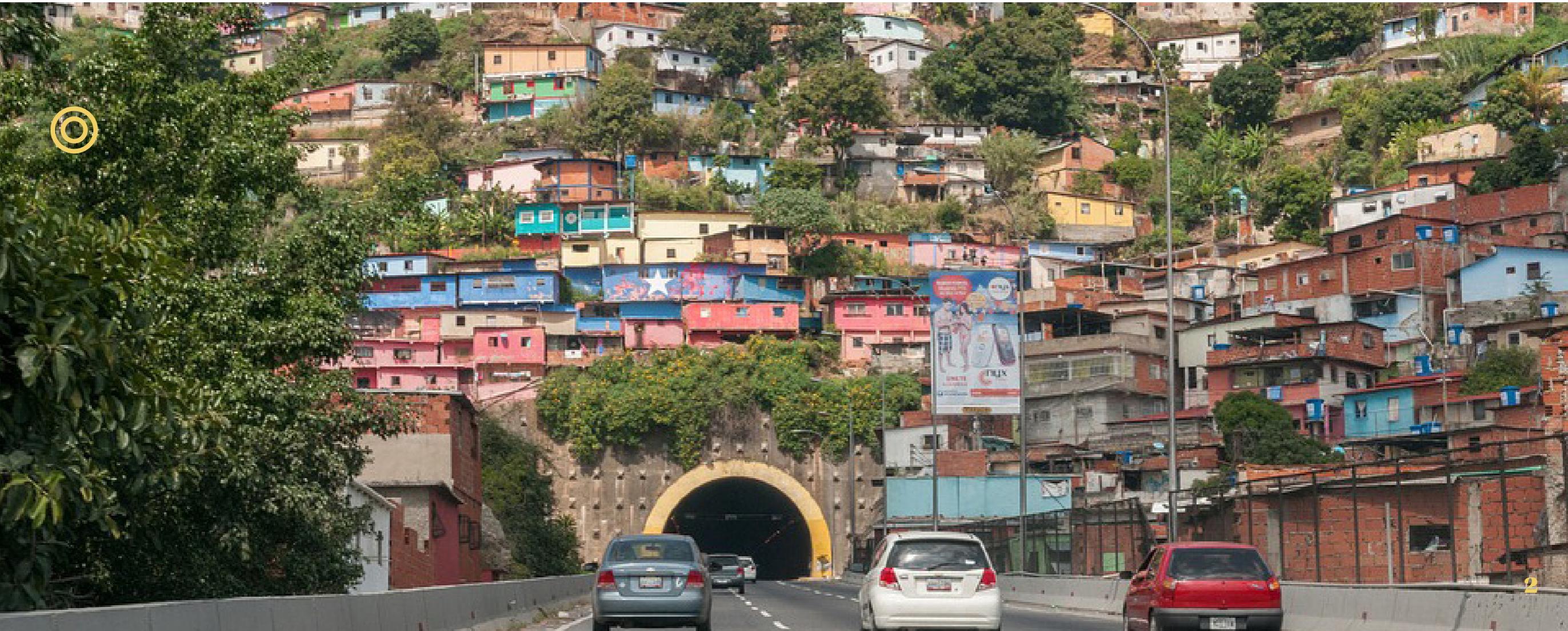


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ARIANA TORRES  
ADRIANA MIRANDES



# The Country of Venezuela

**Venezuela is one of the seventeen megadiverse countries of the world.**



## FLORA

Among plants in Venezuela, over 25,000 species of orchids are found in the country's cloud forest and lowland rainforest ecosystems. These include the "flor de mayo" orchid (*Cattleya mossiae*) which is the national flower; the national tree which is the araguaney, and several carnivorous plants including the marsh pitcher plant, *Heliamphora*, and the insectivorous bromeliad, *Brocchinia reducta*.



## MUSIC

Venezuela has always been a melting pot of cultures and this can be seen in the richness and variety of its musical styles and dances: calipso, bambuco, fulía, cantos de pilado de maíz, cantos de lavanderas, sebucán, and maramare. Another fact is that the national musical instrument is the cuatro.



