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US-MEXICO RELATIONS: ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AT THE BORDER

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UNCORRECTED TRANSCRIPT

INTRODUCTION:

DAVID F. DAMORE, Nonresident Senior Fellow, Governance Studies, Brookings

FEATURED DISCUSSION:

VANDA FELBAB-BROWN, Senior Fellow and Director, Initiative on Nonstate Armed Actors, Brookings

MICHAEL KAGAN, Director, Immigration Clinic, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Joyce Mack Professor of Law, William S. Boyd School of Law, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

RACHEL TORRES, Assistant Professor, Political Science, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

JOHN TUMAN, Executive Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Professor of Political Science - University of Nevada, Las Vegas

MODERATOR:

AMBER DIXON, Host, "NevadaWeek," VegasPBS

DAMORE: I'm David Damore, executive director of Brookings Mountain West. Welcome today's event panel discussion, "US-Mexico Relations Addressing Challenges at the Border." Today's event is part of Brookings Election 2024: Issues at Stake series. For those who may not be familiar with Brookings Mountain West, it's a long-standing partnership between the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and Brookings that brings Brookings scholars and expertise to bear on issues affecting the dynamic, fast growing Mountain West region. Today's panelists from Brookings, Vanda Felbab-Brown, has been a frequent program participant and has had students completing the UNLV's Brookings Public Policy minor work as interns. Today's event is a great example of our partnership bringing scholars from Brookings, and you and I'll be together to address the topic of regional and national significance. So while border security has dominated the presidential candidates rhetoric so far, this relationship between US and Mexico is a multi-dimensional, multi-dimensional, and complex. Nevada is home to over 220,000 residents who were born in Mexico, and this November, Latinos may make up 20% of the state's electorate. Las Vegas and the Mountain West region are already benefiting from increased trade with Mexico, which is now the United States largest trading partner. Our panel will be engaging on these issues and more, as well as the topics that were submitted online earlier in the week. I want to give some thank out. Thank you. Before we start the panel, first UNLV TV for handling today's broadcasting on our team, Ashley LeClaire and Katelyn Saladino in the Brookings events team for pulling this all together. And of course, our moderator, Amber Renee Dixon. She's award-winning journalist who hosts Nevada Week, a public affairs program broadcast by Vegas PBS.

DIXON: Thank you so much. And there are no cards that you should be getting in order to write down any questions that may come up. So yeah, be thinking of them. Looking forward to hearing what you want to know. So let's have each one of you introduce yourselves. But also answer this question in relation to your area of expertise and in relation to US-Mexico relations. What is one policy that you would like the next president of the United States to implement and why? Vonda, we'll start with you.

FELBAB-BROWN: Well, thank you, Amber. And, thanks to UNLV, for, co-hosting this event with us. It's absolutely terrific to be back in Las Vegas and to be, at the university. Brookings Mountain West has been enormously generous partner, friend, co-organizer over many years. And, I've always just received the most, generous, hospitality. And I'm absolutely thrilled to be back here and have this opportunity to talk with all of you about one of the defining issues in US politics overall, and certainly, in this election. So I am Vanda Felbab-Brown, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC, where I direct a number of projects. One of them is the initiative of non-state actors and issues like crime in Mexico. The US-Mexico

border and its various licit illicit flows are very much part of my focus there. I also direct a large project on fentanyl. And that is, of course, something that very much, influences thinking about, the border. So, you know, your question. So, Amber, what I would like to, see in the US-Mexico relationship in the new administration is much more honesty and, frankly, much tougher, honest talk about, the issues that, flow across the border, including, contraband, but also the rule of law issues on both sides of the border and particularly in Mexico. But there are also sides on our side of the border that have to do with rule of law, such as the presence of self-styled militias along the US-Mexico border that can have potentially, significant and negative effect on the quality of our elections. So much more frank, tough talk between both countries is needed to advance rule of law. In both places.

DIXON: I'm going to have more questions for you on that. But John, let's go to you next.

TUMAN: I want to echo Vanda and say thank you very much to Brookings and Brookings Mountain West for organizing this event. In this election year, I think the US Mexico relationship is tremendously important. So anything to promote education around those issues and the electorate is, is really important. So I'm John Tillman, I'm a professor in the Department of Political Science. My research areas are primarily in Latin American politics with a focus on Mexico in. And so I've been doing work on Mexico since the early 1990s, and most of my research has been focused on the auto industry there. I've also done work on foreign investment, including Chinese investment across, different Mexican states and what drives investment in the auto industry and also among Chinese firms. And then I've done some work, not so recently on immigration and, immigrant communities here, in the Las Vegas metropolitan area, from, different Latin American countries and also different states, in Mexico. So, the immigration and migration issue is still sort of near and dear to my heart. You know, I think of the question we're posed about the US president and what the US president might do. There her his first day, my hope would actually be to as difficult and challenging as it might be, to, restart, negotiations with the Congress on immigration reform. I actually think that the bilateral relationship and between the US and Mexico, while very complex, in many ways, sometimes gets derailed around, immigration. There's a obviously a very large the largest out of all, you know, groups from Latin America and Mexicans, living in the United States. We have a number of DACA recipients, here in Nevada. And there's still a large population nationally. And this is a tremendously important, issue for Mexico. And I think if the US were to actually make progress, as challenging as that might be in such a polarized environment, increasingly like around identity, for example, in the US, I think if we were able to make some progress on that issue in the US, that might actually help to leverage other changes and and priorities for the

US and its relationship with Mexico, that would actually be what I would say, even though it's kind of like the third rail of, politics in the US right now.

DIXON: All right. Rachel.

TORRES: Hi. So my name is Rachel Torres. I'm an assistant professor in the political science department as well. My specialization is on public policy, specifically criminal justice and immigration. Within the United States. Most of that is centered on Latin American immigration, particularly populations that we would think of constituting Latinos. Right. And so my specific goal, I mean, I echo John, I want to add a caveat to that question, which is that there's actually quite limited power in what the president, US president could do, right, in terms of long term reform or change in relation to immigration policy. And so that's kind of been the problem that's been reoccurring across administrations is congressional gridlock as well as just, general Partizan divide on how we should go about reforming immigration is going to create the system where a different presidential administration comes in. They may pass, for example, executive orders that are reshaping immigration next administration come in and undo that quite quickly because they lack some of the firmer like, legislative powers, right, that Congress has. But if I were to blue sky idea what I want the next presidential administration to do, it would be something similar to the 2001 Dream act. As proposed by Hatch and Durbin. And so most people are more familiar with the 2012 version of the Dream Act, much of which got, kind of scooped by the Obama administration into Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, DACA. But that 2001 bill was a little bit more, encompassing in terms of setting a pathway to citizenship so immigrants would be able to apply, get provisional residency later, transition that to permanent residency. And then permanent residency allows for the opportunity of naturalization. The one caveat I would make is that I think it should be a much broader bill. Just like DACA, that 2001 bill was mainly focused on people who've been brought to the US as children. If we're going to kind of really, embrace immigration reform, we have to acknowledge that's actually a relatively it's a big percentage of the immigrant population, but it's certainly not right. The lion's share of populations, most people coming to the US legally as adults, right, and overstay right. And so that would be kind of my, you know, dream, presidential reform that they could forward.

DIXON: Michael. Mike.

