

**RESEARCH ABOUT DISCRIMINATION  
AGAINST LATINO JOURNALISTS  
WORKING IN THE U.S.A. AND HOW  
INTIMIDATION AFFECTS MEDIA  
OUTLETS THAT ARE THE MAIN  
INFORMATION SOURCE FOR  
HISPANIC COMMUNITIES**

Fundamedios Research Project  
Donald W. Reynolds Journalism  
Institute Fellowship 2020–21

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Discrimination against Latino journalists in the U.S.A. affects the environment of freedom of expression and access to information for the Hispanic communities in the country. This is the main conclusion of the research conducted by Fundamedios with the support of the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute Fellowship 2020–21 and the Fund for Investigative Journalism.

Starting in June 2020 and for 8 months, Fundamedios interviewed 115 journalists and talked with representatives of 28 organizations about the working conditions of Latino media workers. 45% of the interviewed journalists said they had experienced discrimination.

The most common claim expressed was about differences in their working conditions or contracts. Latino journalists do the same job as their white peers with fewer resources, and less pay. The intersectionality of race and gender results in cumulative discrimination against female journalists who are of Latino origin. Latinas earn on average 37% less than their white male peers.

Underrepresentation in newsrooms and lack of Latinos in the leadership affect the way in which Latinos are portrayed by the media and therefore treated. Many journalists shared their experiences when receiving racist comments or attitudes. These comments imply that Hispanic journalists do not belong in that space or are too stupid to do that job. It happened mostly in newsrooms where they were a kind of “diversity token”. Some of the defamatory comments came from colleagues; others from audiences complaining about watching or reading news about Latinos. For some journalists, the racist attitudes toward them undermined their self-esteem, for others it encouraged them to fight to claim their place in American society.

Four years of offenses emanating from Donald Trump, the former president of the United States, have definitely harmed

journalists' safety and a unprecedented number of journalists have been assaulted or arbitrarily detained.

These findings have encouraged Fundamedios' mission to protect freedom of the press and stand behind those journalists who have been harassed, assaulted, detained or discriminated against in any way. Independent journalism is an important pillar of democracy. And the democracy of a multicultural America is only real if all voices are being heard.

In addition, we work on solutions. In 2021 Fundamedios is addressing the journalists' needs and is implementing a training program to raise awareness of the pay gap that affects Latinas. We are building capacity by coaching journalists to improve their negotiations skills.

Boosting Latinos entering in fair conditions the market place, by reducing the inequality they currently face and helping them achieve fair representation by gender and race in newsrooms. More Latinos will consequently demand from their information sources, better answers for their audiences and provide the Hispanic communities with access to trustful and reliable information.

Dagmar Thiel  
Fundamedios U.S.  
CEO

# BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

This research was proposed in Fall 2019 with the premise that being a Latino and a journalist in the U.S. would provoke a double bias which could be expected to exacerbate discrimination. We assumed that the defamatory rhetoric blaming the press as the enemy of the people and also identifying

Latino populations as criminals, would make Latino journalists working in the United States of America a target for harassment. We expected it to make them more likely to be exposed to physical aggression, illegal surveillance, defamatory online trolling, and deny them access to reliable information.

The study was done from June 2020 to January 2021, a very sensitive time for freedom of the press in the U.S.A. During this period the Covid19 pandemic was putting even greater stress on the already fragile business models of the media.

Losses from advertising income heavily impacted media outlets<sup>1</sup> and many journalists were being laid off or asked to take furloughs. As was the case in most industries, women of color were the first to lose their jobs<sup>2</sup>.

The final report of Fundamedios' research coincides with the last month of Donald Trump' presidency. He had been de-platformed from his megaphones on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube among others. Before losing his accounts, during his four years in office, President Trump targeted the media and some journalists. According to the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker, 11% of his posts on Twitter were devoted to denigrating the press<sup>3</sup>.

14 days before leaving the White House, Trump supporters went into the Capitol, and wrote "murder the media" on one of its doors. During the riot many journalists were verbally harassed and physically assaulted. It would not be correct to say that more journalists of color were harassed than white journalists. All media workers who did not identify with the conspiracy theories of the narrative of a fraudulent election were at risk. It is absolutely correct to say that in order to cover the Trump's rallies, newsrooms and journalists already took their precautions, which could include safety measures such as not sending Black or Latino journalists into the field; hiding the

media identity, not broadcasting live among the crowds, and/or keeping some kind of distance from the events. Preventing journalists from doing their job has not been usual in the U.S.A. before the Trump era. Intolerance and political polarization were displayed in this most aggressive form on January 6<sup>th</sup> 2021.

Among the journalists harassed the day the U.S. Capitol was taken by the far-right insurgents were several Latinos, including the Univision teams led by Claudia Uceda<sup>4</sup> and Edwin Piti<sup>5</sup>.

Also, Julio Cortez<sup>6</sup>, photographer with the Associated Press, was seriously assaulted by the rioters. Journalists were being targeted that day. The U.S. Press Freedom Tracker reported that in the first 30 days of 2021, 15 assaults and 3 detentions of journalists took place. Fundamedios is a member of the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker<sup>7</sup>.

But press freedom violations had already peaked in 2020 after the George Floyd killing with 343 assaults, 123 arbitrary detentions, 80 cases of equipment damaged and 13 journalists or media organizations subpoenaed<sup>8</sup>.

On October 7<sup>th</sup> 2020, for the third time in history, the U.S. government was called to the Inter American Commission of Human Rights to respond to reports on violations

against freedom of the press. Fundamedios and Reporters Committee for Press Freedom presented the cases before the 177th Session of the OAS Human Rights body and requested that all arbitrary detentions and excessive uses of force against journalists by law enforcement cease immediately. Our organizations also

requested all levels of government within the United States to conduct a thorough investigation into the different events and recommend the implementation of training to deter law enforcement agencies from improper use in future of excessive and unnecessary force against journalists covering protests<sup>9</sup>.

