

S01E10 Venezuela

SPEAKERS

Ray Abel, Gretchen Hurd, Gonzalo Veloz

Ray Abel 00:00

Hello, and welcome to research the News. This week we're talking about Venezuela, the birthplace of Saman Bolevar. The liberator of South America is home to the world's highest waterfall, some of the best chocolate in the world and a place where gasoline costs eight US cents per gallon. In the 1970s, Venezuela had the highest growth rate and lowest inequality in Latin America. But since 2014, it's been home to the second largest refugee crisis in the world next to Syria. Now, most of us know about what's happening in Syria. Because of their civil war, they have had 6.6 million refugees and have received \$20.8 billion in aid since 2011. And the US has contributed more than \$12 billion of that. But in comparison, Venezuela has had 5.4 million refugees, which is only about a million less than Syria, but is only received \$1.4 billion in aid, which is 6.7% of the amount given to Syria. And that's only since 2015. So for less years. The population of Venezuela before the exodus was 30 million people. So that means that 18% of the population have left their country, their homes and their family. This is in a country that has the largest oil reserves of any country in the world, and is ranked 12th and highest freshwater resources. But now a single bottle of water costs nearly 40% of the monthly minimum wage. less than 20% of factories are still in operation. Passports can be confiscated at will, citizens can only withdraw what equates to 50 us cents per week from their bank accounts. And most importantly, 96% of Venezuelans live in poverty, and 70% live in extreme poverty. This became personal to me when I met a friend who came to America from Venezuela in order to escape the conditions there. But more importantly for her to support her family back home. She brought her cousins to America as well and provided them with a place to live all while sending money back to her family in Caracas so that they would be able to survive. And not only that, but one day I saw Skarner like when I asked what it was from. She calmly told me that she was at a protest there was organized against the disputed President Nicolas Maduro, when police opened fire on the crowd. She dove behind a car but was hit with a bullet in her leg. And at that moment, I realized that she was way more badass than I would ever been. And today we're talking with another friend of mine who left Venezuela in 2015. To come to America as a political asylum seeker. His name is Gonzalo veloce. And we're going to hear his experience on the turmoil in Venezuela, as we try to figure out what happened. This is research finance. All right. Welcome to both of you. Hi. Hello. Thank you for having me. Yeah. Thanks for being on. Yeah, I'm looking forward to the conversation. And yeah, everyone I think knows, Gretchen. At this point. Most of the people listening will not know Gonzalo. But I would like to say that whether we always talk about you don't agree with what we're saying, Keep listening, because you'll understand what we're talking about. With Gonzalo I feel like whether you're liberal or conservative, you may feel a little bit uncomfortable with what he has to say, because one of the things I love about him is that he doesn't pull punches. But I think it's a great first hand experience. And I hope that if you disagree with what any of us are saying, you keep listening so you can understand where we're all coming from. And as always, we're live, there'll be no edits to the podcast, we just won't have a free flowing conversation

here. And we're going to start out by talking about as we always do some of our biases when it comes to this topic of Venezuela, and the politics and life and Venezuela. So Gonzalo I think since you're the guest and by far know way more about Venezuela than both of us. Do you want to talk a little about your biases and your experience. Sure.

