

What Facebook knew about its Latino-aimed disinformation problem | Los Angeles Times

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It was October 2020, election conspiracy theories threatened to pull America apart at its seams, and Jessica González was trying to get one of the most powerful companies in the world to listen to her.

It wasn't going well.

After months of trying to get on their calendar, González — the co-chief executive of media advocacy group Free Press — had finally managed to secure a meeting with some of the Facebook employees responsible for enforcing the social platform's community standards. The issue at hand: the spread of viral misinformation among Latino and Spanish-speaking Facebook users.

Across the country, a pipeline of misleading media had been pumping lies and half-truths, in both English and Spanish, into local Latino communities. Sometimes the misinformation mirrored what the rest of the country was seeing: fear-mongering about mail-in ballots and antifa vigilantes, or conspiracy theories about the deep state and COVID-19. Other times it leaned into more Latino-specific concerns, such as comparing candidate Joe Biden to Latin American dictators or claiming that Black Lives Matter activists were using *brujería* — that is, witchcraft.

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