## THE STUDY



As part of this research, Fundamedios specifically investigated whether Latino journalists working in the U.S.A. were victims of discrimination, harassment, aggression or attacks, either on or off line. Were Latino journalists being forced to self-censor or to stop reporting and therefore become unable to continue informing Latino minority communities?

To get an answer to this question Fundamedios sent out a survey to the members of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ) and conducted 115 in-depth interviews with Latino journalists. The organization also sourced information following events on journalists' social media accounts and their posts. We also contacted and held conversations with 28 organizations. Among them, academic and non-profit organizations committed to supporting journalism, to promoting Latinos, fighting inequality, and supporting women's rights.

The journalists interviewed were almost 60% women. 40% worked for TV stations; three out of four were employed, and 60% of the respondents were between 31 and 50 years old.

Unfortunately, in 2020 far more acts of aggression and arbitrary detention were experienced by all journalists. More blatant violations of press freedom occurred in 2020 than in other years.



Despite these examples of generalized attack on the press, Fundamedios' research found clear evidence leading us to assert that there is systemic discrimination against Latino journalists.

This discrimination is not always expressed in disrespect, insults or segregation. But it is definitely a result of underrepresentation in newsrooms, lack of opportunities to grow, minimal representation in leadership or management positions, and therefore, the incapacity to influence the editorial line of the outlets and how the community is reflected. The news that is converted and

how Latinos are portrayed is out of their influence.

Brenda Castillo at the National Hispanic Media Coalition framed it exactly with this sentence "How we are perceived is how we are treated", and the 41% increase in hate crimes against Latino in the U.S.A. from 2016 a 2019 is a stunning reality<sup>10</sup>.

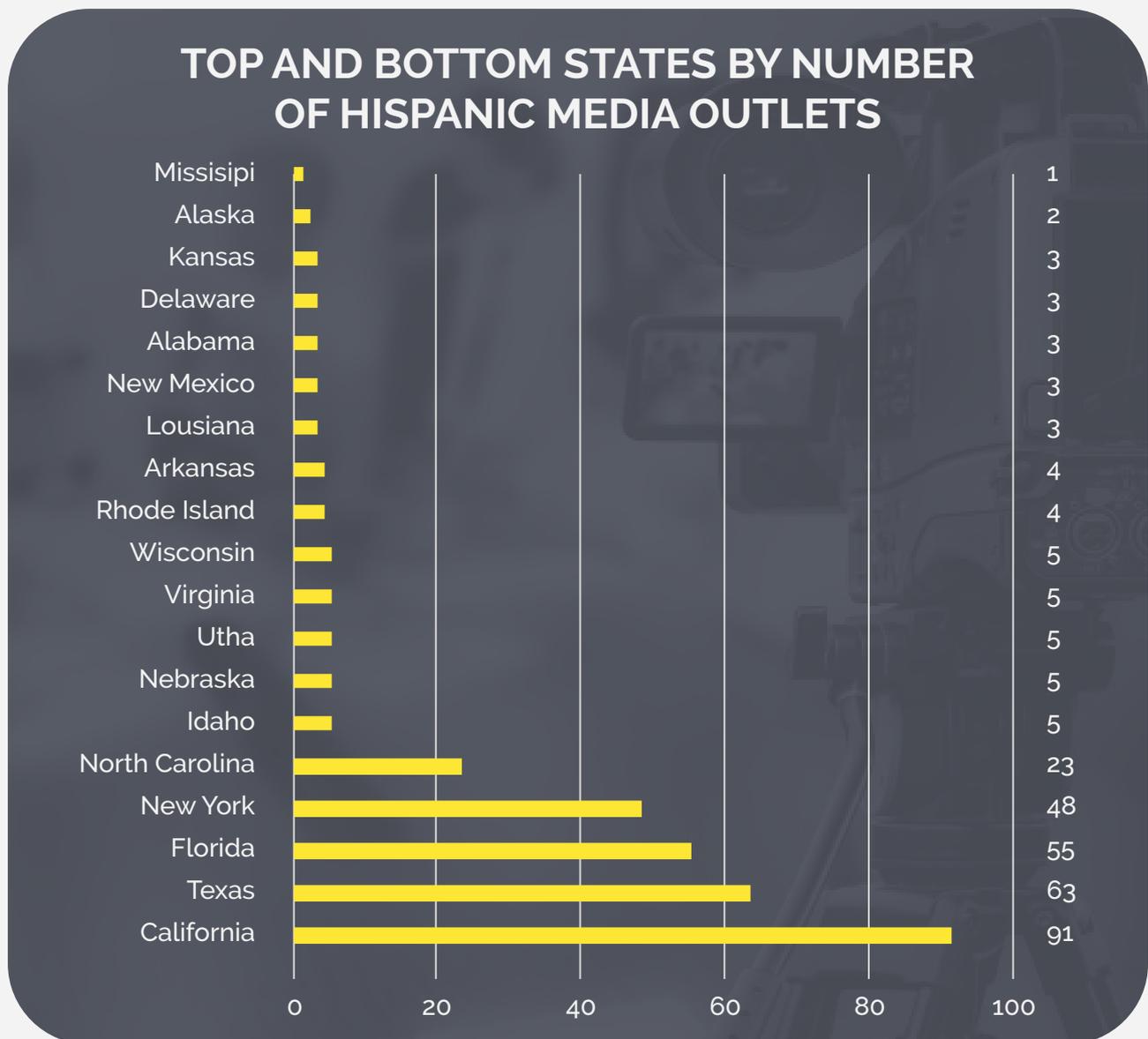
# UNDERREPRESENTATION



Before the COVID 19 crisis started, in June 2019, CUNY (The City University of New York) published a study of the Hispanic media and counted a total of 624 Latino news media (States with more Spanish newsrooms are California 91, Texas 63, Florida 55, New York 48, North Carolina 23).<sup>11</sup>