Gonzalo Veloz 04:10

So yeah, the the situation of Venezuela. A lot of people in the outside world, understand the crisis, and has seen the crisis and think of the crisis started in the early 2010s. But beyond that the crisis really started in 1998. When when Hugo Chavez got into power, after two coup attempts, then he finally got power through elections. And then from there, it's been 20 plus years of this crazy roller coaster of of all sorts of, you know, a lot of antagonizing the US and a lot of oil and a lot of money and a lot of crazy stories and a lot of surreal things. That has brought us to This moment that we're in the present day, right? The probably the second biggest refugee crisis in the world, it that it's not going to stop the most underfunded refugee crisis in the world. You know, one of the most dangerous countries in the world, one of the highest inflation rate in the planet, probably, and the list goes on and on and on. So yeah, I was born and raised, I grew up, I spent all my childhood, all my teenage years there, and then I moved here in 2015, because of the situation and, and seeing the, the everything from far away has been very eye opening, because you get to see a lot of things from a comfortable point of view, and you get to analyse things would would have been more, more like thought and less emotion. And, you know, and Venezuela house also with everything that has happened here in the past four years on the polarization and the politics and all that has become a topic of conversation of from from both sides of the political spectrum here and and in the world. So. So I think it's really important that that and I appreciate that we're having this conversation. Yeah, I appreciate you being on I think for people who are unaware, you, you said you think it's the highest inflation rate. It's insane, man, I think the last I saw it was what 200,000%? It's a US for example, I think in the 70s, we had like 12% inflation. And that's what got Jimmy Carter out of office and the world that US was going crazy. But there's actually a new new dollar they issued with five less zeros, because money is just basically worthless. Yeah, there's been all sorts of all sorts of adding zeros and taking CS throughout the years. Yeah. There's always new bells new. Yeah, I I honestly, at this point, I can't keep up with the economy when somebody tells me how much something is I don't understand. Because it's been over six here. So I, the economy has changed so much that I have no, no way to get hot. Really? What prices are for stuff. Yeah, I mean, it's crazy. And I think that's going into some of my biases. I think in general, I do have friends that are from Venezuela. And I've heard a lot from them about the situation. And I've tried for a while now to learn about what's happening. But I also am someone who is a free market person. And I am scared of socialism and communism. When I say scared, it's, I think that there are often good intentions, I don't think people who want to have socialist societies or have bad intentions and want people to suffer. But I think that when you look through history, it's not been something that's been executed well at all in many situations. And so my bias is against socialism. And I think that's something that we're, we're gonna talk about today a little bit. And that's just kind of where I lean towards. Gretchen, you want to talk a little bit about your biases in relation to politics or Venezuela? Yeah, I have a few acquaintances from Venezuela, but I don't have any friends, people that I talk to on a regular basis. So I'm actually really just interested to learn about your views about Venezuela, what's happening there, what you've gone through, and then how you view our country collective.

Gretchen Hurd 08:18

What it's like here versus there. And and if there are any concerns that you have here. I'm very liberal. So I like the idea of social programs and what they can do to help people I am not in favor of socialism, I don't think it has worked. And I think that it's, uh, you know, when you look at socialism, it can go into communism, so then I, you know, that worries me, where, where the government can actually take more than what it should and, and have a lot more say in what it should. So that's kind of where I lean,

Gonzalo Veloz 08:50

I think, in terms of my biases, I think a few years ago, when I was just like, when I just moved here, I would probably would have said, Yeah, my biases are against the left and all these things, but now after living near here for so many years, I think my biases are more against interpretation, interpretation of politics. Because, yeah, when you see, like, the I think the polarization here, the United States is a great example of the polarization of the rest of the world. Right? You have right wing that you know, it's very pro money grow, you know, and you have Nazis coming out of the World War. And this horrible movements are coming up. They're very Romani, very anti people very, you know, and then you have a left. That is just more like, foreign by the anger of the youth right, and the anger of a lot of people that feel that life has been life has been unfair to him. He's had a reaction. And like I think both both sides of the political spectrum are reactionary to each other. And I have learned a lot in terms of observing how politics really are. Because at the end of the day, I, in my opinion, politicians don't work, like very few of them do a good job. And, and now, I, when I see people that come there from the left, and they are asking for specific things, I see where they're coming from, right. And I see when people are asking for, you know, free college or a better health care system, I understand where they're coming from, because when you read the news, and you see, I read some news recently that this kid got, like, he had an accent got burned. And he almost lost his life. And he had to get like 27 surgeries, and he got a bill for like \$1.7 million. And he literally this person tweeted, like, I am questioning if I would if I want to be alive. That's when you understand, oh, okay, there, I think I think there's something that we must observe. And this is like an outsider, right? Like, I'm not from here. So when I got here, there's a lot of illusion about the United States that I still kind of have I like, this is a great country in a lot of ways. But you understand that us any other countries in the world is not perfect? Sure. But when you that's in that's on the left side, but when you see on the right, how like, like, how horrible are the instances that these people are willing to go to not help other people is also horrifying. So so it's, it's you I think, being an outsider has helped me see where people are coming from and how they feel. And and that has been really helpful. But at the same time, I am, I'm a bit more jaded into what people have to say, because when you lift the what the worst the world has to offer, like, yeah, growing up in Venezuela, like honestly, I don't really care if an old white man is getting their taxes raised. Or if a kid that went to like a super expensive school, you know, says that he wants like, Mao to come back and you know, communism for everybody. Like, I don't I don't have time to hear any of those