## SPORTS

The most popular sport is baseball, although it is unclear on how it started. Although not as popular as in the rest of South America, football (or soccer) is also commonly played.

According to the most popular and accepted version, the country was originally named *Veneziola* by Amerigo Vespucci, after Venice, Italy. Later, the Spanish version of *Veneziola* came to be *Venezuela*, and today it is officially known as the Bolivian Republic of *Venezuela*.

This continental territory comprises a continental mainland and numerous islands. The mainland is located on the northern coast of South America where it is surrounded by the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean on the north, Guyana on the east, Brazil on the south, and Colombia on the west. Topographically, it can be defined in four regions: (1) the Maracaibo lowlands in the northwest, (2) the northern mountains extending in a broad east-west arc from the Colombian border along the northern Caribbean coast, (3) the wide plains in central Venezuela, and (4) the Guiana Highlands in the southeast. Because of the different elevations, the country falls into four horizontal temperatures zones, having tropical, dry, temperate with dry winters, and polar climates, amongst others. Besides the overall tropical weather, another perk of their location is their natural resources which are: petroleum and natural gas, iron ore, gold, and other minerals. It also has large areas of arable land

and water. In fact, the country was previously an underdeveloped exporter of agricultural commodities such as coffee and cocoa, but oil quickly came to dominate exports and government revenues when it was discovered in the early 20th century. This led them to be the world's largest known oil reserve and one of the world's leading exporters of oil.

Overall, it is the 33rd largest country in the world with a population around 31,568,179 (according to the 2016 estimate). It is also among the most urbanized countries in Latin America, with the capital city being Caracas. The official languages of the country are Spanish and those languages spoken by indigenous people from Venezuela (which are more than thirty –including Wayuu, Warao, and Pemón). However, due to immigration, Chinese, Portuguese, and Italian are also commonly spoken.

In terms of politics, Venezuela is a federal presidential republic which implies that the chief executive is the President of Venezuela who is both head of state and head of government. Currently, that position is occupied by Nicolás Maduro since 2013, although his presidency is being disputed by Juan Guaidó since 2019.

By: Ariana Torres



# THE COLLAPSE

## **Venezuela's descent into economic and political chaos dates back to 1998 when Chavez was elected president.**

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Oil in Venezuela was first discovered in 1922. By 1929 it was one of the greatest producers of oil, only second to the United States. In order to claim the oil industry, in 1943, they passed the Hydrocarbons Law which required foreign companies that were exporting their oil to give them half of the oil profits. In 1960 Venezuela joined the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). As the years passed, the oil industry of Venezuela kept growing.

Things took a turn in 1998 when Hugo Chavez, the former president of Venezuela, was first elected. His socialist platform pledged to use the country's vast oil wealth to reduce poverty and inequality. Before that, however, he



had been a paratrooper jailed after leading a failed coup back in 1992. As his presidency took place, he transformed what used to be a pluralistic democracy into a largely authoritarian system. He did so by ending term limits, taking over the Supreme Court, closing independent press, and nationalizing private businesses. These reforms are precisely what paved the way for Nicolas Maduro (pictured below) to establish a dictatorship after Cha-