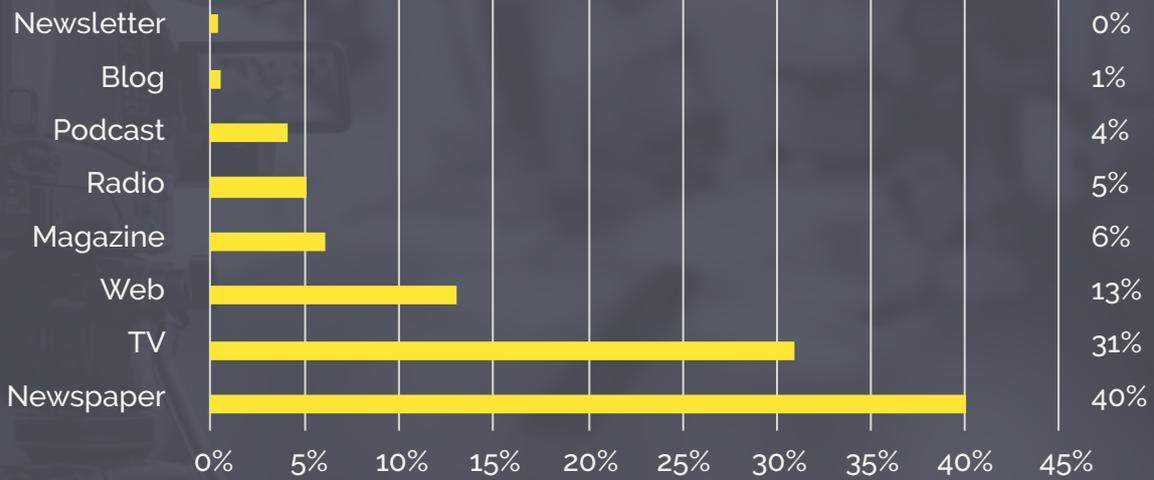
40% of the media outlets were newspapers, most of them very small local papers. 181 were TV stations. Of those, Univision and Telemundo, own or operate 132 and serve most of the traditional audience<sup>12</sup>.

The chart below shows the states with most Hispanic media outlets, and those with barely 5 to 1 newsrooms to serve the Latino community



Source, CUNY Hispanic Media Study 2019

## HISPANIC MEDIA OUTLET BY FORMAT



Source, CUNY Hispanic Media Study 2019

Although the above-mentioned ethnic media provide important sources of employment for Latino journalists, they do not reach the majority of Latino readers and viewers today. 20% of the U.S. population are Latino. Two thirds of the 59 million Latinos, are U.S. born and are millennials. 62% are bilingual, but the younger generation looks for information online and prefers English-language sources<sup>13</sup>.

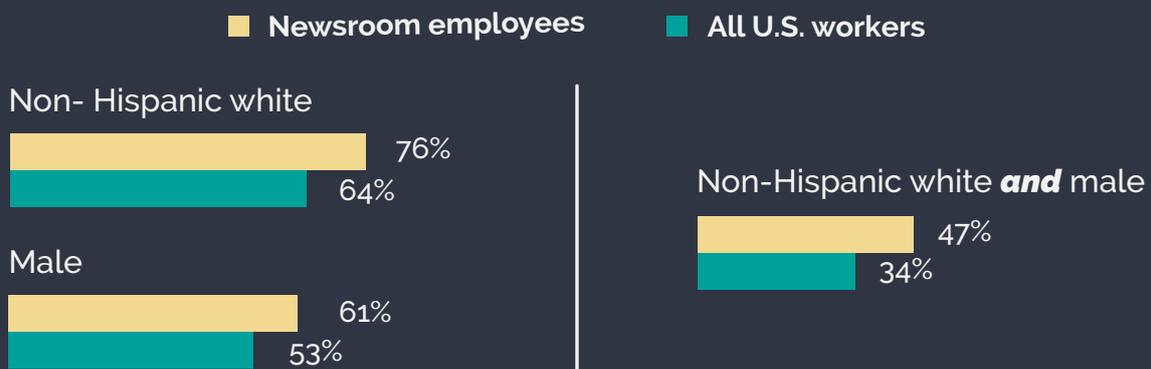
Latino professionals find it difficult entering the mainstream media or having opportunities to grow within it. The

Argentina-born journalist, Julieta Mendieta, defined it very clearly “for the monolingual mainstream media your experience as a tough reporter in Spanish language newsrooms doesn't count. They don't bother reading your portfolio, nor [do they] consider it valid if it's not in English.”

News industry analysts' general findings underscore the plight of journalists of color in today's media markets: In 2018, the Pew Center for Research said 76% of the nation's newsrooms were non-Hispanic white and 61% male<sup>14</sup>.

## NEWSROOM EMPLOYEES ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE WHITE AND MALE THAN ALL U.S. WORKERS

*% of U.S. employed adults who are...*



Source: IRE Journal

ASNE (the American Society of News Editors) has tracked diversity. They concluded that even those newsrooms which attempted to diversify their staff tended to give their Latino or minority journalists non-essential beats, in which they wrote about things that were not valued in the newsroom. For example, non-English-speaking community news. "Newsrooms have not been inclusive."<sup>15</sup>

Despite people of color making up about 40% of the population according to the last census data, brown and black journalists only represent 22.6% of the workforce in the U.S. newsrooms that responded to the ASNE's survey. <sup>16</sup>Efforts to diversify before COVID19 haven't made much progress.

ASNE data shows that between 2004 and 2019, 37% of newsrooms became more diverse, adding Black, Latino, Asian and female journalists. In the same period, 30% of newsrooms became less diverse. And, of course, inclusion in leadership is even more limited. In the New York Times, for example 7% of the staff is Latino while only 3% of the leaders are Hispanic<sup>17</sup>.

The lack of diversity by gender and race in newsrooms can be seen in detail in ASNE's website<sup>18</sup>. All these data reflect the situation in pre-COVID19 times. Conditions can only be worse now, especially for women of color, who are on the frontline to lose their jobs or experience furlough<sup>19</sup>.

