

Reporting with community, identity, and purpose

Leveraging our lived experience for impact

Presented By: **Johnny Perez-Gonzalez**
WHYY Delaware Reporter

My story:

- First-generation
- Delaware journalist
- Community-centered storyteller
- Grew up understanding the importance of accessible information
- Saw how language and trust shape communities
- Found purpose in journalism that serves people directly



Why lived experience matters

Lived experience helps us:

- Build trust among our communities and those around us
- Ask better questions
- See overlooked stories
- Report with empathy and context

Don't remove yourself completely from the story.





Covering immigration, immigrant community stories

Reporting beyond the headlines

- Explaining complex policies
- Reporting with care and accuracy
- Understanding fear within immigrant communities
- Making information accessible
- Bridging those gaps, others don't understand
- Using your own experiences to tell stories of other

You're the resource people did not know they needed.

TRUMP IMPACT

'La migra llevó a mi papa': How immigration enforcement is affecting Delaware students long before the school bell rings

For many students, immigration fear doesn't stop at home. Educators and researchers say it's reshaping learning, attendance and well-being.



By [Johnny Perez-Gonzalez](#) · Updated Dec. 22, 2025 12:04 pm

▶ Listen 2:23



FIRST STATE FOCUS

Delaware leaders launch 'Know Your Rights' campaign, urging immigrant communities to prepare for ICE encounters

The effort includes multilingual resources outlining what to do if approached by federal agents, including the right to remain silent, refuse searches and ask for a lawyer.



By [Johnny Perez-Gonzalez](#) · Updated Apr. 3, 2026 7:05 pm

▶ Listen 0:59

FIRST STATE FOCUS

'Knowledge is power:' 600 expected at Delaware Latino Summit to drive civic voice, unity and economic impact

About 600 attendees are expected to gather in Wilmington for a summit that focuses on civic engagement, economic power, education and immigration.



By [Johnny Perez-Gonzalez](#) · Updated May. 5, 2026 1:50 pm

▶ Listen 1:16



Delaware's 14,000 immigrants eligible for naturalization face complex path to citizenship

Of the state's 100,000 immigrants, only 14,000 are eligible for naturalization. Here's a look at some of the complex legal hurdles.



By [Johnny Perez-Gonzalez](#) · May 7, 2024

▶ Listen 1:27



WhatsApp

Primer Estado

Information for Delaware's Spanish speaking community

- Spanish-language news and updates
- Community-focused reporting
- Accessibility and trust
- Bridging information gaps
- Bring news to them
- Safe and welcome space

Primer Estado became more than a platform. It became a way to make sure people felt informed, included, and seen.

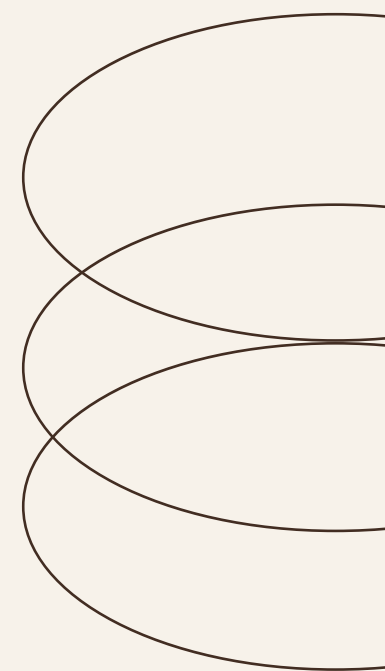




- Communities feel represented
- People understanding policies affecting them
- Building trust through journalism
- Creating access through language

Impact

What impact can look like





Challenges and lessons learned

Challenges along the way

- Covering emotional heavy stories
- Balancing empathy and professionalism
- Representing communities authentically (YOUR community)
- Navigating spaces where diversity is limited
- The political climate
- YOUR own experiences

What 'ive learned

- Your perspective matters, brings value to your reporting
- Representation changes storytelling
- Community trust is earned, not easy
- Journalism can be a service
- Identity can be a strength
- Set your boundaries



**Don't underestimate your voice.
Your lived experience has value.
Authenticity creates connection.**

Lets stay connected:

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