

Democracy Of the People with Marielena Hincapié

Marielena Hincapié is a nationally recognized leader, legal strategist, and voice in the American immigration movement. Over a multi-decade career, she has worked to champion the rights of low-income immigrant families.

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My name is Marielena Hincapié. I am a legal scholar, a movement builder and a storyteller, and I am short, have dark hair and hazel eyes.

One of the things that I remember growing up is that my father always told my nine siblings and I that we had a responsibility to leave this country better off than what we found it.

As an immigrant from Colombia and the daughter of working-class factory workers—and now a naturalized citizen—one of the things that I've learned over the years is that the term of “citizenship” is more than just a legal status. It's about how do we define who belongs in this country—and having citizenship by itself is not sufficient.

Over the last three decades, where I've focused primarily on fighting for immigrant justice, fighting injustices, advocating for everybody to have the freedom to thrive, and breaking down barriers of belonging.

And what I now see is that this project of democracy is one of a shared responsibility, mutual accountability, caring for each other, and really fighting for all of us. And when I say all of us, it means all of us.

Democracy of the people is a society in which everyone has the freedom to thrive, where everyone sees themselves in the democracy, that they feel a sense of responsibility for it, and also a mutual accountability to each other.

[The Ford Foundation logo is stacked in a bold black serif font, then transforms into a single letter “F” set inside a black circle.]

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