## DISCRIMINATION

Getting into newsrooms is not easy for Hispanics, but once there, Latinos face harder working conditions. Almost half -- 45% -- of the journalists interviewed by Fundamedios said they experienced direct racial discrimination. The number of gathered testimonies makes it clear: they are not isolated cases; nor are they due to the excessive sensitivity of individuals. They are part of a structural problem.

Latino journalists do the same job as their white peers with fewer resources, and less pay. The intersectionality of race and gender results in cumulative discrimination against female journalists who are of Latino origin.

It is important to say that discrimination does not only occur in anglophone newsrooms.

Latinos are not a monolith and there is also differentiation among people from different origins. We collected testimonies of Mexicans, Cubans and Boricuas discriminating against descendants from other regions, due to their accent or cultural heritage, and lately their political views or party.

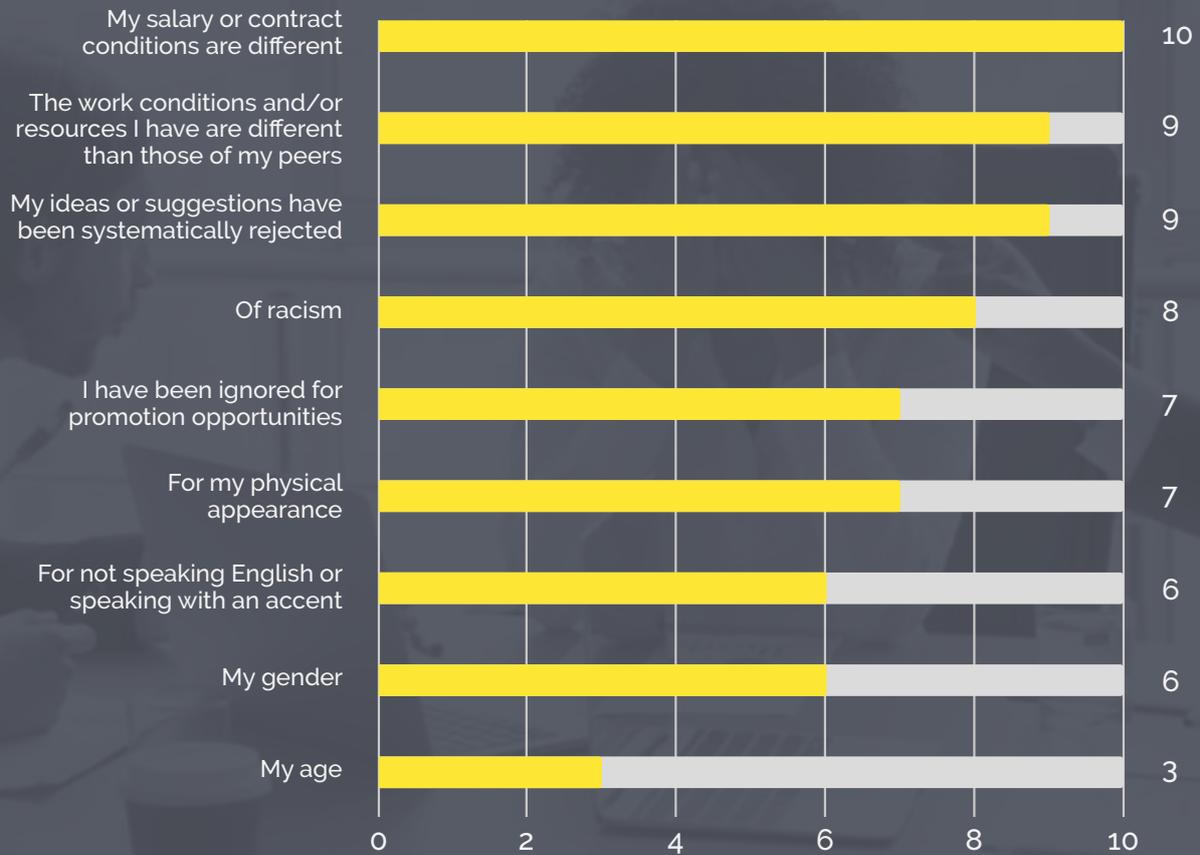
Also of concern is the discrimination by Latinos based on sexual orientation or gender, which is very common in Spanish speaking media outlets. The Latina pay gap is, by far the worst form of discrimination against journalists of color, but it is even worse in some Hispanic outlets which are strongly affected by a distinctly macho culture.



*"As a photojournalist for one of the Hispanic TV networks, I realized the big differences between the "general market" and the Hispanic market. In one of my jobs the salary was almost 50% less than the same position in English".*

This statement was provided by a Latino journalist who answered Fundamedios' survey about the main challenges Hispanic journalists face in the U.S.A. It is an anonymous quote, but it perfectly coincides with the complaints collected on Fundamedios' interviews and shown in the following chart.

## I HAVE FELT DISCRIMINATED AGAINST BECAUSE...



Fundamedios spoke to journalists from DC, TX, FL, NC, CA, AZ, NJ, CN,CL, VA, MD, NV + Puerto Rico