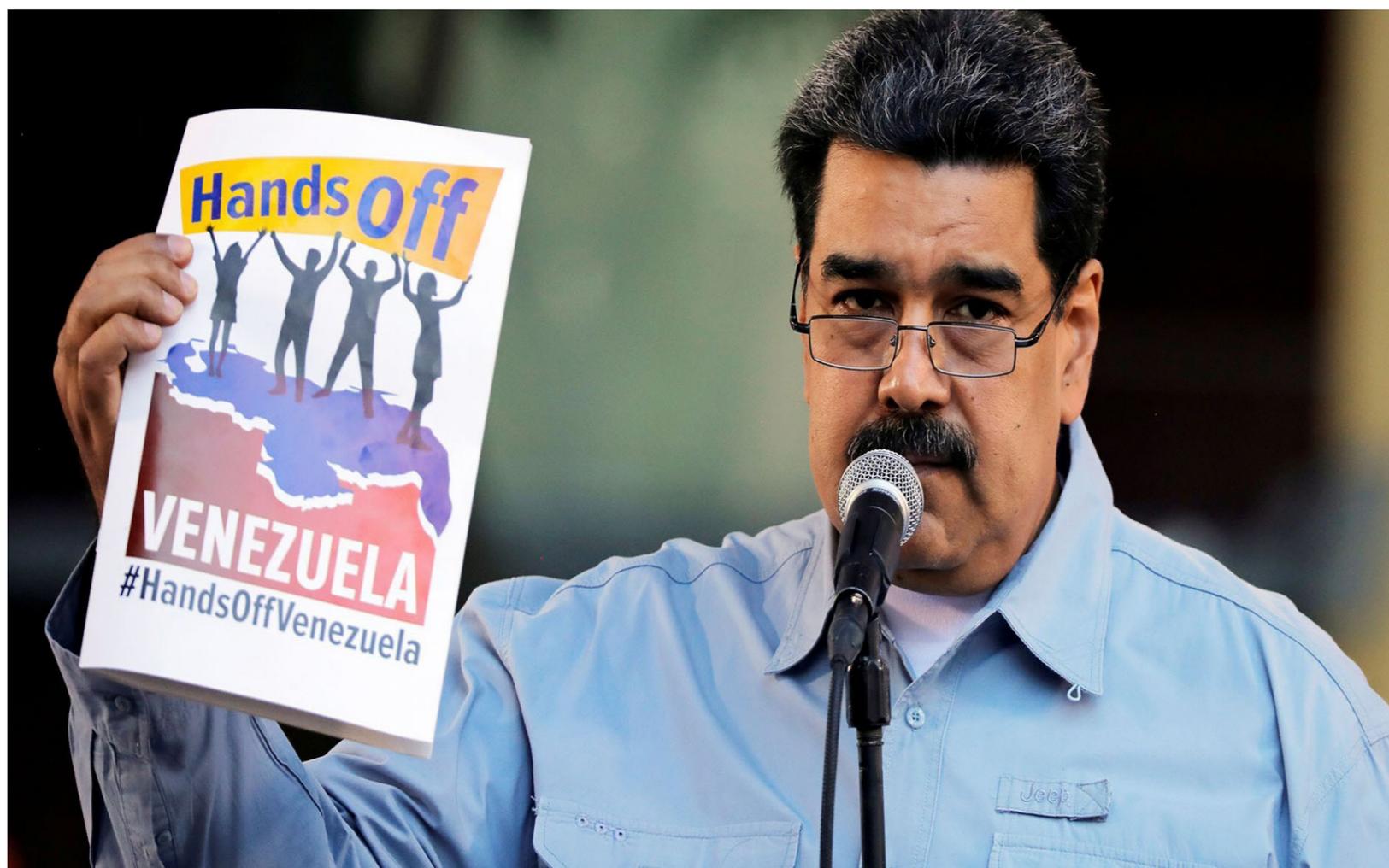
vez's death.

Along the way, nationalizing the oil industry got to the point where the only thing the country produced was oil. Although this was precisely what led Venezuela to be the country with the highest per-capita income in Latin America at one point, it was also what led to its downfall.

Venezuela soon became a petrostate—a small oil-rich country in which institutions are weak

and wealth and power are concentrated in the hands of a few people. The problem with having a resource boom in an afflicted country is that it attracts large inflows of foreign capital. The issue arises when this event, in turns, causes an appreciation of the local currency and a boost for imports since they are now comparatively cheaper. Since they only concentrate in producing one good, they depend on other countries for the rest of their basic necessities.

The true collapse started when the oil market dropped, which at the time accounted for 95% of foreign currency earnings (which the government used to pay for imports). This is what amounted the current debt of Venezuela and created the shortages they now have for their basic goods. Maduro hopes to negotiate a debt restructure, but the United States has prevented American investors and banks from participating. As Jeffrey Sachs laid it out, "American sanctions are deliberately aiming to wreck Venezuela's economy and thereby lead to regime change". However this is a "fruitless, heartless, illegal and failed policy, causing grave harm to the Venezuelan people."