KAGAN: Yes. So I my name on my business card is Michael Kagan. But most people call me Mike. I, teach, in the, law school. I, I teach immigration law sometimes, and mostly administrative law, professional

responsibility. Probably best known around here for being the director of the Unlv immigration clinic, which runs, we have a community advocacy office in downtown Las Vegas, which is State of Nevada's only dedicated deportation defense center, and has, as of September of eight lawyers there. And one of those lawyers actually supported by Unlv as, support to Unlv students. So we provide actually our most comprehensive services to our, we always say we stand by our neighbors. And, that starts with, our immediate campus. So if you are a Unlv student or, and in some cases, staff member or a member of the household of, Unlv student, we might be able to help you. We serve, I should say I was resistant to being on this panel because I don't work at the I teach immigration law. I don't work at the border, because, Nevada, you can check it out on a map. Does not have a border with Mexico. Maybe a spiritual border But but but not, not a literal one. But I think that actually the population here illustrates how how unfortunately, this parallel can be just repeated every year. Could have been held 25 years ago. And, because in Las Vegas, according to Pew, might have the highest, documented population, per capita of any large metropolitan area in the country. And, it possible Houston might be slightly ahead of us, but I hope we're at number one, because it's good to just be number one in something. It's a better talking point. More interesting, actually, than even the size of the population is the fact that while we call them undocumented immigrants, they haven't immigrated in a really long time. They basically the vast majority of that population has been here more than ten years. One and 1 in 4 have been here more than 20 years. And that is just an illustration that we have not yet solved the, failures of migration policy in the United States from, from 20, 25, even 30 years ago. And of course, we have new daunting ones today. So to answer the question, I'm going to be a little bit more blunt and then a little bit more evasive. The, the blunter part is obviously it depends who wins the election. If one candidate wins the election, I hope he does nothing. So, so, because that would be the best case scenario. So the, I actually and I mean, this actually, then this actually gets through with my true answer is, I think the for people who are more serious and I think potentially better intentioned, at the border, I think there are lots of technical policies that I'd be happy to talk about that I think, could be improved. And there are a whole lot of, a lot of not just policies, but we have to pay attention to the administrative apparatuses, and the funding for them. A lot of the problem lies. They're not even in the written law. But, before we get to that, there's a larger problem, which is, while I think we have reached a point in American politics on migration where essentially one party is actually very clear about what they want, I think it's it's terrifying and it's driven by racism and xenophobia, but they want a closed border. And actually, there's a difference in vocabulary used if you listen closely, Republican politicians starting with Donald Trump. But many others will use the word we need to close the border closed. And when you look at that, although sometimes it's a little bit of gray area about the line between legal immigration and illegal immigration, quite often even that disappears if you push

on it. And they really don't want, migration. Certainly not from the global South, certainly not from, black, people who are black or brown, to be really blunt. I think the more so I find that scary, but not all that interesting. The, it's pretty simple, and I think actually it's maybe a political advantage, to some extent that it is actually easy to understand. I think the more interesting problem is, if the other candidate wins, if she wins, I my advice to her, before you get in, immersed in the technicalities of what should be the standard for the credible fear process in the asylum system. I think that, what has been missing in the Biden administration, and to some extent previously in the Obama administration is an articulation, you could say, a vision, for the American public about what exactly are we trying to accomplish there? And we have been stuck in basically a binary between two words. One the one the Republicans use closed and the opposite opposite open. So to have open borders or totally closed borders, I don't think either captures where the I think the American people are conflicted and ambivalent about it, and the issues are complicated, but neither of those really captures where 60% of Americans would fall. I don't think that whether it's Kamala Harris, Joe Biden and or anyone else in the Democratic Party for the most part, has really articulated actually, an understandable alternative vision. To some extent, I would note there is a vocabulary difference, and I do think that it's worth paying attention to this. If you listen to the Democratic National Convention, they didn't say closed borders that most press reported, I think accurately that they were moving. Right. And they were on immigration on the border in particular. But the term that the Democrats used was secure. So we need secure borders. We need to secure our borders. You can have a sports stadium that lets a huge crowd in that is secure. You can also have security by being closed. It's very ambiguous what it means. I do think putting some flesh on that, I would suggest to them that that that Democrats in particular and anyone who is not basically xenophobic will lose out if the battle is just between totally open borders and closed borders, because people think of open as chaos. And I hope that maybe the next president would try to present, a vision about orderly borders, which is quite different from closed or open and chaotic.

DIXON: While we're on the topic of vocabulary, I think you were hinting at this. Rachel, perhaps you could expand. You say, undocumented migrants. There are politicians who will say illegal aliens. Illegal immigrants. Explain your word choice.

TORRES: Right. So something I think really important to note is that being undocumented in the US, in and of itself, is not a crime, right? If you are caught right entering the country without authorization, certainly you will be detained, deport, processed for deporting. Right. But it in and of itself, right. Being undocumented is not an illegal distinction. Now, there's been a lot of different kind of state policies that kind of created this

narrative in which we kind of think of these people as inherently their the space they operate as being illegal. Right? That doesn't make it right. Normatively true about them. And so when I use undocumented, what I'm referring to is the fact that we do not have them openly kind of communicating their presence to the US. But I feel like the term illegal kind of implies right, to a certain extent, that their entry was inherently illegal. And what we know is that most undocumented populations did at one point legally, like enter the US. Right. It's also completely legal to show up the border and claim asylum and enter that kind of plea. All right. And so again, when we start talking about, immigration, I think when we utilize that terminology of illegal, we start again immediately. If you're going to think more normatively or in the humanitarian sense, we're automatically calling those populations like criminal, right? We're associating them with that when reality, there's a lot of different ways in which someone finds themselves to be undocumented, undocumented. Fun fact during 2020, right when we saw our kind of immigration, like, agencies and institutions have significant backlogs, there were people who are in the process of getting their permanent residency whose visas lapsed right now. Again, are they there? Are they undocumented or are they illegally in the country? Right. I think the terminology we can be a little bit more precise in what we're trying to get at. I think the larger just term of illegal immigrant is far too broad for me. And also, kind of acts as if this person is not a human being.

DIXON: Thank you for that. Vanda. Touching on this idea of open and close borders, you have talked about the extension of a border wall and how effective that may or may not be.

FELBAB-BROWN: Unfortunately, it's not at all effective, even though, of course, the Trump administration made it a hallmark of its policy, and it's something that a Trump two administration would return to. Now, interestingly enough, we are in a situation where the Biden administration had to, restart the construction of part of the wall, because of congressionally mandated appropriated money. So when the Biden administration came in, it tried to significantly disavow, the policies of the Trump administration, certainly the most, egregious, brutal ones such as, separating children from their families. But the white said of other policies. But as the years of the administration were unfolding, a lot of the switch, to the left toward the more humane humanitarian aspects of dealing with migration, turned out really challenging, not the least of which, because of the highly polarized debate and the vulnerability, that this created with, Republican constituencies, especially as we saw a massive surge of migrants coming to the US border at first principally trying to, claim asylum. Overwhelming the system. And eventually, as the system became overwhelmed, many simply resorted to, coming in, illegally. So part of the package of what the Biden administration tried to step away from was the construction of the wall. But nonetheless of parts of the wall, it's really a bollard

fence, were constructed, during the Trump administration and other parts had money allocated to it. So the Biden administration tried to get a new legal judgment that would allow it to spend the money in other ways, very much within the thematic of, secure border that would focus on, technological surveillance at the border, for example, and certainly beefing up, security in, legal ports of entry. The court denied it. And, so the, one of the aspects of the, policy has been that, parts of the construction, have to be, reauthorized, but, which is broadly written to the theme of what is the border supposed to do? Right. So the border, and the wall, according to the Trump administration, was to stop the flow of undocumented migrants, as well as other contraband, principally drugs. And chunks of the border wall were constructed during the Trump administration. Now, immediately during the Trump administration, we saw that both migrants and drugs were getting across, the wall. Whether people are digging tunnels underneath, bringing many more people by boats through the sea. In the case of drugs, a wide set of technological innovations took place, including flying drugs by drones. But anyway, the vast majority of drugs, certainly enters the United States through the legal ports of entry, are smuggled by US citizens, with vehicles, that often majority of time carry us, licenses. So building the fence has dramatic, consequences. Negative consequences for, the environment. It has, dramatic negative consequences for, communities along the border, not the least of which are Native American communities and does not deliver the promise of stopping, the bad flows, that it purports to stop.

DIXON: John, can you expand on how Mexico views these issues, immigration as well as border security and the influx of drugs from Mexico?