## LOW SALARIES

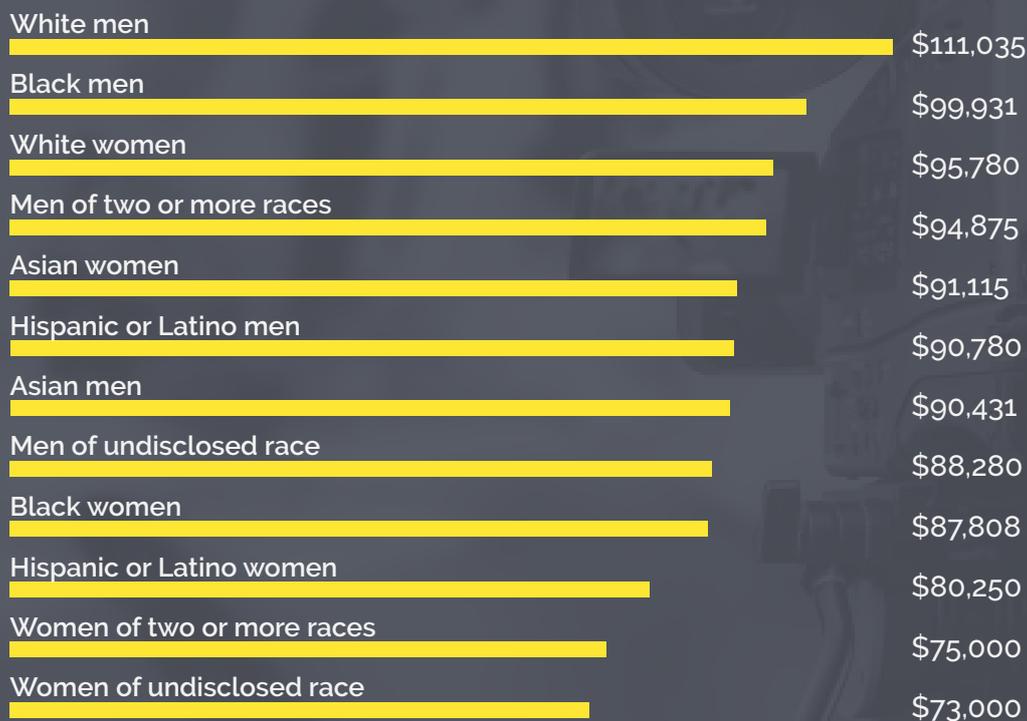
Although journalists shine light on injustice, there is not much transparency on pay equity studies for newsrooms. The existing pay studies in the media reflect differences among white and all nonwhite workers (Black, Indigenous and people of color). But there is little data giving specific information according to race or Hispanic journalists.



Except for The Washington Post. Its Guild Study 2019 presented very transparent pictures of the situation, with differentiated data by race and gender that reveals a great deal about the industry. In this newspaper, a Latino male journalist makes \$20,000 less a year than a white man. A Latina earns \$30,000 less for the same job. A woman of two or more races, most probably a Black Latina, deducts an additional \$5,000 from her annual pay check.

COMPANY - WIDE

## MEDIAN PAY BY RACE AND GENDER (SALARIED EMPLOYEES)



Source: Washington Post Guild Pay Study 2019

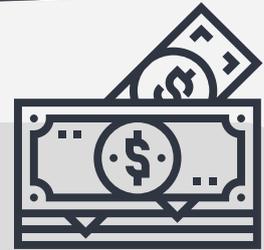
Also, the Los Angeles Times Guild Pay Study published in 2018 provided specific numbers about the pay gap. Non-white men earned \$15,000 less than white men, while non-white women, most of them Latinas, were at the bottom with almost \$30,000 less per year<sup>20</sup>.

## MEDIAN PAY GAPS BY GENDER AND RACE/ETHNICITY



Note: Figures rounded to nearest thousand.

Source: Los Angeles Times Guild Pay Study 2018



The Asian American Journalists Association documented on Voices how salary disparities affect almost all journalists of color in the main U.S. newsrooms. The relevant data published in 2018 does not specify what Hispanics earn. But the information proves how systemic disparities are persistent throughout the industry, except for the Star Tribune, which shows Latinas unusually well off. The following data was highlighted by Voices<sup>21</sup>.

## Dow Jones (Includes Wall Street Journal, MarketWatch and Barron's)

### Gender:



Union-represented men made \$88,421 a year on average



versus women who averaged \$76,744.

**That's an \$11,678 difference.**

### Race:

White women earned \$77,862

while black women earned \$59,348,

**a \$18,514 difference.**

Source: AAJA VOICES 2018

## New York Times

### Gender:



Men in the newsroom made \$111,072 a year on average



while women made \$101,556 on average,

**a \$9,516 difference.**

### Race:

Whites earned \$109,876 a year

while people of color earned \$97,136,

**a \$12,740 disparity.**

Source: AAJA VOICES 2018

## San Francisco Chronicle

### Gender:



The median salary for a male reporter is \$75,548.



compared to \$72,428 for women,

a \$3,120 difference.

### Race:

For white reporters, median pay was \$75,340,

compared to \$73,364 for persons of color,

a \$1,976 difference.

Source: AAJA VOICES 2018

## Associated Press (Note: the union did not provide salary figures.)

### Gender:



On average, a male reporter made \$2,700 more annually than a female reporter.

### Race:

Of the AP's 50 highest paid employees in the editorial unit, just four were people of color.

Source: AAJA VOICES 2018

## Star Tribune (Note: the union did not provide salary figures)

### Gender:



Women earned, on average, 95 cents to every dollar a man earned.

### Race:

Hispanic women earned 93 cents to the average dollar earned by any Star Tribune employee in the union; Asian women earned 88 cents and black women earned 86 cents.

Source: AAJA VOICES 2018

In the aftermath of the George Floyd killing, the discussions about race in newsrooms encouraged unions to demand more equity in the Summer and Fall of 2020. Examples of that were the open letters published by the HuffPost Union<sup>22</sup>, the Arizona Republic<sup>23</sup> and Los Angeles Times<sup>24</sup> among others.

The latter, for example, established the Latino Caucus and wrote an open letter<sup>25</sup> to the owner on July 21, 2020, with 14 specific demands. His response was a recognition of the mistakes made in the past and a willingness to redress them. On Nov. 10 2020, the L.A. Times and its former owner,

Tribune Publishing, announced they would settle a pay-disparity lawsuit for \$3 million. After the lawsuit's final hearing, 240 current and former Black and Latino staffers will get some back pay.

It is worth quoting what Esmeralda Bermudez, one of the L.A. Times Latino Caucus founders said during our interview "This is not only an internal moral obligation, this is a moral conversation for our entire Latino community; for the Latino students who have the hardest time entering the internship roles and all the representation in our environment in L.A."

## **WORST WORKING CONDITIONS AND/OR LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES**

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We also documented complaints of a lack of appropriate resources for Latino journalists to do their work, especially in broadcast journalism, where survey participants cited receiving inadequate equipment or being relegated to understaffed reporting teams.

