARIA HINOJOSA: So I was walking home from school. I went to public school on the South side of Chicago, Hyde Park, actually Obama's old neighborhood, very black, very Jewish and other mixed, but not a lot of Latinos or Latinas. My best friend was Jewish. And, you know, there was no cable news back then. Like there was, you know, one news show, but we consumed use and, and I somehow understood.

I had seen enough of George Wallace and his face. And the fire hoses and the dogs. And I didn't really understand what, but I knew then that he was running for president. And so my best Jewish girlfriend and I were walking home and we were discussing

whose basement would be better to hide in, because her family and my family were going to have to hide together. And I didn't have the words. Like, I didn't say like you're Jewish, I'm Mexican. So, no, no, I didn't have the words, but I knew which is what's very freaky because if I felt that before cable news, before social media, and I got that from George Wallace, it's pretty terrifying. Pretty terrifying.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: Right. Right. And I think that that, um, colors you for the rest of your life.

MARIA HINOJOSA: Oh yeah, absolutely. I definitely knew that we were not American. We, we knew we were not born here. My parents, uh, spoke with thick accents and so I had that self hatred. Also. I remember a time when we were on the far South side, in a white community, I was with my mom and dad and they started to speak Spanish, uh, in the grocery store.

And I said, shhh, don't! And my mother obviously just said, *Estas loca?* Are you crazy? Of course, we're going to speak Spanish. This is our language. Now I do not want to paint myself as a child that was, you know, a victim of abuse, abused that I was being called the S-word or no, that's not. I mean, I was, I was in a multicultural almost utopia, if you will, Hyde Park kind of prides itself. It's next to the University of Chicago. But I definitely knew I was different. Yeah. At the core I knew I held a Mexican passport. I knew that, that it was green, that my father's was blue. Cause he had become an American citizen. And I knew I was Mexican. I was not American.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: What was the rationale for the University of Chicago insisting that your father become an American citizen? Because he didn't want to be an American citizen. Right.

MARIA HINOJOSA: So first of all, my father was a genius. He really was. I didn't know this, but the inner ear is in fact, the most difficult part of the human body to study and understand. And my dad made this commitment to himself dream that he would help to

find a way for people who could not hear to be able to have a chance to hear. So he helped to create the cochlear implant. And I think the university saw his genius. And at that time it was when the United States actually was in a policy of openness towards immigrants. So we were beneficiaries of that kind of politic, which is like the good immigrant, yes. But my dad, we ended up living grant to grant. So my dad was not a wealthy doctor seeing patients. He was a nerdy MD scientist. And so he, we lived grant to grant and those grants came from the NIH. And I believe that he had to be an American citizen in order to... So he was fast tracked, I guess his citizenship came within the first five years or something like that. And then we just all, I mean, we all remained with green cards.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: But you eventually got your citizenship. When, when was that?

MARIA HINOJOSA: December 27th, 1989. And how I know that, because I had to find it out for this book. I had kind of put it aside.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: So you were 29, 28,

MARIA HINOJOSA: 28. Yeah, it was late. I became a citizen because I became afraid that my green card was going to be taken away from me. That's what motivated me. I was doing a leftist community radio show on WKCR at Columbia university. I was inviting revolutionaries from El Salvador, Chile, and Nicaragua. I had been to Nicaragua. I had been to Cuba. You know, these were like the, you know, the communist hotspots. I had been dating, actually, a Salvadorian revolutionary, you know, people who were involved in very high level leftist activity. And that's why I decided to become an American citizen. And by the way, once I had to raise that right hand, say that I will bear arms for this country, then I was like, okay, now, now I'm taking my civic duty ridiculously seriously, because now I'm an American citizen. They couldn't throw me out of the country for being a loud mouth.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: So why journalism?

MARIA HINOJOSA: Because I wanted to be an actress and some dude told me that I, I was never going to be good enough.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: There's always some dude.

MARIA HINOJOSA: Yeah. Somebody and I gave him the power. And when I got to college here in New York, um, I had heard about WKCR I had heard like they were, you know, part of the uprising in 1968, um, here at Columbia University. And so I showed up there, they were like, oh, there's another young Latina. She likes radio as a small department at Columbia of people who were doing mostly salsa. And I was like, guys, I don't know, really I'm Mexican, I'm just learning around salsa.