TUMAN: So for a long time in Mexico, the view across many different parties and the current governing party is Morena on National Regeneration Party. And Amlo, the current outgoing president, Claudia Sheinbaum, who's the president elect, viewed transit migration, you know, as they call it in Mexico from Central American countries, from other parts of Latin America, as well as migration from Mexico. They use the language and discourse of human rights that it's very important for them to protect, the human rights and the rights of, of migrants from other countries, as well as, Mexican migrants in, in the United States. But the reality has been, and I'd say this has also been true over the last six years, Mexican president serve A16 year term, no possibility of reelection. The reality has been that there has been increasing militarization. At least that's the way it's characterized in Mexico of of the government's response. I mean, there are other elements to this, but there are now over 300, detention centers, for for migrants throughout Mexico. They greatly expanded the. So these are called temporary, but, I think there's kind of an elastic meaning of that term. They seem to be becoming semi-permanent. They have militarized parts of the southern border. They've teargassed,

migrants from Guatemala or people who are transiting from the Guatemalan border. For example, there was, of course, near Juarez, and a migrant detention center, a very tragic fire that killed 40 people. That you may have heard about. And that is all part of the government's response, under pressure from the US to really, sort of ramp up enforcement and almost like a military response, throughout the country. And there are hundreds of checkpoints to, within the country along well-known, routes that people take throughout Mexico if they're transiting from other countries at the same time. You know, Sheinbaum, has really echoed what Amlo and this is President Lopez Obrador, as he's known in Mexico, Amlo, this Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador. So he goes by the acronym. That's how people know him in Mexico. You know, they really emphasized and this is not a novel approach, but, I think in their relationship with the US, they talked about the importance of getting to the root causes of migration. And, but they've really emphasizes the importance of additional aid, and investment for social development in Central America and other parts of Latin America where you've seen large, outflows of people. Venezuela is obviously a complicated situation, but the Trump administration, we now know, had plain evidence that was presented. This has now become public that if you ramp up, the sanctions, guess what? You're going to get more outflow of people from an economy that has been sort of a freefall and a collapse. And, you know, Sheinbaum has also talked about, you know, violence against women as being complicating factors. So and that has certainly been, you know, at play, probably on the margins for outmigration. In Guatemala, also, El Salvador, where you've had very high murder rates adjusted for population, against women. So that's been the other part of the approach. And, you know, what she's articulated in this was not really a salient issue in the campaign, but in the few times that she spoke about it, she said that she would like to sort of deepen those investments in other countries, which are sending migrants, through Mexico in order to try to address the so-called root causes.

FELBAB-BROWN: If I can come in on that. So it's absolutely true. What John is saying that both Claudia Sheinbaum, the president elect and, the current president, Lopez Obrador, have often spoken about the root causes. And that's was also something that the Obama administration was focused on with then Vice President Biden in charge of focusing on the Northern Triangle and, of course, Vice President Harris, when she assumed the vice presidency, was tasked with doing that. And she had some significant accomplishment in the Northern Triangle. But there are two problems. Several problems with the, rhetoric about, root causes. So the number one is that, the Mexican government, doesn't have money for addressing the root causes. Also, it's not just the Northern Triangle or in fact, arguably it's principally not the Northern Triangle. You heard about Venezuela, but we are seeing the flows of migrants from very many other parts of Latin America, and we are seeing very vast increases under flows of migrants from Africa, even from places

like Russia and Ukraine. And while those numbers in absolute terms are still dwarfed by the flows of people from Latin America. Significant jump. So at what point, how fast with what kind of resources can you be addressing? Root cause is everywhere, as intuitive as that is. The second element, and I should also add, however, that even on managing migration within Mexico, the Lopez Obrador administration decimate the Mexican budget for anything other than the National Guard military response gutted the resources that, the Principal Office for migration, for example, had, even as migrants in Mexico face tremendous violence from organized crime groups. But the other very important thing is that the Trump administration told the Mexican government that the way to have leverage with the United States is to turn the spigot of migration on and off, but never fully off, because the moment you have no migrant flows, all of a sudden issues of democracy that is being weakened in Mexico, issues of rule of law that's collapse in Mexico. Issues of trade relations, environmental relations, human rights, rise in the prominence. But as if. You can have the migration flows and turn them off to satisfy the US. And then they come again and you have to do more favors to the US. You have tremendous leverage over the US and the bill. Part of my original response to you, we need some hard, honest talk is that we need to break out of this straitjacket in the bilateral relationship that migration has put the United States in, and have far greater policy freedom on tremendously important issues, such as the criminal groups taking over Mexico, such as the weakening of democracy in Mexico. By finding other ways, not just rely on Mexico for migration.

DIXON: Mike.

KAGAN: Yeah, I want to pick up on that. I think it's extremely important. And I think there's a close connection to what I was talking about before, about the importance for the president to articulate what is the goals of our policy. I think the central error that President Biden made very early in, after taking office in 2021 was that he basically adopted President Trump's metric of what does success look like? Success in the border policy is when fewer people come to the border. And we continue to hear this. Right. So the, the Harris campaign would very happily tell you about how they brought the numbers down, but they might really mean Mexico for the reasons we just heard, that basically, what the US government has found is the most effective way to stop people from coming to the US border is to get the Mexican government to stop them, which, as we heard, makes the Mexican government it gives means that that's the only horse to trade from the US side. Nothing else can really be on the agenda from our perspective. But it also means if you're the US president coming into office and you're looking at this policy, that was a huge headache for your predecessor. If success and failure is measured by how many people come to your border, well, success or

failure is not in your control. And if I'm president, which I won't be, but if I am, I would like it to be in my control, my success to be more in my control. And I think the way to do that from the US perspective, as well as to make this more manageable, is to change the perspective on what we're trying to accomplish. Now, part of that, to be the honest part, I think, is that, we have to accept migration. A lot of this has to do it's not unique, the United States, that a lot of Western countries, it's true in Europe, as well as true in Australia as well, have basically become anti-immigration or or want to be very, very picky and very limited. I think that that puts people that puts governments, powerful governments at war with humanity because human beings migrate. It's part of what we do, where we're evolved for it. We're actually very well suited to do it. And it's part of how we solve problems on a regular, on a regular basis. It doesn't mean that there can't be any regulation of it, but I think an alternative vision of regulating migration is something more like housing. You don't want, un totally unregulated housing. I've actually lived in countries that have that trust, but you don't want that. But you need housing is a human need, and you need to address it and meet it. And a migration policy that's more like that in the end, is going to be a lot healthier. We can make it more secure. We can make it more orderly. I actually think that if people could see a policy like that, it actually would be fairly popular. But I don't think that's been articulated for anyone, and it would take a lot of resources and a lot of work to get to it.

TUMAN: Yeah. So I just wanted to jump in and make a couple of points. I mean, I agree with a lot of what Vanda was saying, but the administration, Sheinbaum have talked about, investments from the US under USAID and also multilateral investments. There's no doubt, you know, more foreign aid, whether it's coming from the US or if it's multilateral, takes years to materialize. So it doesn't have it doesn't pay dividends immediately. When you're talking about altering the incentive structure economically for people when they're deciding whether or not to migrate. And we know that the vast majority, I mean, some were displaced in civil wars, you know, over a million people in Guatemala in that civil war that, was not resolved one way or the other. El Salvador kind of also came to a stalemate, but it takes time. The other thing is, you know, I agree with what Mike is saying, Michael. You know, if we're having a frank talk, I think about immigration. We have to recognize the demographics here. So I'm at the tail end of the baby boomer generation. All right, 1964. Since then, fertility rates have dropped. You we can't, boost fertility rates and immediately solve what's going on in the labor market. We know that we have very good econometric evidence that the recent spike in inflation would have actually been worse if we had not have migration flows coming into the United States. Migration. You know, immigrants contribute tremendously in the Nevada economy, in the largest parts of the sectors which contribute the most gross state product here in gaming and hospitality. If you bought a home