Gretchen Hurd 12:20

people. Yeah, I can imagine. You don't

Ray Abel 12:23

sound Jader at all consolidate. I feel like there's no no hint of Jaden in there. I think that's a good lead in though, because I think that's something when we talk about socialism, when we're talking about the

definition of it, I think that means a lot of things to a lot of different people. And for me, I again, I completely see where you're coming from with people why people want these kinds of things. And I, you know, I grew up, I've talked about this before, in the show, I was, I always used to say I was poor, but I learned that I've American poor, because once you start spending time in other countries and see what's happening around the world, you realize how privileged in general, we are as Americans, just being able to not have the poverty levels that are seen elsewhere. But to me, when I look at socialism, I actually brought up the dictionary definition, which is a political and economic theory of social organization, which advocates that the means of production, distribution exchange should be owned or regulated by the community as a whole. And I think that there's two things that stick out to me. Number one, it's a great theory, like that's the thing that I always think of when I when people talk about socialism and communism, it's a great in theory, like everyone works, everyone contributes no one's left behind. It tends to fall apart in the details in my mind, but also to there's a big differentiation there between owned or regulated. And to me, communism moves more towards the state owning everything. And socialism is more about regulation of everything. And that's where the definition that's where the differences in my head. And if you have any different viewpoints on what socialism is, feel free to jump in, let me know or else we can move forward and start getting into some questions.

Gretchen Hurd 13:53

Yeah, I feel like socialism, usually, to me is more like I think of like a business owned by the people who work there. Like that's what I kind of think of as socialism and even maybe like a state owned or run business. On I don't think I don't think of it was like a huge scale. I think it's even more a smaller scale is when I think of socialism. I don't think I think of it when it goes to the bigger scale than I think it's something else. So yeah,

Gonzalo Veloz 14:21

I think I think socialism was the devil. No, I'm kidding. That's, that's a social media clip. No, I agree. I think I don't know, I think a small scale of what socialism is when you see like a co op on business. Yeah, a super like a co op supermarket and those kinds of businesses that employee owned. And I think that's great. But, you know, the classic, it hasn't been implemented, well, vicious cycle.

Gretchen Hurd 14:48

When it's mismanaged. That's when it's Yeah.

Ray Abel 14:52

And that's part of the problem. Or I think to me, in general, if you get into communism, Marxist theory, you start getting into well, should we even have any form of government should all be anarchy and then you start, it starts getting tricky because it's like, well, then how do you actually pick who's in charge? If you don't have any kind of forms of governance, like, well, then we hide, we picked someone delete us. And it's like what you basically have a government again. So it all gets very tricky. And I think that that's the thing that for people on the right, and you often hear me talking about, you know, some of my people from an economic perspective, things like coops and employee on businesses, some of them have done well, and that I think, totally fits inside a free market economy. I think people want to band together and start a business. I just think there should be less regulation in general. And I think that's moving on from this because I don't want to get stuck just in the definition of socialism. But I think that's

where the regulation comes into be a problem for me as someone who owns a business and has to deal with so many regulations about some of the stupidest things gets very frustrating where I think we should just be a regulated less and and I think that's where going into some questions for you, Gonzalo. I feel like if you look through, you actually gave me a great documentary to watch. And I just heard about it today. So I'm still getting into it. But in that documentary, it's talks about how there is a woman in there who loves Hugo Chavez, and is basically idolizing him. And there are some people that are in Venezuela still, that have this kind of cult of personality around him. And initially, I don't think that the Bolivarian missions, which Am I saying that correct, the old nations, that's all of the welfare programs that Chavez implemented, I don't think people were probably I don't think they were fighting against them. And I think a lot of people like them. Yeah. And they're those Bolivarian missions, from what I understand cover a lot of things. It's, you know, health care, it's free housing, there's so many things that are covered and eventually kind of collapsed in itself when the oil reserves went down. But in your opinion, growing up in Venezuela, was that done initially, with some good intentions? Did you ever see any benefit personally from them? Did you kind of go from liking them to realizing the problems with them? Or were you against them from the start?