But I started to do a little bit of news, like literally rip and read, and people are like, what is rip and read? But, you know, Abby, it was rip the wire and read it. There was a wire machine that would be going on 24 hours a day that was basically our Twitter. It would be typing. You know? And then when it would, you'd hear the ding, ding, ding, ding, that was a breaking story. And you were literally ripping and reading. So I got a little bit of experience in doing the news and that's how it all started, but I never thought I could be a journalist because there were never any Latino journalists in this country. So it was like an illusion.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: Right, right. That kind of pioneering is incredibly difficult. Was there a lot of trepidation? I mean, was it hard?

MARIA HINOJOSA: Oh, hell yes, of course. When I got to NPR as the first, of course, I was terrified. That was the whole thing, but I was like, but you have to raise your hand. You can't be in this editorial meeting with all these white people and all these white men and not raise your hand. Force yourself to raise your hand.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: That's why I keep saying to people, they need to stop calling people fearless. Because actually the point is not what you do when you're not afraid. Most of

the people I know who've been really, really amazing have gone forward into their fears and you do the things anyway, I keep thinking. And it's such an interesting story to me about the first two stories you did.

And the first story you pronounced your name, like an American and the second story pronounced the way you pronounce it. I mean, tell me about that decision. Was that hard?

MARIA HINOJOSA: Oh, it was actually kind of liberating because I really knew that I was defining myself. And when you grow up in this country, knowing you are the other, you, you want to be like everybody else. You do.

That's where the self hatred comes in. So in high school, I was Maria Hinojosa. I mean, I was not like everybody else at my preppy high school because I dressed up every day. I wore four inch heels. I wore makeup and I was at a preppy school where the women were top siders and IZOD shirts and khaki pants.

It was not like everybody else, but I was definitely Maria Hinojosa. In college still, but I was now hanging out with central Americans and becoming an activist. And so people call me Maria all the time. I was speaking Spanish all the time. My radio show was in Spanish. So at that moment at NPR, I was like, yeah, no, it's going to be my Maria Hinojosa.

And I knew, I knew like something in me was like, dude, this is going to stay with you forever. And there was a part of me that was like, yeah. And you just fucking owned it. You just owned it for everyone to see this is who you are.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: So NPR leads to CNN. That's a pretty big culture shift.

MARIA HINOJOSA: So to be honest with you, I was tired of NPR. I was, and I love NPR in many ways. I will always fight for public radio, and NPR is a network has, it's a

part of my life, but like my family, but a lot of things are wrong with it still. I was getting hate mail. Why do you say your name like that? My editor told me, Oh, Maria, we know about your Latino agenda. And I was like, what are you talking about your Latino agenda? And I hated that. I was tired of it. And I was doing okay, but I was tired of the fights, of the editorial fights. I remember my husband would tell me, you know, these men who are saying these things to you that make you feel insecure. I battled tremendous imposter syndrome. I thought I was a fraud at NPR. I went into therapy, all of this, and my husband would say, you know, in five years, they're not going to matter. So don't give them all of the power. And CNN was enticing one. They offered me a 4 day workweek. So that was like, I asked for it and they offered. Yeah. And I was like, shit, alright.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: Well, and you had just had your first baby. Right?

MARIA HINOJOSA: Yeah, I had just had my son, so I was like, I want that data myself. Um, it was, it was an opportunity to try something different, to be part of a network that I thought. Was all about news. I didn't realize that, you know, the networks, ABC, NBC, CBS looked at CNN and we were laughed at because we were doing this thing called cable, like not network.

And I come in at CNN at a really interesting time, right. Because it's right in the time when a 10 Turner decides to sell and I'm kind of perceived as being like the new wave and I got hazed. You know, I think they definitely saw me like NPR, like an affirmative action hire. W, yeah, that was like for reals, like for reals. I was like, yeah, whatever, you know, just keep on doing your stuff.

Um, and I love the challenge of getting to know how to do television, but very soon it overtook my life. And at that point, my husband, again, had to say, don't give these men the power to make you feel like you don't know what you're doing. Um, but it was, uh, there's a lot of internal politics at cable news networks all the time to this day.

And I do not miss it.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: So, let me ask you just as one instance of maybe a sign of things to come, why did they bring Lou Dobbs in? Where did he come from? And like, did you know right away where he was headed?