here, very likely that they're all they were subcontracted crews, but those crews are coming from Mexico, Central America. When you get down to the people who are who are pouring pavement and building your home and, and now we're seeing other parts of services as, as the Latinx population gets, you know, higher levels of educational attainment, many parts of, of services, social services, education as well. And that's true in other parts of the economy. We've seen what happens in agriculture when we have ramped up enforcement, with la migra, as it's known. I grew up in the Central Valley. I picked peaches, not that I had to. I can tell you I got paid by the bin. It's very hard work. Most people self-select themselves out of those parts of the labor market for good reason. It's really, really hard work. So, you know, we have an aging population. If you look at Mexico's demographic, it's only in demographic structure. It's only about 10% of the population now, which is over age 60. Their fertility transition, so to speak, which is the the total fertility rate, the average number of children per woman declined, but it did so after the United States. And that's also true in many parts of Latin America, including in Central America. So you have people who are joining the workforce in those countries at a time when there really aren't very plentiful jobs that are well paid in the formal sector, you have a very large informal sector. Mexico, about half of the working population is actually in the informal sector, which is tremendous given how much manufacturing is there. And whereas we have high wages here and we also need immigrant labor. So that has to be part of any frank discussion as well. When we talk about, you know, the reasons that migrants come. People forget about the fact that whether we like it or not, we have high a high level of labor market integration. It's just not part of any formal agreement with Mexico and other Latin American countries. So, you know, I think that's lost often in the rhetoric and the discussion. We need immigrants in the US and they make a tremendous economic contribution nationally and also in the state.

DIXON: So when Elon Musk talks about birth rates, he he has a credible point there.

TUMAN: Well, but again, it takes a little while to.

KAGAN: I think he's talking about something else.

DIXON: Rachel, you wanted to add.

TORRES: Oh yeah, I think to add into it also in this additional context. Right. So something important to note is that our undocumented immigration, like immigrant population is really grown as the result of the

securitization, the militarization of the border. Right? So historically in the US, right, we did have migrant labor coming in from Mexico. I would say that more, Central American flows that we see now are really more related to kind of external factors along the lines of civil wars, increase cartel violence, etc., but also economic markets crashing. But historically in the US, right. We had migrant labor coming in, but they were only working for short periods of time. Right? So they were essentially we saw this kind of class of young, predominantly male laborers coming to the US working because their wages were a lot higher, and then going back to Mexico and developing it. Right, getting married, starting families, building up their, you know, homes. Right. And so they had this more of this mentality of seasonal labor, right. As the US has increased its militarization of. The border. Right. And I think you're completely right. What do we mean by secure? We have to have, like, a clear definition. Right. But militarization in the sense that we have fewer ports of entry, we're far more limited in who's allowed to come in for periods of time. The idea of immigrants being able to just come over seasonally in mass and work in our agricultural industry, I would argue, right. Politically, a lot of people would probably be opposed that historically, that's how our US economy worked, right? In our agricultural sector, we have sowing right and harvesting times. They would come in work and essentially move back. Now, because of the securitization of the border, people have to pay more to enter this country, right? Illegally. Right. And so as a result, they've had to pay much higher costs. So they're like, okay, I need to stay longer to offset that. The longer you stay, the more that you get invested in the community. Maybe you marry a US citizen, right? Maybe you end up buying a house here. And so as a result, it's one of those things where I think it's really interesting that people who advocate so strongly, right, for border militarization, closed borders, kind of fundamentally misunderstand that. That's only just going to increase, right?

Permanent residency of immigrant population. I'm fine with that. I agree with John. It's a good thing. But if you don't think it's a good thing, it's one of those situations where you're investing money in something that's actually causing great the policy outcome you don't want.

FELBAB-BROWN: And I think we are seeing a similar dynamic in other parts of the world. So Europe, Mike is very much part of the picture of the Western countries. Do, not want, migrants to come in. And of course, they have been receiving migrants from the Middle East, from places like Syria, from Afghanistan, as well as from various parts of Africa. And so we saw very much the same dynamics as getting asylum is getting access to any kind of work permit, has become really, tough, in Europe and as Europe invested tremendously in, countries and actors, in Africa, such as very brutal Libyan militias, to be essentially panning migrants down, we see the same, circular nature of the flows being broken. If people manage to get into Greece, if people manage to get into, various other parts of Europe, they, do not feel they can leave, they

can go back because they will not be able to, make it a second time along. But I want to just add one other really important thing, if you, if I may.

DIXON: One more question for you as well.

FELBAB-BROWN: On the on the birthrates, I mean, when, a lot of the, Republican Party members speak about birthrates, they are referring to what they call the replacement theory. And this connects with what Mike was saying, essentially a desire to make America white again and reduce the number of people who are, not white, who are not, Christians. And so you hear a very steady stream that the migrants, Muslims, which are heavily ostracized, certainly, a primary target of a potential Trump two administration would be no, migration, legal migration from, Muslim majority countries. It is part of this notion that a great America is essentially a white America.

DIXON: I want to make sure we get this in. What role do undocumented immigrants play in crime in the United States?

FELBAB-BROWN: Well, you know, you will often hear from, the Republican Party members that very large, in fact, very small. Yes. Of course, there are instances when, undocumented migrants, commit, very violent crimes, but often these instances are, replayed and replayed and replayed overall. And these, fairly rare instances are blown up in proportion. The vast majority, and I'm talking 90 plus percent of rates of violent, crime in the United States, whether this is homicide, rapes, or violent robberies are committed, by, legal US residents who are citizens or, green card holders and vast majority are US legal citizens.

DIXON: Rachel.

TORRES: Yeah. And and to add on to that. Right. So another example of like the ways in which we don't often think of undocumented or just immigration generally being good for the United States, right, in relation to crime is, immigrants move into areas where they can find housing. Oftentimes these are areas that are economically depressed, right? So again, I worked for years in Iowa. There's a lot of small rural towns in Iowa, right, that essentially had seen all residents either move out or die out. Right. So what happened? Essentially, seasonal migrant workers who are dealing with, again, maybe historically their families would migrate back to, you know, Latin America in that time, they end up staying right for the full amount, like they

end up moving here, right? But even immigrants who have moved to the US are documented. They move into these communities and they build them up. Right? They set up businesses, they set up restaurants. They like, buy up homes and fix them up. And that's another example of which we can kind of see crime reduced, right, as we see the economic, you know, poverty of areas reduce that's going to reduce crime as well. But also it's this kind of idea of, you know, now we've got neighborhoods that have people again. Right? We now we have areas of the city that are being fixed up. That's another way we kind of don't often think of linking reduction in crime to immigrant populations.

DIXON: John, I want to kind of take a twist here and talk about Mexico being the United States largest trading partner. How well understood do you think that is by the American public?

TUMAN: I think there's a growing realization of the importance of Mexico, for many things which we consume in the US. I've been studying the auto industry since the early 1990s, and for good reason, because, Mexico now is, we import it's our, our largest partner in terms of imports of, of, cars and SUVs, into the US market. It has a tremendous impact economically, within Mexico. So its contribution to manufacturing, GDP in Mexico is tremendous. It generates about a million jobs, directly or indirectly there, over 80,000 just in. And vehicle assembly plants, there are 37, plants. There are firms there, which range from Audi, Volkswagen, Nissan, Kia, Toyota, Honda. And then of course there's Stellantis, which people still refer to it. It took over Chrysler and bankruptcy. It's really a European firm, even though we call it, still part of the the D three, so to speak, the Detroit three or the, the legacy, OEM firms, the big three, in the US are Ford and GM as well. The odds are if you buy a car from, you know, in the United States, it's either produced in Mexico or it's going to have a significant share of the content, from Mexico, and also from Canada. So it's a very, very highly, integrated industry. And, you know, there are lots of other consumer electronics, other products which are made in Mexico, the Border Industrialization Zone, which goes back to in 1965. Obviously, it became important. That was an inbound processing area where if goods and materials came in and then they just were a symbol of Mexican labor. There were no, duties on them. So we now have we've gone through NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement. Now, you know, President Trump, former President Trump said he was going to rip up NAFTA and negotiate a new, better agreement. And so now we have the Usmca, which is referred to in Mexico as the TMC agreement, which did make some changes, over NAFTA. But, you know, some were substantively important. Others, were not. But, you know, Mexico has a tremendous, footprint, you know, in terms of the trade relationship with the US and it was as we talked about, earlier today, there has been a lot of concern. And I've been seeing things in. Media report about Chinese