Typically, investigative journalists work in teams for each part of a project. But unlike their white peers, Latino journalists in our survey said they were too often the only person in charge of investigating, recording and editing all reports. Moreover, many said their story ideas were routinely rejected. Others reported disparaging comments about their physical appearance or accents. And a significant number of Latino journalists said they believed they had not been given equal opportunity for advancement.

## **TESTIMONIES OF DIFFERENT WORKING conditions and lack of opportunities**

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*In a media group in the Southern US that broadcasts from local channels, its staff for the six English-language newscasts includes a team of forty people, versus the four people who work to produce two local Spanish-language newscasts to inform the Latino community.*





*When I go to cover news, I go with my simple tripod, which I bought, and I go alone on the street. Other media work with four people. We are like the ugly ducklings of the family that they never remember.*



*I was a more experienced freelancer who didn't get a position over a younger blonde Caucasian woman.*



Agism and sexism are also important factors of discrimination against women that we were able to document. But of course, they affect women over 40 years of all races. Latina journalists at the TV station NY1 have been challenging the accepted formula of a television news anchor desk consisting of a man with distinctive gray temples, next to a young woman who meets a stereotype of beauty. You can find more details of the interviews on our RJI piece from October 2020.

Some journalists we spoke with provided us with testimonies of discrimination inside the newsrooms, where they were the only Latino or one of a few, and felt like tokens, or not accepted at all. But the huge majority were subjects of the growing hostile environment against Latinos outside of the

newsroom, such as citizens on the streets or intolerant audiences, rejecting news about the Latino community, about the dreamers or the situation of undocumented workers that work on essential sectors as meat packers or agriculture. This is added to the long history of Latinos being treated as second class citizens.

The way media has portrayed Latinos was crudely described in a Los Angeles Times column by Gustavo Arellano,<sup>26</sup> who quoted professor Mark Cronlund Anderson calling the Times “unrepentantly racist” for describing Latinos as “greasers” who were “lazy, thriftless, ignorant, superstitious and unstable.” This way of reflecting Latinos has done a great deal of harm to the Hispanic community over a century.

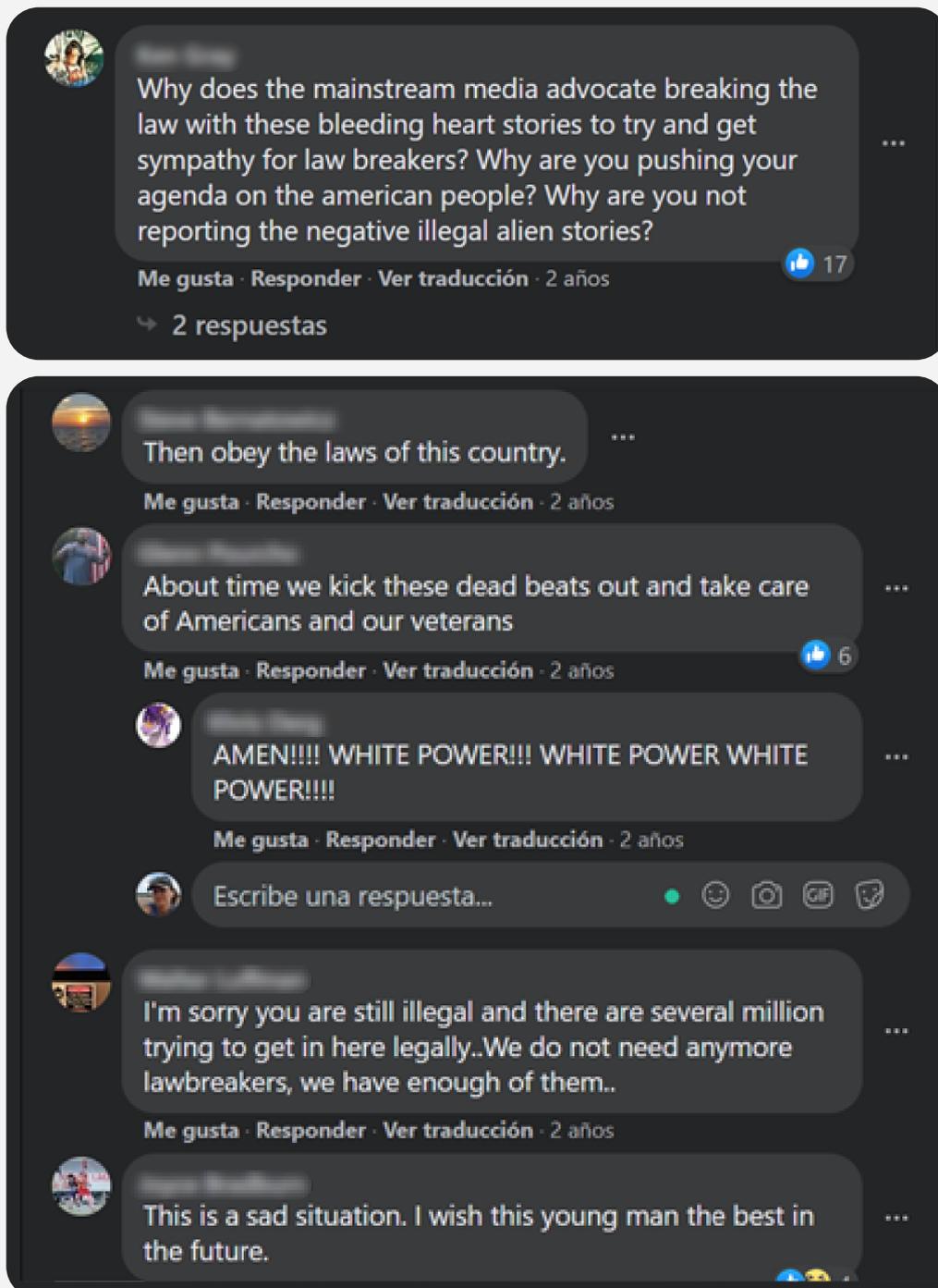


To be just, it is also key to mention that racial stereotyping in Hispanic media has been a topic over the last years<sup>27</sup>. And the way the Black Lives Matter protests were covered led to a vigorous debate about racism in Spanish language media<sup>28</sup>. The editor of the Miami Herald was forced to resign when the paper published an unchecked insert containing racist and anti- Semitic content<sup>29</sup>.