MARIA HINOJOSA: No, no, no, no. So when I get to CNN, Lou Dobbs was not around and people spoke of Lou Dobbs, like, Oh yeah, no, he was this great guy who like really had this like rising show.

And people really respected him as a newsman. He brought a lot of credibility to the network, but as I describe him in the book and I actually love this description, which I don't have in front of me, but it was basically like he was just one more mediocre, overweight, balding, uninteresting white man. And they brought him back because they thought he was going to bring back some ratings for his news show.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: Did you ever confront him?

MARIA HINOJOSA: Uh, confront him? No. In fact, I would see Lou, and Lou made it a point to. Not be an asshole to me. Um, because too many people were watching. To me, he was not almost because I would look at him and almost like, don't even try that with me.

Lou, I got on his set one time. They had me on for one little Q and A with him. But one of the reasons why I decided I had to leave CNN. Was because by that time I had decided that if I ran in my head, I had decided that if I ran into Lou in the elevator that I was going to have to, I was going to have to kick him in the nuts.

And I was like, I don't think I'm going to be able to control myself. I think I'm going to slug him. And I think I'm going to end up leaving CNN escorted out by security. And I need to get out of here, because by then his rage and his anti-Mexican thing, anti Latino anti-immigrant thing was so disgusting that I was about to lose it at CNN.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: So, so I want to ask you about anger. I don't know about you, but nothing makes me, me angrier than being told I'm angry. And, and I hate when it gets leveled. Like an accusation. Anger is absolutely appropriate a lot of the time. So, so when you were younger, it was less as an accusation on a woman and it really had an effect on her prospects in her career and so forth.

So. So, how did you handle that then? And how, if at all, have you evolved on the question of first of all, how angry you are and second of all, how you manage people's feelings about your anger?

MARIA HINOJOSA: Oh, totally. I mean, that's why they thought I had an agenda was because, you know, I'd get revved up about these things in each, I did need to really, you know, you're a little bit too angry. And then, you know, you have to remain objective, remember him. So the anger was always like, you need to calm down. I mean, I...

ABIGAIL DISNEY: I'm just going to tell you a truth that I hate copping to. Um, because my mom was a piece of work. My mom was a real piece of work and um, she found you very angry and uh, and it was mainly just the way you pronounced your name.

MARIA HINOJOSA: Oh my god, Abby, I can't believe that you're saying this.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: Yeah, that in and of itself was so angry to her.

MARIA HINOJOSA: That I came off angry because of the way I said my name or not that she got angry because of the way I said my name.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: No, no, no, because she said it showed that you were angry and confrontational and had an agenda.

MARIA HINOJOSA: Yeah, so, right. So people did say that, but the thing is, is that what would happen on the other side was that I was hearing, in fact, the opposite. I was hearing all the love of people who didn't see themselves ever represented in a place like CNN or NPR, and that they would just be like, please don't ever stop.

Please don't ever leave. So that, that tempered it, but the anger was real. And in the sense that also news executives were worried that I could come off as angry, as well. Yeah, but the thing is, is that it's righteous anger. And that's what, that's what pisses me off is that, you know, we are living what we're living through right now, Abby, is what I was trying to say. Uh, I'm blowing the whistle on this stuff so that you can stop it before it gets out of whack. And they're like, Oh, calm down, Maria. You're so immigranty and so angry. Feministy, you know, they are immigrants, they weren't born here and I'm getting angrier and angrier and they're just like, don't take it so personally. And so that's, this is what enrages me is that somehow white men had have the possibility to tell me something about anger and to control it, but, but who gets to tell them. About their anger, but I think what has overridden, that is my sense of responsibility because I clearly got, I clearly understood that I had privilege. Like that. I was like, yo, you're really, you're really lucky to have made it all the way here. So therefore now you have responsibility. And so that I think is what would power me through to get to the other side of the anger. So..

ABIGAIL DISNEY: So I'm going to ask you a question. I'm a little afraid to ask you, Maria.

MARIA HINOJOSA: You already told me about your mom girl, what more, I mean, I'm like, oh my god.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: I know there's so many secrets, so, okay. Okay. So as a sovereign nation, a country does have a right to control its borders. And acknowledging that a certain amount of immigration is good for the country and that open borders may or may not be realistic, What is the right immigration policy?