firms in particular, beginning to invest in Mexico and then using Mexico as an export platform to get into the US market. With either a nominal, for example, a 2.5% tariff on imports of cars, you know, coming in from Mexico that are made by Chinese companies or zero tariffs. I happen to think that concern is really overblown. Chinese firms in Mexico produce. Their production right now is less than 1% of the total. Currently, you know, January through June of this year, they only comprised about 6.5 to 7% of all sales in Mexico. So Chinese car sales have gone up. But they're starting at a very low level. So, you know, the growth looks, significant. And most Chinese cars in Mexico are being imported from China into Mexico. They're not being produced there. Nonetheless, you know, there was a lot of discussion. BYD is a major in electric vehicles. China is dominant when it comes to batteries. China is dominant. And, there's been concern again that Chinese firms, particularly in producing electric vehicles, will invest. The, us put a lot of pressure on Mexico and Mexican state Mexican as a federal system, and they usually offer a lot of investment incentives to foreign companies to choose their state. We saw in short order that they paused or withdrew those incentives that they were offering to some Chinese auto companies, and then those investment plans have been put on hold. So, you know, I think it's a concern. Justin Trudeau, prime Minister, just put 100% tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles in some segments. We've already put 100% tariffs in the US. So you know, I, I there's possibly a threat. It's been characterized as an existential threat to the US auto industry. I think that's a lot of hype. And I also point out that, again, many other European and Asian companies are already using Mexico as an export platform. But this gets back to the question of sort of the identity of national states. And when we share a common identity, we don't see them as a threat. But China is increasingly seen as a threat. And so, you know, I think from China's perspective, they feel like they're playing by the rules of global capitalism. To a certain extent. People say there's too much, you know, government involvement, government subsidy, so their cost of capital is lower, etc., but they feel like they are trying to make an effort in sort of playing by the rules of global trade, and yet they're being punished, unfairly. That's kind of their perspective. So, you know, it's it's interesting. The last thing I'll just say, you may not have heard about this, but, you know, the Biden administration did a tremendous amount to really move industrial policy forward in the US in a way that we haven't seen really in a long time. The Inflation Reduction Act and all the tax credits and electric vehicles are all about near shoring the supply chain in electric vehicles, whether we're talking about lithium, which goes into lithium ion batteries. We're talking about the components, for batteries, and then the battery production themselves, and then that the production of the vehicles. And that was intentionally done basically to make it hard, if not impossible for those components to come from China and to a lesser extent, from Russia. And so that has affected sort of investment in the US as well as what's going on in Mexico as we go transition from internal combustion engines to electric

vehicles. That's slowed somewhat, but I think that transition is going to occur, if not as fast as President Biden had wanted. The other thing is that the Biden administration has put out tremendous grants and other investments separate from the Inflation Reduction Act, which have helped to spur innovation, research and development in electric vehicles and also in battery production. And, you know, it's not for nothing that, Sean Payne, who is the relatively new president of the UAW, who like President Biden because he's the first sitting president who walked the picket line in the stand up strike in 2023, has also expressed a lot of admiration because of what the Biden administration has done to return manufacturing as we go through this transition into the United States, or at least into Mexico. You know, a country that we have a better relationship with. It's a long winded answer, but, that's, kind of the importance there.

DIXON: And real quick, before you add on Vanda, everyone needs to, pass their cards with questions out to the end of your aisle. They're going to be collected and then, screened, I believe. And at some point we'll be getting to those. But now let's go back to you, Vanda.

FELBAB-BROWN: Well, you know, there is tremendous amount of, partisan division of a wide range of policy issues, but there is one striking partisan agreement. Bipartisan agreement that started in the Trump administration and really had its initial inklings in the Obama administration and has certainly cut it across the Biden administration. And that is that free trade is actually not good for the United States. Huge break in what, what was core definition of US interests, core definition of US policies for many decades, and certainly a bipartisan agreement across the administration that China was unfairly taking advantage of the free trade. And that had to change with the Biden administration very explicitly moving into an industrial policy, that John spoke about, that had other components such as the Chips act and that really centered on de-risking or what what was called de-risking, from China, meaning moving production of strategic, assets such as, microchips, away from China to the near shore or what is sometimes called to French shoring to countries with whom the United States has close relations. And in fact, even, thinking about, the fragmentation of the, global economic system into blocs, that would be centered around friends and not friends. So, you know, really dramatic change in decades of US policy with strong bipartisan, agreement, that is likely to last and in many ways, a dramatic weakening, if not outright end of, the free trade, era that was, the core concept of US foreign policy, for many decades. And it's even manifested in something like USMCA, the replacement for NAFTA, which, the Trump administration, of course, negotiated with the sunset clause. Actually breaking away from USMCA is quite complicated. It's not easy. It's not something that a president, or an

administration can do with the stroke of a pen. But 2025 will be, a review period, of USMCA and, the, the authorization and the review of, the various aspects of the treaty and the sunset clause.

DIXON: Am I understanding it correctly, though, that the tariffs that have been imposed on China are part of what led them to investing so much in Mexico in order to take advantage of some of the trade agreement?

FELBAB-BROWN: Yeah, absolutely. And the tariffs didn't come down, during the Biden administration. Right. I mean, the, Beijing hope that they'll just ride out, the end of the Trump administration, or better yet, so that they will, give a payment, of what they believe was a payment to the Trump administration on fentanyl restrictions, fentanyl being an opioid. And if only they started regulating fentanyl, as a drug, the Trump administration would take the tariffs away. The Trump administration never did that. They waited into the first year of the Biden administration. The Biden administration didn't take the tariffs away and explicitly embrace the notion that China was a strategic rival, that it was not a, fair player in the global trade, kept the, tariffs on and pushed up the strategic competition to unprecedented level of intensity, across very many domains. And frankly, although this is not the official, white House terminology, we are in the Cold War with China.

TUMAN: So let me just qualify. You know, last year, out of all foreign direct investment that Mexico received, the amount from China was less than 1%. The US comprised 38%, by far the largest foreign investor in Mexico. And then the other usual players. Japan. France. Spain was actually in second. The United Kingdom was in the mix. A lot of those are they they change positions, but they have been the top, investors for direct investment in Mexico for many years. I think China is significant in some states. Nuevo Leon, for example, the New York Times ran a story and that's been supported by some research in Mexico. You know, that Chinese firms are now about 30% of manufacturing in that state. That's also a hub for industrial activity. So it's no doubt significant in some states and Mexico. But nationally, this is a signal that you can barely detect. And I think it gets traction because of what's going on in the bilateral relationship, which is deteriorated between, China and the United States. So it's grown recently, but you're starting again from very low levels. And so when you start from low levels, anything is going to look. And the percentage basis like it's a very significant increase.

DIXON: Mike, I want to go back to something you mentioned earlier. And that was a policy. If it were to be implemented around immigration being more human focused, am I correct in my remembering what you said? Right.

KAGAN: I think I said that, migration is human and that, if we have a migration policy that's rooted in the idea that we don't want anyone to migrate, we're going to have a lot of problems. We're going to end up inflicting a lot of cruelty. We're going to see a lot of chaos. We'll be at war with humanity. I think a migration policy that accepted migration is something human beings do, that there's nothing inherently wrong with it, that there are problems that can result related to it, but that we can solve that through having it be done orderly and in a secure way. I think then we can have a functional policy.

DIXON: What would that policy look like?

