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Special Report: Lou Dobbs, Latino Media
Clash At NAHJ Convention



At the 24th annual [National Association of Hispanic Journalists](#) Convention, held last week in Fort Lauderdale, the overwhelming talk was of the hot-button immigration issue. CNN's **Lou Dobbs**, who has become an unlikely figurehead in the debate, was there, as was New Mexico Governor **Bill Richardson** and hundreds of Hispanic journalists who convened at the three-day event. **Mariela Dabbah** delivered a series of special dispatches for FishbowlNY.

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June 15

John Ferraro, deputy state editor/investigative editor of the *Hartford Courant* came down to the 24th Annual National association of Hispanic Journalists Convention to interview reportorial candidates, and had already found one when I caught up with him Thursday night at a night club. Even here, journalists from such mainstream media outfits such as the *Sun Sentinel*, *San Diego Union Tribune*, the *Arizona Daily Star* and CBS expressed concerns regarding how much their voices are being heard and the kind of stories that are coming out about Latinos in the press. **Alexa Capeloto**, East County editor of the *San Diego Union Tribune*, the paper that initiated the story about immigrants using sewage tunnels to enter the United States, said that they are trying to get more angles on stories about Latinos, a sentiment echoed by many others.

June 16



María Elena Salinas, Univision Evening News' co-anchor and Saturday night's inductee to NAHJ's Hall of Fame, moderated today's panel

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entitled "A Look at Immigration Coverage — Out of Touch?" I spoke with her before the session and she commented that the English speaking press should have noticed long time ago that the Latino community was growing. "The media needs to realize that we are part of society and we are also American. There are 42 million legal Latinos and there are 8 million illegal ones but the media is focusing on the smallest percentage. So what, we don't exist? She noted that before the protests, there was a monolog about immigration and now there is more of a dialog, albeit still very negative. "This has affected the country enormously. It has caused more racism, more hatred and a racial conflict that we thought had been overcome. We see it in schools where white and black kids are fighting with Latino kids. Nationalism is now coming out as a negative issue."

Role of Radio, MySpace in Immigration Coverage

The panel talked extensively about the role that radio played in the success of the protests but also how other media like the Internet helped get the message across. "A 16-year-old kid, afraid that his father would soon become a felon, mobilized his friends through MySpace and text messaging and he got 3,000 students to meet at a specific location," said Elisa Alfonso of Univision Radio Chicago. Alfonso suggested that the media needs to realize that this is a long process that is not going to be resolved right away, and should be covered as such.

Dobbs Steps Out On the Great Immigration Debate

Once again, the focus was on immigration, fueling the fire that was "The Great American Immigration Debate." The panel, moderated by Ray Suarez, senior correspondent, the *Newshour with Jim Lehrer*, included **Rev. David Beckmann**, president Bread for the World, **Lou Dobbs**, anchor and managing editor CNN's *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, New Mexico Governor **Bill Richardson** and **Jorge Castaneda**, former foreign minister of Mexico. Needless to say, it was not a boring debate. With most of the attendees clearly opposed to Dobbs' position on immigration — he had been the target of many bitter comments throughout the convention — the debate had several heated but no less entertaining moments. One of them was when Governor Richardson told Castaneda in Spanish that he shouldn't let Dobbs talk to him like that. At one point, Castaneda turned to Dobbs: "This is not your show, I didn't interrupt you, so please give me a chance to talk."

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June 17



In between ESPN-sponsored luncheons and World Cup gawking, I caught up with **David Puente** (above), producer and anchor, ABC News Now's *Exclusiva* who sat on a panel about producing documentaries in the digital era. "You should be able to deliver the same content in different platforms. People will be watching a documentary on a telephone, or the computer," said Puente, who is actively looking for submissions. One of his biggest challenges is finding reporters at the border. "It's a way for someone who's looking to do a documentary to make some money to fund their project and also, if it's a good story, they may end up doing the documentary."

Panel: The Boom in Spanish Language Media

Circulation of Spanish editions of main-stream papers is growing while circulation of the English edition of the same paper is dropping. The challenge, as Alfredo Carbajal-Madrid, managing editor Al Dia, put it, is to make sure the Spanish papers are viable financially. One of the big difficulties is finding journalists who are perfectly functional in both English and Spanish and who at the same time have experience covering the Hispanic market. "If someone was a great journalist in

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their country, that doesn't necessarily mean they're prepared to work here." Gustavo Godoy, editor Vista magazine, pointed out that people choose Spanish media because of the content. "The English media only covers our countries when there is a coup-de 'etat or another tragedy."

NAHJ Hall of Fame

Henry Alfaro, award-winning newscaster, retired from ABC7 in Los Angeles after a 35-year career at the station, and Salinas were inducted to the NAHJ Hall of Fame, capping off a the convention's festivities in Florida. Next year, San Jose.

Posted by Dylan | 07:11 AM | [International](#)

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