MARIA HINOJOSA: So, first of all, at this point, the United States of America does not have an immigration problem. It has a human rights problem. And I'm saying that with the level of seriousness that it deserves, and I don't know how that's going to be dealt with, but that's how I see what's happening now. Now, in terms of immigration reform, you got a couple of things going on and we can't mix them up.

We have a refugee problem and sorry, it's not a problem. We have a refugee situation. And what we are talking about here is not 50 million people. We're talking about several thousand people who are desperate because they are in need of refuge. They are refugees. Most of them are women fleeing from impunity and extraordinary forms of domestic abuse and rape.

Now in terms of immigration, cheap immigrant labor is a central part of the economic base of this country. We know this because we have seen it through the pandemic. The meat processing plants were forced to be open and they were COVID hotspots. The farms forced to be open, COVID hotspots. You know, all food service, all of that. That's where immigrants work. And by the way, con mucho respecto, they love their work. The Guatemalan immigrants who I met in Mississippi, in those chicken processing plants, they love their jobs because, because they are people who, oh my god, they're seeking for the best in life. And they're not afraid of hard work.

So now. What they would like is probably, maybe some of them come and then their kids are born here. And then by that time they may say, you know what? I'd like it here. I want to stay here, and to give them the opportunity to stay. But there are others who will be like, you know what? I really do want to just come and work for six months and then go back for six months.

Can we figure that one out? So there are lots of ways to figure it out. But if you start from a perspective that Latino and Latina immigrants primarily are a threat to this country that we are trying to come in and take something from you, that we are

destroying the culture that we want to take away, the language, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. It's not true. The people who want to come here and I know a few of them, it's like, oh my god, man, let them boy, these are the people who have...

ABIGAIL DISNEY: You want these people.

MARIA HINOJOSA: You want them! I'm like, with the Syrian refugees. Dude, bring half a million Syrian refugees and watch and see what's going to happen. The food, the nightlife, the economy. But no, instead we are seen as a threat.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: Um, okay. So I have one more question for you. Um, and that is about Futura. Tell me about why, why and what are you doing there? What do you hope to accomplish? Tell me about that.

MARIA HINOJOSA: So Futura happened because *Now on PBS* was going away, it was a year, uh, 2010. They were shutting down.

Obama had won and he was like, why do we need investigative journalism, Obama's here. Everything's okay. And I went to. I thought the next place that I should go to work is *60 minutes*. They agreed to give me an interview. I should have taken the hint when they said it was going to be at a Starbucks, but there, I was like all googly eyed, you know?

And the guy said, look, we think you're great, but can you wait until one of these old white guys gets sick or dies and then come back. And I got in the subway and I cried and then I realized that I was going to have to create something on my own. And so I created a nonprofit Futuro Media. Terrifying, scary. We're growing, Abby. I mean, now we're 10 years old, as far as we know, I am the only Latina who has created and run a nonprofit newsroom in the United States right now. And, um, and. We're employing people. We're giving jobs to journalists of all kinds of backgrounds, very diverse. That is our ethos. And so I, um, I'm very, very happy that I jumped off the cliff and did it right.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: Somebody once said to me, you jump and then you build your wings on the way down. Which we think is sort of brilliant.

Maria's new book is called *Once I was You: A Memoir of Love and Hate in a Torn America*. On twitter, she is Maria-underscore-Hinojosa. Did I do that right?

MARIA HINOJOSA: Maria-underscore-Hinojosa.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: Hinojosa. And her podcast is Latino USA. And it's both on NPR and wherever you get your podcasts, along with her political podcast, *In The Thick*. So keep up the good and manic work, my dear friend, Maria.

MARIA HINOJOSA: Abby, I can't wait to see you and hug you and share a meal up close and personal. Thank you for a beautiful interview. I really loved this.

ABIGAIL DISNEY: Take care.

All Ears is a production of Fork Films. The show was produced by Alexis Pancrazi and Christine Schomer. Lauren Wimbush is our Associate Producer. Sabrina Yates is our Production Coordinator. Our engineer is Veronica Rodriguez, Bob Golden composed our theme music. The podcast team also includes the VP of production Aideen Kane. Our executive producer is Kathleen Hughes. Learn more about the podcast on our website. forkfilms.com. And don't forget to subscribe, rate and review *All Ears* wherever you get your podcasts.