KAGAN: Well, so first of all, we do have to actually, accept and have a facilitate and a higher level of migration. I don't think we should dance around that. John articulated why it makes sense for us. I mean, the fact that undocumented immigrants are so well integrated in our society here, and that other than their legal status, actually have very little difficulty building families and, and, supporting them and finding work integrates and indicates how much we need them and that and sort of the natural, course of events. We, we they would be here. We also have people who are escaping from, from more serious harm as well. If we there are huge problems in administering our asylum system right now, which has largely broken down, but it's broken down for reasons that are actually very familiar around the world, which is that we've, made that the only door in. Now, some people actually are fleeing from harms that the asylum system at least approximate or at least relate to it. But we are putting way too much stress on that system. So, we would need policies that actually address to our actual economic and social realities. I mean, that's just the economy. And you don't have to walk very far in Las Vegas to realize the social links between the United States and Mexico. Right. So we should, just accept that and have laws that actually, embrace it. And then we'd probably be a little less stressed, I think, of if you want a secure system, think of airports. Right. We want airports to be secure, airplanes to be secure. But we don't accomplish that by saying, well, lets us have no flights, or only 1,000 people a year can get a can get a quote at a fly on a plane. Maybe you'll be lucky enough to go to Cincinnati this year, right? No offense to anyone since it's great. The Chile is, actually But anyway. So. But I mean, my point is, actually, our immigration system is actually a lot like that right now. And what you actually would get is illicit. Flights, right?

DIXON: Do you want to explain the most recent executive order that, President Biden took?

KAGAN: Do you mean the one that was in court yesterday or the asylum? Yeah. There's, so many right now. It's an hour by hour thing.

DIXON: Let's talk about asylum.

KAGAN: Okay, so, President Biden, and now has enacted a series of policies about asylum at the border that I frankly think the Trump administration would have been pretty proud of. And, that's not meant as a compliment. So, because they adopted basically having no one coming in, applying as their basically sole metric of success, and then couldn't accomplish that. They have they have basically shut down the US asylum system in a way that hasn't been shut down since before the Reagan administration. And I think it's a, so that basically now, it's based on a quota if the too many people come and ask for asylum. No. When he gets to ask for asylum. It's a kind of rough form. And that is the case at the border today. That is a betrayal of not just international law, but of, I think, sacred values. And my parents brought me up with on that work, so important to the best of this country represents, when people are fleeing from harm, sometimes they flee in large numbers. And so this system would literally repeat exactly what we said we would never do again after the Holocaust, which generated large numbers of refugees when exceeded quota. So therefore we would hear from no one. I think it's a real shame and a real blemish on the Biden record. And so but looking forward, I think the way out of that is what I said before for the next president to actually articulate for the American public what a success look like in migration. That's just not we want fewer people coming in. Don't overwhelm our system. We need to be able to embrace the fact that people will migrate and also build a system within our control, so that that can be so that it's orderly and secure and, and be much more focused on. There's type of people we really don't want to come just like an airport security. Then focus on screening those out, not screening out people who have large families in Las Vegas and, and, an employer who needs them.

DIXON: You've done a tremendous amount of research into the asylum process. It's definitely worth looking into. I believe you have a paper coming out later this year.

KAGAN: Maybe I can neither confirm or deny. I did write a paper about, it's called a faster Way to. Yes. And it's, about the asylum procedure. It is not. It doesn't even pretend to be an entire fix of the system, to be clear. But it suggests that we spend, extensive resources for everyone who wins asylum. They go through years of adjudication, and I've never seen a tabulation of the amount of money the US government has to

spend, not even including clinics like ours, to represent people to win strong asylum claims, when often it would have been obvious from the beginning. And so the only the natural reaction of governments us, the French, the Italians, they all, well doing basically same thing, which is we're looking for faster ways to know. And then we're at war with, with migrants. We can also say yes quickly. And that can also produce a more orderly system.

DIXON: Plenty of questions to get to from the audience. Thank you for these. So Vice President Harris has stated she will bring back the border security that failed earlier this year. If this were to happen, what would be the impact of this legislation?

FELBAB-BROWN: It can start with. So first of all, let me explain what, the legislation is, is being referred to. So, the Biden administration, with elements of bipartisan support in the Congress, try to, strengthen security in legal ports of entry. So you might be surprised to know that only 2% of, personal vehicles coming, legally through legal ports of entry into the United States are screened for contraband, for drugs, for carrying, undocumented migrants. And the percentage for trailer trucks is higher. It's somewhere in the 20s. It can go up to the 30s, depending on what, level of intensity split at any one point on the border. But it's certainly much lower than one would hope. Now, there are physical limitations. The border is not just a line of separation. It's a membrane of connection. We heard from John, about, the economic integration, between Mexico and the United States. And certainly, the same is true of the northern border between Canada and the United States. So one cannot close the border because one needs economic flows. But nonetheless, within the legal economic flows, illegal flows, contraband, like drugs, like fentanyl are being hidden. So the the bill tried to, address, some of the massive challenges with the, synthetic opioids epidemic, the most lethal drug epidemic ever in human history. Contributing the vast majority of deaths in the United States, around 100, 110,000 people dying per year. The vast majority of, synthetic opioids produced, in Mexico, with precursors smuggled out of China and then brought through mostly legal ports of entry, but not solely legal ports of entry, to the US. So it should have been a very straightforward build because it essentially invested in better human capital, for, securing the ports and a lot for, but the technologies to allow for greater numbers of vehicles, to be checked, without creating economic disruption. So if the bill had passed, the assessment was that the new technologies, the new non-intrusive radars and screening, platforms would boost, the number of trucks being screened to 70% from somewhere 25, 2940s. Almost doubling that number. And the number of personal vehicles from 2% to, somewhere around 40 plus, percent of personal vehicle. That was for a while, level of bipartisan support until Donald Trump instructed, the Republican Party to kill the bill.

DIXON: How can DACA recipients dreamers at Univ. Advocate for policies that will benefit first generation students without being able to vote? Rachel, this.

TORRES: Yes. Thank you. So first of all, I just want to say, like historically, where DACA has its most power is through direct advocacy by DACA recipients. Right? So even though DACA recipients cannot vote right, they can still make their voices heard. Right. And so traditionally in the US, what we've seen essentially as this kind of, DACA cohorts have been aging into our political process. Getting denied a voice at the ballot box is that they make themselves heard in other ways. Right. And so a big part of that is protesting. Right. And so the other element you can also think of is direct advocacy to elected officials. So the important to note is that even in the midst of what I would say, very heated discussions and debates around immigration, DACA has really broad bipartisan support, right. It's really like kind of beloved across the border, across the aisles. Right. Essentially because DACA recipients right, brought over as children, have only ever lived in the US. And so I think most of the American public is a little concerned about the idea of sending people to a country they have essentially no ties to. Now, of course, there are people who don't care about that at all, right? But I'd say the bulk of the American public is really concerned about that. And so the ways in which DACA recipients make themselves known right to their communities, it's often called a compare, comparable to coming out, right, coming out of the immigration closet. Right. It's that they're signaling like, hey, we are your neighbors. We are your friends. We're the parents that you, we pick up children together at school where the children your children play with, right? And so as DACA recipients are able to kind of express themselves more and more vocally, right, they are able to pressure groups to advocate for them on their behalf, but also say is that even individuals in the US, right, US citizens who are not immigrants but feel very strong, this concept we call political science linked based. Right. So Latinos have very high levels of linked fate with immigrant populations, right? So why? It's because of this kind of larger rhetoric where we kind of cast all immigrants as being Latino, right? So essentially, right, when Trump was running the first time, right, talking about Mexicans as rapists, etc.. Right. And he's making he was making a broader kind of anti-immigrant rhetoric. Right. But Mexican Americans, right. US citizens who have Mexican heritage heard that, and they heard him talking about them. Right. And so this the idea here is that what you do to immigrant populations impact me, even if I'm not an immigrant. Right. The other thing is that in the US, we have a lot of blended families. We have a lot of US citizens, right, who have an undocumented parent, an undocumented grandparent, undocumented partner, right. So even some undocumented children, right. And so, as a result, I think the DACA recipients, are able to really advocate when they show their community, like, hey, we're