By: Ariana Torres



# Today

"We are protesting because we are in disagreement with the government of Nicolas Maduro. We are experiencing a serious crisis that is suffocating us". These are the words expressed by journalist Leonardo Bruzual, as the situation in his home country worsens.

Now that the previous article mentioned the negative actions that have led to the current situation in Venezuela, it is now time to learn about the negative consequences that these actions have brought. For years now, because supermarkets shelves have been found bare and the healthcare system has collapsed, the people of Venezuela have suffered from shortages of food and medical supplies. These basic necessities have also been affected by the severe power shortages since hospitals have struggled to keep vital equipment operating and the little food found in refrigerators have gone bad. Other effects of the power cuts include chaos in the transportation system and the closing of government offices. Skyrockete-

REVOLUTIONARY



ting prices, accompanied by inflation, which is eroding what little remains of the country's currency value, have also contributed to the cause. As an effect of the burden and desperation of the people, violence has come, making Venezuela one of the countries in the world with worst crime rate.

Just as the old saying goes, "drastic times call for drastic measures", after many years of hardships, Venezuelans, with the support of opposing leader Juan Guaido, have decided to revolt and protest against President Nicolas Maduro and his supporters.

President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaido, declared himself acting president of

Venezuela on January 23rd, after Maduro's highly controversial re-election was not recognized by the National Assembly. Tired of the political, economical, and humanitarian unrest in the country, anti-government protesters clashed in the streets with pro-government forces on April 30, after being called upon by Guaido to oust President Maduro. In response, Maduro ordered the armed forces onto the streets to maintain order. He also called members of the opposition "vandals and terrorists" and accused them of "serious crimes" that would "not go unpunished".

Because the last anti-government protest was unsuccessful, Juan Guaido admitted that def-



in order to topple pro-government forces, they needed military support. Unfortunately, the military vowed its full support to Maduro. However, Guaido's persistent efforts of defea-

ting "dictator" and "usurper" Maduro, leaves the future of Venezuela still unknown. "There's no turning back", he declared, as he addressed thousands of supporters in the streets of Caracas.

It is important to acknowledge that with protest comes violence. The bloody tactics carried out by the pro-government forces, such as looting and the use of tear-gas, have left countless of citizens dead and many more injured, including journalists and even children. In addition, many anti-government supporters have been arrested, making the country hold their highest tally of people detained in a year for at least 20 years, for a total of nearly 700 people.

The high rates of poverty and violence in the country have caused a massive exodus of Venezuelans. In recent years, more than three million citizens, almost 10% of the population,

have left the country, making this the largest mass migration in Latin America's history. Of those three millions, four thousand have claimed asylum from political persecution, and another million have gained other forms of residency. However, thousands of others lack legal residency, limiting their access to employment, education, and social services. Out of every ten migrants, eight stay in Latin America and the Caribbean, neighboring Colombia and Peru being the highest recipients. Nonetheless, many more have migrated as far as North America and Southern Europe. Because of the intensification of migrants flow in these countries, their capacities to provide Venezuelans with basic services have been strained, leaving many living on the streets and struggling to generate a proper income to provide for their children.

By: Adriana Mirandes



# Maria's Voice



**Maria Molina is a current senior here at ISU majoring in Industrial Engineering. She was born in Zulia in 1996. Three years later, she moved to Caracas where she was raised and educated.**

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How aware, up-to-date and/or involved are you with what is currently going on in Venezuela?

I am fully aware of what is going on right now in Venezuela. I still have family and friends that live there. However, the reason why I am so involved with this situation goes beyond the fact that I have people to care for in Venezuela. It is mainly because it is the country where I built all my childhood memories; the country that gave me so much to be grateful for; and, no matter how hard it gets, Venezuela will always be part of me.

Regarding the two flags used by Venezuelans (the one with 7 stars vs the one with 8 stars), where do you stand on this debate? Do you see it as a minor detail or a big deal? What does it mean to you?

