

Podcast Name: *Our 7 Neighbors*
Episode 1: Dr. Miguel de La Torre

Welcome to season 4 *Our Seven Neighbors, Diversifying the Narrative, Immigration and Religion in America*, brought to you by the Interreligious Institute at Chicago Theological Seminary. Through an intersectional lens of Latinx voices, this season explores themes of immigration, mass migration, and colonization, and how diverse faith traditions can and do affect the story. Your host is Dr. José Francisco Morales Torres, who is joined in today's episode by Dr. Miguel de la Torre, a professor of social ethics and Latinx studies at the Island School of Theology in Denver

Before getting into the conversation with Dr. Miguel de la Torre, Dr. José Francisco Morales-Torres introduces himself as the Associate Professor of Comparative Theology and Philosophy at CTS. Dr. Morales describes himself as "Pan-American" due to this diverse cultural exposure, and his scholarship reflects this rich, cross-cultural upbringing. Then, Dr. Morales introduces Dr. Miguel de la Torre, who is one of the most prolific social ethicists, having served as president of the Society of Social Ethics and holding several prestigious honors. He has authored numerous influential works on ethics, theology, and immigration.

Dr. De La Torre explains the terminology around immigration, as many terms are often misunderstood or misused. First, he argues that the term "illegal immigrant," is a racial slur used to criminalize people and advocates instead for the use of "undocumented immigrant." The conversation shifts to the term "expatriate," often used by people from North America and Europe to describe their immigration status when living abroad. De La Torre critiques this term as a way to avoid the negative connotations associated with "immigrant." He notes the political and racial dimensions of language in immigration debates. The discussion also touches on de la Torre's diverse scholarly work, from biblical commentaries to ethical inquiries, all connected to his lived experiences as an immigrant. He reveals that his upcoming book, *Tear Down These Walls*, will explore the symbolism of walls in immigration crises worldwide. De la Torre critiques the way U.S. politicians frame the immigration crisis, often starting the narrative at the U.S.-Mexico border without considering the broader historical context.

Dr. De La Torre rejects the notion that Latin Americans should be thankful for U.S. hospitality, arguing instead that the resources stolen from Latin America—such as sugar, tobacco, and rum—were foundational in making the U.S. powerful. U.S. actions in other regions like Vietnam, not just Latin America, contribute to mass migration. Similarly, western Christianity has been manipulated to support white supremacy. This fusion of religion with nationalism, he argues, serves to marginalize, disenfranchise, and even commit acts of genocide against vulnerable populations. In closing, De La Torre delves into the violence embedded within the U.S. immigration system and the challenge of confronting such institutionalized violence.

Links:

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