here. And I also think it's interesting that you kind of have support across both aisles for that. Right? So you don't need to say, oh, I live in a red district necessarily. That means that my voice is completely useless, right? There is kind of broader public and bipartisan support for this policy and for this population. So I know that sounds like really sad to prescribe, but, if you want to advocate for yourself in this realm, you have to kind of stand up, on the town square and do it right. And we've seen some wins, especially in local politics. But even town to university policies, when they can, within the framework of state law. Right. If they know they have a significant portion of their population that's undocumented, they set up right institutions to handle that. So again, it's about kind of being able to vocalize. But I will say DACA recipients, you know, they put themselves at tremendous risk to do this right. voting right. The safety of it is it's anonymous. Right. You're able to enter that ballot like that booth and make your voice heard. It's like kind of a much more like it's a time commitment, certainly, but you only have to do it right within set periods. DACA recipients have to advocate all the time. Right. And there is inherent risk that you might be right. Detained. Right. Especially as we see more and more states kind of crackdown on protests by students on campus. So it's not a happy answer nonetheless. But it is the the most one. We have the data to back it up. Right when you have your voice, be loud. When you show your community, hey, it's us and it's also our allies, right? Elected officials can't ignore you.

DIXON: What can individuals do to navigate the misinformation, inundating social media and biased news in relation to the election and immigration policies?

TORRES: Throw your phone into the river.

DIXON: Mike, you want to take a shot at.

KAGAN: I knew if I knew how to answer that question, I would have done that already.

FELBAB-BROWN: Well, let me add a few faults here. So one obviously is, supporting platforms, that do fact checking. So part of what I do at Brookings all the time is engaging with journalist, on fact checking candidate X, Y, and Z. So this is just true. What's the nuance? What's the context, how effective that is? And I can imagine, you know, student media doing similar kind of fact checking for Nevada, for Las Vegas, for perhaps national policies. I would also suggest, however, encouraging, peers, encouraging friends, parents to expand, where they get their media, you know, they'll get it and use rather, what has been very

detrimental, in my view, is, the fragmentation of media that people simply listen to only one viewpoint that they want to hear and do not get a sense of how skewed that viewpoint might be. And, the major media, I have become very discredited, or are believed to be discredited because politicians condemned them, as being discredited. Where I would be looking at is the media source that I am reading or listening to doing fact checking. How objective are there? What kind of editorial standards? They have. So, you know, go to the New York Times, go read Washington Post, listen to PBS, the media platforms that we grew up things. And then we had significant trust and with good reason.

TORRES: Oh, no. No, you go first.

KAGAN: Can I could try to give a more serious answer to this, which is actually, look, I am supposed to teach people immigration law for a living, and I'm not that good at it. And, the I blame the material. So the, because it's a really, illogical area of law, most of our better areas of law, contracts, law and so forth are kind of what you would come up with on your own. And you got to reinvent the legal system from scratch, immigration laws. But nobody would come up with, I mean, really no one from any perspective, nothing makes any sense. And and I think that it's very hard for me to even get lawyers to understand, the details. And so I actually don't recommend that for, like, say, a Thanksgiving dinner. I think that when you hear this stuff a lot, one of the immigrants are othered all the time. You know, like I mentioned before, it's weird to talk about someone who's lived in Las Vegas for 22 years and call them an immigrant when they, you know, don't travel, you know, farther than the mall, you know, and they, they have migrated in a long time. I think that a lot of the stuff that people will say they're, they're they're all criminals or they don't pay taxes and so forth is the way that they're othered. So as a kind of like not quite a human being. And so the best way to actually talk to people about it is to exactly the way you did every reminder. Like, you know, they wake up in the morning and the first thing they do is like breathe some oxygen and then they eat breakfast and then they, they have kids. They probably worry about that. I my kids dressed are my late for school and that is what, immigrants worry about on a daily basis. And we do to reduce it to much more functionality like that. The difference then is if you don't have the right papers, if someone asks you for a certain kind of ID and then you don't have it when other people do, your life gets more difficult. Whatever people think about why that is, most people actually have a heart, and I think once they recognize a common humanity, if someone are going to be a lot more charitable. The other thing, a lot of the stuff that people say, like they're part of crime or like they don't pay taxes, if someone would actually stop to think about and realize that this person actually goes to work, has to buy groceries, it actually doesn't make any sense. But it's because as soon as

you enter the word immigrant, people are thinking of some weird species. And that's why people think weird things might be happening. But by the way, the law, it is weird.

TORRES: And so something I also like again, those are both really, really great suggestions, but something I feel like, especially for students who might be listening or just general college students. Data literacy. Right. And you there's no age you can learn data literacy. And so what I mean by that is immigration, right? The sheer numbers, those are reported by our government. You don't need to take my word for it or anyone's word for it. Right. If you put in the time, it is difficult. Right? But it's all kind of public information. You can get this information yourself. You don't have to get it through the skewed kind of lens of a particular kind of media source. Right. And so I really encourage people, if this is an area you're really interested in and you want to know, right, okay. A politician went on TV and said a bunch of stuff. Is this true? Right. You might be able to kind of get the information yourself. I mean, this is one of those things where, essentially, I think believe it was Arizona. There was essentially during the Trump campaign, they made a bunch of claims about Arizona immigration, and the Arizona Sheriff's Department was like that. That didn't happen, right? We actually report the amount of undocumented people we process right through our jail system. You can look into those numbers, right? So essentially, one thing you do is advocate one for your local, immigration, organizations, right, to kind of make their data publicly available. You can pressure again, a lot of immigration enforcement is done by police, right? Not actually, like federal immigration officials or agents. It's done by like your local law enforcement. You can ask them, hey, I want to know how many undocumented people have been kind of detained within my community. Right. But more importantly, you have access to government data related to crime statistics related to immigration visa applications, those that are denied, which are the majority of them, those that are approved. And what nations right from those individuals are from. Right. So you don't necessarily have to just go to one particular, well, right of information and trust it. You can actually kind of build those skills yourself. And unfortunately that's a lot of the work of what your professors have to do. Right, is that it's not easy, but as one way to kind of bridge that gap and push back against misinformation.

DIXON: John, when Rachel said data literacy, I saw a big job from you. What does that mean to you?

TUMAN: Well, I mean, I agree with points that all of the other panelists have made. You know, data literacy does mean sometimes getting into the numbers and doing things which are boring. I and I, I want to highlight two and then this is not to throw sort of a broad critique to the media, but I think the media itself is it's just, I

mean, it's a huge institution. It's not monolithic, but I think there's been, enormous pressure in the media in the US. I think that business model is extremely challenging, whether we're talking about print media or television. And that has created, I think, opportunities for fragmentation. I also think the so-called mainstream media or Trump would say the lamestream, media, freedom to say that, sometimes has a tendency to do selection bias. I mean, they focus, if we're talking about crime and immigration, for example, that's why it's clickbait. You know, if it's a story which is on CNN's website, you know, there's someone who was murdered by an immigrant that drives attention, whether it's people who are accessing that through the internet or they're watching their their TV. If you know someone who's a little bit older, like myself and people are still watching TV, you know, however, they're getting that message across. I think there is a certain amount of complicity across the media sometimes in focusing on things which are not actually representative of what's going on. You know, criminologists have done I mean, there are limitations of the designs and their debates about this, but we've known for years now since Trump first elevated this, you know, issue and made it so salient. And the sort of crime immigration link is that, in areas spatially, in communities where you have a higher share of the population, which is foreign born, crime rates are lower, you know that. And that's a statistically significant difference. These are well designed studies from criminologists who don't have a bone. You know, there there's no real bias. But that's not the kind of stuff that often gets reporting, you know, and it's it's striking to me that it's rare to actually have people who are interviewed to kind of translate results like that if we're talking about data literacy to the average person. So instead, what gets all the other doesn't get attention or I my view, it gets attention is this person was murdered, which is always tragic. Any murder or a violent crime is is, you know, one is too much. But to what extent is is actually representative of what's going on nationally or within a state, within a community. And that's really, I think, where the disconnect has been. The other thing is, you know, when people are in echo chambers and I don't know, I don't think there are good solutions for this. I mean, there have been discussions about what family members can do to engage other people who are sort of in those echo chambers. I think there's maybe a role for civic engagement here. But the problem is, and this is generational too, is that, you know, we've known since bowling alone, most people are not involved in civic organizations anymore. And as a result, you know, I think people are very isolated sometimes. And then you have this sort of fragmentation of information that just makes it that much worse. So I think it's a I think it's a really a complicated, issue. I do think there is a role actually for higher education, to play here in translating. You know what? Well, design research shows on topics and, and engaging broader communities. But I from my perspective, I don't want to minimize this. I think it's really challenging. And I've had students in classes for years who just say, well, anyone can say anything. You can make the data, say anything. The data, you know, they're lying. And it's just like, well, so,