# VERBAL AGGRESSION

Although many journalists have shown they have a thick enough skin to ignore most derogatory comments or attitudes, we gathered many examples of comments that caused pain and affected their self-esteem. Some were directed towards Latino journalists; others were aimed at the Hispanic community. Some of the comments came from colleagues; others from audiences complaining about watching or reading news about Latinos.

The following screen shot belongs to a typical Facebook page of a local TV station in the southern state of the U.S.A. after a report on immigrants.



One of the strongest testimonies shared with us, was from Helen Ubiñas, columnist at the Philadelphia Inquirer, who told us that she has got accustomed to being called “ugly, fat, whore, stupid Puerto Rican, the N word”. She already got used to the threats that they would rape her or beat her, which were intimidating enough. But what she definitely could not stand were the insults that she did not belong in that space, that she was stupid, and not good enough because of her gender and the color of her skin.

Among all her harassers, she has identified at least ten or twelve men who regularly attack her. They even sign with their name and companies. They fill her voicemail with hate messages telling her to just write about baking or that she should consider killing herself. In the following link you will be able to hear how harassment sounds:



“kill yourself”

The newspaper’s management reported these kinds of threats directly to the police. But the most the police can do until the situation escalates, is knock on the offender’s door if they can find him or her or know his or her address.

## HERE ARE OTHER EXAMPLES OF TESTIMONIES

### ABOUT DISCRIMINATION BECAUSE OF RACISM GATHERED DURING OUR INTERVIEWS:

“

*It was not racism towards me but towards my reporting on the Latino community. Some comments on Facebook said ‘I will not tune into this station if they re-publish content translated into Spanish’. Ninety-five percent of the comments on social media were negative, racist and hateful.*

”

“

*I got obscene emails and calls from readers referencing my Latinx name, and topics I wrote about.*

”

“

*I have been told that the Hispanic media is hypocritical and that we are not with the community. They have offended me with derogatory words.*

”

*“ During a Republican rally I was prevented from participating and did not manage to record even one interview. Nobody wanted to talk to me. And , when a man spoke with his microphone in the air, I moved forward and two guys started pushing me and called me a cockroach. ”*

*“ I have been the victim of several verbal attacks by protestors while doing my job. I have been branded as reporting false information, and some people shouting “fake news at me. ”*

*“ When I covered a public hearing on undocumented immigrants, a woman was speaking and said that Hispanics were dogs, and when I interviewed her, she asked me for my driver's license, and she verbally assaulted me. I reported it to the organization she represented. ”*

*“ On the station's Facebook page, some people in the audience criticized the publications made in Spanish. ”*

## **INSIDE** **THE NEWSROOMS**

*“ In the communal kitchen of the station I had just had lunch and the head engineer threw his cup at me, to wash it. He was always very disrespectful to me. ”*

*“ I have experienced microaggressions from coworkers due to being Latina. ”*

*“ Systemic racism is in every institution. Also in Unions, they are all white males. There is also institutional racism. ”*

*“ In Oklahoma I received letters full of insults, they deduced that I was married to a Latino and they sent me letters accusing me of being a sinner because we were married between two people of two races. ”*

## DISCRIMINATION

# DUE TO THE ACCENT

“

*At the White House, where I report from, some white journalists make comments and even talk badly because I report in Spanish.*

”

“

*In Boston and Florida, I had sad experiences of discrimination for being a Latino reporter and speaking with an accent.*

”

“

*Generally, the Governor's Office does not allow for Spanish-language media inquiries.*

”

“

*It is also difficult for us to get answers from ICE and the sheriffs, as some are anti-immigrant. They don't send us press releases or invite us to news calls.*

”

“

*Discrimination definitely worsened with the Trump administration and its discourse against Latinos. It was as if all that hatred from the people came out and they felt free to discriminate against whomever they wanted. One time we were on our way to West Palm Beach and we were speaking in Spanish and a lady came to say that we will speak in English. Since Trump's arrival, discrimination against Spanish speakers and the media has been on the rise.*

”

“

*When applying for a position, my boss told me that even though I work for the news or some national show, I would never have a fixed position on the news because of my Caribbean accent.*

”

# LESS ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Although over 60% of the journalists in our study consider they have equal access to information, digging deeper reveals even the largest corporations, such as Telemundo and Univision, have struggled to have direct answers for the Latino community or to receive materials in Spanish. Further, they often experience extreme difficulties accessing one-on-one interviews with the main Federal or State authorities. The COVID19 crisis has unveiled the most blatant testimony that there is no strategy to inform the Latino community, despite the fact that Latinos are most affected by the virus with a higher rate of infection and deaths.

It is well known that to have an impact you need information oriented toward local communities. Based on the CUNY study of the Latino Media, Graciela Mochkofsky pointed out that Latinos trust their local media “...they are the first people immigrant Latinos call when something bad happens”.<sup>30</sup>

It is critical now, during the Covid19 pandemic, that reliable information reach the Latino community. Fundamedios has documented several cases of larger Hispanic media outlets being unable to get direct answers from governors, even in states which have large Latino populations. In Dallas, for example, in order to get simple interviews, the Univision station had to resort to a public campaign denouncing the lack of answers. This was given publicity by an English language newspaper, The Dallas News<sup>31</sup>, and obtained the support of the county’s highest authority, Judge Clay Jenkins<sup>32</sup>. He reminded the governor “his obligation to communicate with all the constituents”. It was only after this pressure that governor Greg Abbott began answering their requests. It took almost two months for the governor to comply<sup>33</sup>.

Similar complaints were made about lack of access to direct information by Hispanic media outlets in New York and North Carolina. The claims did not refer only to governors but also to health departments in different counties.