Gonzalo Veloz 16:56

So when I was getting power, I was very young, I was a kid. And, you know, I didn't understand a lot of what was going on. But of course, I had, I heard a lot, you know, family, adults would talk about how they're going to destroy the country, and they're giving everything away for free, because the premise of Chavez was putting the middle class and the rich against the poor against the middle class and the height, like the high class. And, and, and the thing, because I don't have any issues with the social programs. What I am against, are, well, first of all, they they would say they would start something and then they will steal the money. But at the same time, where the lies around a lot of this missions, you will go when you talk with somebody that it's not from Venice, about Venezuelans public school system, and they're like, Yeah, Chavez, broad political, public education in Venezuela has been free since the 18. And since 1870, that's a fact. But of course, Chavez did a good job doing the propaganda, he was the one that did it. And same thing with like, public health, public health has always been free. And but then you got, you know, your rebrand all these programs, and you put whatever name they came up with, because what they will usually do is change the name of like the program and make it something that would resonate with the people. Um, and they would just rebrand stuff. And that's the thing I remember I was in I was fortunate enough that I didn't have to go to a public school because the public school system got very deteriorated very quickly, when I was gaining power, and the public health system as well. You know, my family did the effort, and they put me not, because like there would pride like they it's not like here that a private school is just something very unattainable. It's like there's private schools of all price ranges in Venezuela. So I didn't, I didn't see firsthand that the, as a student, the education system, but I had a lot of friends that went public schools, and it was crazy. It wasn't good. Like there was like, there's a lot of crime happening there. Because there's like the problem with Chavis gone into power. It's not only the economics and all this stuff, it's also the social and cultural aspects of the country that when in absolute decline, I feel that Venezuela generationally, a generation is absolutely lost in terms of the reconstruction of a society as a fully functioning society. As you have over 5 million people have left. And then you have a very big mass of people that believe in Chavez on their brain. He's absolutely washed and there's no way back from that. And you have this people are still in power. So it's It's like a like, it's like a, it's like a chess game. But it's like there's no place.

Because even though if Chavez and Maduro and none of them are in power tomorrow, the country's culture and society, like fibers are so deteriorated. So it will take in my guess. And this is something a lot of people say, like at least 2030 years after these people are out of manpower, because like the other part is, even though the public missions and programs existed, they saw the money. So they exist, but they don't exist. You go to a hospital, there's nothing. You go to a school and there's no supplies. So so it's just it's like a, like a carcass of something at this point. Because they just stole everything.

Gretchen Hurd 20:43

Do you think the majority of why everything fell apart was because of the mismanagement and the corruption?

Gonzalo Veloz 20:48

Yeah, absolutely. It and their resentment. Yeah. Because then he became, oh, the government's giving us this program. So this is just for the people.

Gretchen Hurd 21:01

Like, almost playing them against each other and creating your issue, which we know that

Gonzalo Veloz 21:06

but then but but then the classic thing would they would start a program is I don't know, and just a random example, not coming from facts. But just as an anecdotal example, that usually what would happen is we need 50 We're gonna build a school. The school in reality cost to build \$2 million. We need 50. And then this guy, the guy that said 50 He right? Oh, oh, it's 30 on Oh, yeah. 15. And then like, it goes from like a budget of 50 to a budget of two, they don't fully build the school, and just a bunch of money that's stolen, and the school ends up halfway build no school for the kids, everybody is screwed, and everybody is stolen money and, and goes on and on and on. And yeah, and when you had the height of the oil prices, when Chavez was like in the in the in the early 2000s. Your beer, it was just

Gretchen Hurd 21:59

like it was I was reading it was just like a big party. Like basically, they're just like, let's just spend this money and make us. And then there was no reserve left. And when everything ran out, it was Jay stole

Gonzalo Veloz 22:10

everything.