you know, I'll say like, we'll go to the Department of Commerce or go, you know, go to these websites actually, and look at the data. And they're just like, well, they're lying. And at that level, it's that's a really challenging conversation. I you know, those have not been extremely frequent, but that has happened over the course of my teaching here, you know, for 23 years, six years in another institution. And, and when you reach a student like that, I think it's challenging. And I think my neighbors say things like that, you know, and and those are, those are hard and very challenging conversations.

DIXON: Mike, you wanted to add something?

TUMAN: Yeah. So, American public opinion on on immigration is very famously divided and also ambivalent. But there's one thing that's really, really consistent in opinion polls. If they ask about salience, about ask, what are the most important issues to you? They're all in immigration. It's not unusual for it to come in about number two or number three, which is pretty remarkable given that it doesn't really affect that many people, so directly. However, if you look, as I say, in the cross tabs, at who are these people who are saying immigration is the most it's such an important issue to me. They are overwhelmingly people who do not like immigrants. They're the ones who say, this is a big issue for me. This motivates me politically, right? And that will affect almost as much, maybe even more so than the overall of like, who favors this policy or not like DACA, it'll affect what messages and what pressures elected officials feel. Right. And in some ways it's totally healthy, right? It's that the people who are saying I am so alarmed by immigration are people who I was in line and I heard someone speaking Spanish in my head exploding. So I raced home and bought a red hat. They like those kind of people, but they will be heard by elected officials. The other person also standing in line, also heard someone speaking Spanish didn't even notice because it's so normal and healthy for them. So by the time they get home, they're worried about what's for dinner and have don't even realize it happened. That's that's healthy. But it has a political effect because it means that the people who should be voting to say defend dreamers aren't aware that the person that they're sitting with in class is under attack by some really powerful people. And if they're ambivalent about I don't really like anybody and I don't know if I want to vote, are not as aware of that as that person who like, oh my God, I heard a foreign language and someone spoke with that accent and I'm angry about it. And that was actually two weeks ago. I'm still angry about it. There are people like that, and they will be heard. And the other, the opposite people are actually more numerous, but it's less important to them. And that's a hard political problem to overcome.

DIXON: I think we have time for one more. How has Las Vegas established itself as a Mexican diaspora?

TORRES: So I'm actually, Latina. And I am Mexican-American origin. And what I will say is that the community here is incredibly diverse, even within the, Mexican community, be that people who've immigrated from Mexico years ago, recent immigrants, as well as just Mexican Americans who've maybe even lived here for decades or moved here from other US states. So it's really, really diverse. Something that I think is unique to Las Vegas is our, focus on hospitality. And so I think that's really interesting is that, compared to other places lived, including Texas. This to me is the city that has the most accommodations, language wise, that I have ever seen. Right. If I enter a hotel, if I enter a mechanic, if I go anywhere. Right. I speak predominantly English. Right. But if I know if someone is there who speaks almost exclusively Spanish, these businesses have adapted. Right? Essentially, in terms of, like the local kind of nonprofit sphere, there's a lot of really long standing organizations in the area who are working now on immigrants more broadly. Right, but have essentially kind of adapted to Latino migrant and unique concerns. Right. So, you know, maybe they're migrating from an area where they're not as familiar with, like social services that are available to immigrants. Right. In the US or just even within the state of Nevada or within Las Vegas. And so I think there's a lot of organizations here that do tremendous work in terms of the community itself. We're awesome. We're doing great. I don't really know how to kind of express, how Las Vegas has set it up as a diaspora community, because that's about the members themselves, right? How they move through the world, how they work, how we relate to each other. Other than it's very private, vibrant. It's very open. And it's a wonderful place to live, in my opinion.

DIXON: John.

TUMAN: Yeah. So it's it's interesting. The Mexican community is the largest, and, they have a number of hometown associations. So, the most people are actually from Michoacán, which is a state in Mexico. And that's an important way that people from Mexico tend to identify as what state of origin they are from subnational, from within Mexico. So there are clubs, these are called hometown associations in the research literature. And they've done very interesting things over the years. There is that, there was a program in Mexico three times one which was, you know, for every dollar you sent back to Mexico, the Mexican government would match it, \$3 for every one that they sent. And so these hometown associations here would often raise money and then send that as a collective remittance, as an organization to support social and economic development locally within their their, states of origin, because that's how they're organized. So the Chihuahua is another one. There have been ebbs and flows in the membership, but they have been

very engaged within Mexico. They've also been engaged here, and they've coordinated activities sometimes with culinary and the citizenship project and trying to, help people who are eligible to naturalized to become naturalized citizens, to help them avoid, sometimes unnecessary, people who might, they're basically, you know, trying to charge them very high fees for services that they don't need. So they those hometown associations have often coordinated with Culinary Union local to the citizenship project historically, and also at the Latin Chamber of Commerce also say, speaking of activism, you know, people forget about the immigration protests here in 2007, 2008. We had over 100,000 people on this trip. And, you know, they brokered a compromise with all of the strip properties that people could walk off the job after 6 p.m. culinary was a leader in that. There was a little bit of tension with some of the hometown associations, but they had a common cause. And when we saw that kind of mobilization, this was during the Bush administration across a number of large metropolitan areas, in the US, which is what generated some interest about what would happen here locally and other metro areas where you saw that kind of mass mobilization in protest and whether that would spur people to become naturalized citizens, or would it translate into more voting, in the Latinx community and population, etc.. So as a diaspora, they've actually been, very involved, both in Mexico and in the US and often I it's it's not representative, you know, but when I did research in this area and I talked to people, they often rejected the idea of having sort of, you know, an either or identity. They saw themselves as both being immigrants, from Mexico who maintained a lot of interest in what was going on in Mexico and their communities that they came from in Mexico, as well as what was happening here. The other thing I'll just say is there's a huge amount of remittances, that are sent. This is money which is sent back to Mexico. This is part of the economic cushion. So we didn't get a much chance. To talk about shame and Amlo, but, you know, there's been a huge expansion of social programs in Mexico. Some people say it's clientelism, about a 5% reduction, five point reduction in poverty. They're a massive expansion in the minimum wage. I don't want to minimize that. But the other thing is that remittance flows have always been very important in terms of providing an economic cushion throughout Mexico for people who come from very poor families. And people here locally in the diaspora have, as we knows, organized a lot of that and send money back and see, that is important. We even had a deputy here who he was a deputy in the, in the, in Michoacán. And so these are unicameral bodies. They're state legislatures. He was from the Democratic Revolutionary Party. He spent he divided his time between Mexico and the United States. And he often advocated for the interests of Mexican immigrants here in the Las Vegas community and also around the US. And then he would go back, while he was serving, his term there. So I'd say as a diaspora, they've been very, very engaged, politically.

DIXON: John Tuman, Vanda Felbab-Brown, Rachel Torres, Michael Kagan, thank you so much for joining this panel. And thank you all for attending.