Government officials, offices and candidates have often avoided communicating directly with the Hispanic media. Candidates have preferred to talk through their advertising campaigns and not in direct interviews. For Lourdes Torres, who is Senior Vice President of Political Coverage and Special Projects at Univision, the largest Hispanic corporation in the U.S.A., it is no coincidence that authorities have stopped talking to Latino media outlets. The immigration question has almost become taboo and politicians are afraid of questions on such a controversial and crucial topic. Although in a survey made by Univision and quoted by Torres, Latino people are primarily concerned about health (even before COVID-19), job opportunities, and the economy. The fourth interest area was immigration.

Latino media outlets and journalists have played a crucial role in filling the gap between official sources and the Latino communities they serve with cultural and language interpretation to provide vital information during the pandemic, such as COVID19 testing places or safety recommendations. Many journalists have developed innovative strategies to reach targeted audiences where they are, implementing hyperlocal journalism solutions.

Penelope Muse Abernathy, Knight Chair in Journalism and Digital Media Economics and Professor at the University of North Carolina, called this civic work “advocacy journalism”. Conecta Arizona, Documented, El Timpano are examples of journalists using WhatsApp or text messages to reach their audiences. But, to cover the information void, many journalists working for traditional newspapers, as Que Pasa or La Noticia in North Carolina, have also done important advocacy work and adapted their skills to fill the gap left by the official sources. You can read their stories on the RJI August piece.

Finally, but not least, importantly the first day of the Biden Administration, journalists had renewed access to the official White House webpage in Spanish.

## ASSAULTS

# AND ARBITRARY DETENTIONS



As already said, 2020 was a year with extreme adverse conditions for journalists in the U.S. As a consequence of the growing antimedia rhetoric media workers were harassed by ordinary citizens as well as by law enforcement officials in several states of the U.S.A.

Fundamedios has documented several cases of abuse of power against Latino journalists. Most of them were in the middle of tense situations in which all media workers were under attack. During the first 30 days of the racial protests, in the aftermath of George Floyd's killing the organization compiled a list of incidents involving more than 25 journalists of Latino origin. Fourteen were physically assaulted by police officers and eight were arbitrarily detained. Eight of the journalists were women. The complete report can be found [here](#).

The most emblematic detention was broadcast live when law enforcement in Minneapolis detained the black Latino journalist, Omar Jimenez, and his CNN crew. It is noteworthy that another CNN team, led by a white male journalist, was in the same place at the same time, but was not prevented from doing its work by the police.

Another blatant violation of the First Amendment was the arrest of Mexican-born multimedia journalist, Gustavo Martínez Contreras, with the Asbury Park Press in the state of New Jersey. On the night of June 1st, he was recording the violent arrest of two minors, when a policeman shouted "He is the problem". Despite having his New Jersey Police press credential visibly hung around

his neck, a police officer violently assaulted him. With one blow, he threw the cell phone out of his hand stopping him from filming. He was forced to the ground and handcuffed, and together with the two young demonstrators, he was taken in a van to the Belmar Police Station. There, Martínez Contreras was questioned as to whether he knew Antifa, whether he belonged to the group or whether he had seen members of Antifa in the protests. President Donald Trump had falsely and repeatedly blamed Antifa as the group responsible for the protests. The journalist was released after five hours in custody and charges were dropped. Martínez testified before the Inter American Commission of Human Rights in October 2020.

Apart from the event on January 6th 2021, during the research period, Fundamedios documented diverse cases of citizens insulting, harassing and disturbing journalists during their work. All of the incidents were provoked by Trump supporters. Fundamedios documented the moment when María Paula Ochoa, from Telemundo Arizona was harassed by the protesters in front of the Electoral College in Phoenix, Arizona<sup>34</sup>. In Florida the Hispanic far right group, Directo y Sin Censura, streamed live two occasions when they insulted and interrupted the work of a Telemundo team.

More detailed interviews and testimonies of this study are available on the piece published by Palabra on January 2, 2021 and on the monthly publications at RJJ.



# SOLUTIONS

Working on solutions, in 2021 Fundamedios is addressing the journalists needs and is implementing a training program to raise awareness on the pay gap that affects Latinas. We are building capacity by coaching journalists to improve their negotiations skills.

Fundamedios has also developed a training toolkit available for all interested organizations and journalists. The contribution of veteran Latina journalists was key for the success of the project. Our gratitude to Rebecca Aguilar, Society for Professional Journalists' President elect and founder of Latina Journalists, Nora Lopez, National Association of Hispanic Journalists' President, and Marisol Seda, Latino Links' President.



**FUNDAMEDIOS**  
Expression of Freedom

**¡My job is worth more!**

For every \$1 a white male journalist makes, a Latina earns \$0.63.  
Salary discrimination exists in newsrooms.

**Improve your negotiation skills.**

The banner features an illustration of three diverse female journalists. One is holding a newspaper labeled 'NEWS', another is holding a microphone, and the third is holding a smartphone. The background is orange with faint silhouettes of people.

# CONCLUSION

As an outcome of Fundamedios' research on the working conditions for Hispanic journalists in the U.S., we can assert that there is discrimination against Latino journalists, which affects the environment of freedom of expression and access to information for the Hispanic communities in the country. Therefore, we ratify Fundamedios' mission to protect freedom of the press and stand behind those journalists who have been harassed, assaulted, detained or discriminated against in any way. Independent journalism is an important pillar of democracy. And the democracy of a multicultural America is only real if all voices are being heard.

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A large, dark blue silhouette of a person's head and shoulders is positioned on the left side of the page, facing right. The background is a dark blue gradient with a yellow curved band at the top.

[www.fundamedios.org](http://www.fundamedios.org)

Fundamedios is a civil society organization committed to defending freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and access to information to promote transparency and human rights as pillars of democracy in Latin America since 2007. Since 2018 our office in Washington, D.C. works to build bridges between journalists in the Americas, support organizations to navigate the Inter-American Human Rights System, and advocate for Hispanic journalists in the United States. Fundamedios is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.