Ray Abel 22:13

Like they say Chavez when he died, he had over \$5 billion in the bank. Yes, yeah. Not not a shock at all is kind of another example as watching a documentary. And they were talking about the energy grid there. And they was basically a six step process this guy was talking about that just repeats, you first, allow the electrical to deteriorate. Then you say there's electricity crisis that allows you to award contracts without a bidding process to your friends. Then you negotiate inflated prices, you purchase scrap instead of new equipment, and then people die because of outages, but the government gets

richer. And I feel like that kind of goes right along with what you just said happens. And that just wash rinse and repeat to different situations that power grids thing was a beautiful moment in Venezuela modern history because that's when the corruption of the people the poor, the government, merged with the corrupt high society. And people did die were kids that came from very wealthy families, very rich schools. And they they like they did a pretty good dent in the country like economics, because they would,

Gonzalo Veloz 23:20

you know, they would know somebody instead of like, any sort of institution or government institution, they would bid for the contract, they would get for the contract, they would inflate the contract and they will still hold they hold all their money, even though these families are raid rich. Yeah, they come from like, I don't know, imagine, like the son of Robert Kraft, for example. I don't know, it's a super random, like super rich person. But like, he gets into that game. And he makes \$2 billion in a very short amount of time, just with like this government contracts, right? There's a book. It's like a fiction book, but at the same time, it's not. It's called The Adventures of one plant charred. There's two parts. And it's about this character that he's like a rich kid from Caracas that he gets into the, into the scene. And he manages to get some contracts in the government to get some, some contracts and he becomes like, super rich. And, and it's like a very, very good description, because like he the author had insiders into those circles, gave them everything. And they and they explained, there's parts of the book that they explain, because there were like, then very known corruption circles that there was that a lot of people got part of was the power grid situation. That was through like government contract limitations. And then there was one through the foreign foreign currency exchanges. And this one is a bit harder to explain but like in in a simpler explanation was if \$1 is the equivalent to four believers. So one to four for both of us get you \$1. But you can only get up to \$3,000 at that price a year. That's it. Now, you can't buy more, of course, that creates a parallel black market. Right? That the prices, if like we're talking about one to four, in the black market could have been one. But 10,000 believers is one. So we're talking the official is four to one, the black market is 10,000 to one. So it's 1000s Per, like hundreds or 1,000% More money to get access to friends. Right. So what would happen is, let's say me, Gonzalo, has a friend that he's a general, and he gives gives me access to the system. This way, you can make a million dollars in 10 minutes, right? I buy the 3000 a four, I go to the black market and sell 10,000 I grabbed my profit, I have you know, you made a bunch of money, you go back again to the system, you buy more you sell. And then you go back and then you do it as many times as you want. And you're pretty much like it's like a crazy like, like, like funnel of money that it's coming from the same place and then the inelegant different place. And a lot of people did that. And that was the way of corruption that the regular people got access to them. So that when the economic crisis was hitting hard, what a lot of people would do was there was travel agencies, that they will give you packages to go to specific countries because to travel, you would have to do all this paperwork to get access. If you will go to the US for more than a month, you get access to a three grand, if you are going to go to Columbia, you get like 750. So they were like agency to Cuba, they will give you all the money, no trial trial agencies that will plan your trip to Cuba, you will get there. And you will go to this like kiosks and you will like swipe your card for a fee, and they will give you the cash. Wow. So you will get to keep the cash. You pay him a fee. You get to get the cash you keep your vacations cheap, you come back home and you make money out of that money. Whoa.

Gretchen Hurd 27:24

Yeah. How did that? That's like

Gonzalo Veloz 27:30

Unreal. Yeah, no. So so that's the thing like,

Gretchen Hurd 27:32

the travel agent, like,

Gonzalo Veloz 27:36

a became a business. It became insane. I remember I have friends. So we'll go to like, I don't know, I feel I was very dumb. Like, are very, very naive. Yeah. Because I never partake in any of those things. Yeah. But then, and like that there's so many things that happened in Venezuela, that are just borderline surreal in terms of what's possible in a society. And then you know, that, and that's the thing Venezuela got absolutely broke. And then the government and people of course, yeah, the people were swiping the cars. Those are the ones two great, guys. So you're talking about like somebody like swipe a car for like three grand and like Curacao, or you're talking about the guy that beat up contract for like \$2 billion for, you know, right subway system that never got built like, right. It was their government for the people but all about blaming the people. Yeah, what was going on?