I stand for the flag that has 7 stars. It is actually a big deal for many Venezuelans. President Hugo Chavez, instead of ca-



ring for his people and helping the country to rise, made changes to the Venezuelan Flag—wasting a lot of money. The Venezuelan flag with 7 stars, to me, means what we used to have before Chavez. It means the country that at one point everyone would travel to because of how beautiful and rich it was. It means the country that my grandparents and parents describe, the one I did not get to live in—a country that one person with enough power and enou-



gh manipulation was able to call “his” which is the main reason as well why he need to “own” a flag as well. call “his” which is the main reason as to why he need to “own” a flag as well.

What is your opinion about the involvement or lack of involvement from the United States? Do you think it is justified? Do you perhaps think it all leads back to the US having a political agenda?

Honestly, I think that right now we need as many countries involved as we can get. The reason why what is happening now has not happened before is because we haven't had international support in previous protests. Venezuela's fight for democracy has reached a point where, if we don't get international support from powerful and stable countries like the United States, this situation will never meet its end. From a political agenda, I don't really follow US politics to be completely aware of their intentions after this. However, I do think that with the US help, Venezuela will be able to rise. Venezuela must get out of this corruption. Venezuelan's shouldn't have to be paying the price of a political agenda.

How do you see the situation in Venezuela in the future? How much longer do you think it will go on for? What do you think needs to happen for the issue to be resolved?

To be completely honest with you, I have no clue. We have had powerful leaders before against the government and somehow, we end up in the same place or worse. However, we have never had a leader like Guaido. His goals in the first place were to get international support which we had never had before and be-

cause of this, the situation might turn the right way this time. But as right now, I am not sure what to expect; this is something that I haven't seen before. This fight is bigger than any of the previous fights. Venezuelan's are tired of having to live their lives on a survival mode, living with an uncertainty due to lack of basics resources such as food, water, and electricity. The situation right now in Venezuela is the result of people adjusting to a poor quality of life

for such a long time, people that are tired of the government's lies and the corruption. Enough is enough and Venezuela is trying to let the world now the truth that the government has been hiding for the past 10 years if not longer.

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**“MY ROOTS  
WILL ALWAYS BE  
VENEZUELAN NO  
MATTER WHERE  
I AM. I WILL  
ALWAYS CONSIDER  
VENEZUELA MY  
HOME”**

If there was one thing you wished everybody asked you or knew about anything regarding Venezuela, what would it be?

Coming form Venezuela, I often get the question of: What's if the most typical food? I guess it's something that is popular to ask to foreign stuents, nothing wrong with that—the answer is Arepa. I just wish I was

asked more about Venezuela's landscapes. Then, with my numerous answers, I could make you fall in love with a country you have never been to. Something new to put on your bucket-list! Look up these landscapes: Los Roques, El Salto Angel, Roraima, Merida, Los Medanos de Coro. Are you in love yet?



# WHY WE CAN DO

In order to help others, in this case the people of Venezuela, it is imperative to first educate and acquire knowledge on the current situation of the country. Now that this has been accomplished from the last articles, it is time to learn about what actions can be taken to contribute to the cause. Beginning with the concert “Venezuela Aid Live”, that took place February 22 in the Colombian border town of Cucuta, thirty artists, including legends such as Carlos Vives, Juanes, and Maluma, joined talents with the hopes of raising funds to buy basic supplies for Venezuelans. The concert was also organized with the purpose of persuading members of the military to defy Marudo's order and allow humanitarian aid to cross the border. Even though the concert already took place, donations are still being accepted in their website. Other initiatives, such as the #helpmigrants campaign, are helping Venezuelans who have decide to migrate by aiming to create jobs, strengthening the educational and medical services, improving housing, and attending other basic needs. By donating, local communities will be able to better cope with the influx of Venezuelan migrants and migrants themselves will be provided with basic necessities. Additionally, an anti-discrimination campaign is being launched with the purpose of giving victims of the crisis the freedom of seeking new opportunities without facing prejudice. Other organizations, such as All for Venezuela, Samaritan's Purse, and Save the Children, are also joining the cause and accepting donations.

Last but not least, in order to help, one must be willing to spread the word and encourage others to join the movement. The more people aware of the situation means the more people who are able to provide support for the cause. By donating you are also providing stability and new opportunities to thrive for the citizens of Venezuela. And remember, just as Winston S. Churchill once said, “We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.”