Ray Abel 28:34

Well, I think that goes into an another question I have, though, originally, I was going to ask why do you think this isn't in the news more. And I started as I started researching even more, I found out Chavez and Maduro. They are really good at propaganda campaigns. And we talked a little bit about this this morning. And I'd like to hear kind of your thoughts on this. I was listening to journalist who left Venezuela and she was saying that they were amazing at propaganda. They bought reporters in different countries. And they did a great job of being able to promote the government. And now it's really hard to catch up to that because so much money has been distributed. But can you tell me a little bit more about that part of what's happening?

Gonzalo Veloz 29:13

So first of all, Chavez was probably one of the most charismatic human beings in the world. He dated like Naomi Campbell and like, coordinate Wait, I'm

Ray Abel 29:22

sorry. Wait. No, that's a real thing. Sir. Courtney Love Oh, my goodness. Wow. That's a really

Gonzalo Veloz 29:32

so for example, when I gave you a grievance about like, like, and this is more like American left and right and stuff. There were a lot of Hollywood actors that were like Chavis was the man. Wow. And there were a lot of you Hollywood actors that got money from Travis to make movies and they didn't make the movies. They kept the money. Danny Glover, Sean Penn, Jamie Foxx. They were all in bed as well. Benicio Del Toro, they were all in Venezuela, Danny Glover got \$18 million to make a movie

about like, the liberator of Haiti. And that never happened. Never made Oliver Stone got a bunch of money to make movies, as well. Yeah. So

Ray Abel 30:15

that's one of the virmani I was talking about that movie instead, it was one of the greatest propaganda pieces where Roger Waters Yeah.

Gonzalo Veloz 30:23

Riley? Yeah. Wow. All right. Boots Riley, the film director. So yeah, so that's the thing. So Bob Chavez was crazy charismatic. He had so much cash. And they started buying consciousness and propaganda very early in the game. You know, they pretty much made that what a lot of people call the south Paulo Forum that it's one like all Latin America was left left wing precedence. So it was the commissioners in Argentina, Lula, in Brazil, Chavez, Evo Morales, and Colombia. And then there was like others, but yeah, they that was Yeah, they did but like Chavez would finance the campaigns. So they would like through all oil companies there's like a there's like a scandal you should check out it's like older Brecht that it's the biggest construction company in Lanham and like, like the hemisphere or something, there's like a whole case of all like the money they funnel through there to pay for like the campaigns of all these precedents. So besides that, I told you early one thing that Chavez did was through oil companies they would buy oil for heating for the very poor neighborhoods here in the US in the Bronx in like all like in the in the poor neighborhoods seemed like Dorchester I think here in Boston, in like, all the big cities were like the winter was really hard. Like they would like through said go and like the oil companies. I don't know if it was through Citgo or another one, but they were like funnel oil a money. And then you like, you know that then it wasn't a surprise to see a mural of Chavez in the Bronx. Right, which is just and people be like, yeah, he's the best. I don't know. Like I because there was at some point, I don't think I remember him. So he was that and then through a pass of the years, you know, the world has changed. But they have still invested a lot of money into that. So right now, if you go there's, there's a couple media outlets, there's one called gray zone. And they're not one that they're like the equivalent to like Newsmax and whatever. Like they're very far left and they're just very they so so they sometimes post on in Twitter and Instagram that were in Venezuela, and everything is great. What they don't show it's like they have like 12 Bodyguards each and they're going you know what I mean? Like, it's just, it's just ridiculous. By what that does a really good job is like, people get really pissed. People get so pissed, like, yeah, and in my personal case, I learned to like be better about managing how I feel about that. But you see what's happening, Miss when you talk to your family, everything is horrible, man, it's miserable. And then you see a green go, like you see an American doing Oh, yeah, this is awesome. This is awesome. Mother was the man. And like, like a T shirt child is. And the thing is that propaganda has reached like American universities. Right? And a lot of people, there is like a photo. There's photos of the founder of the BlackLivesMatter organization with Maduro. Like that's how far that like the money has gone. Yeah. And that's when and that's when it becomes a matter of interpretation. Once again, how do you interpret politics? I'm like, what's going on? For me? And this is more like a very mixed thing, right? I support the Black Lives Matter movement. But when you talk to me about the founder actually come, you know, no, I have no interest about talking about her because exactly as Sam, she loves propaganda for a murder. Mm hmm. Right. And then when you talk about in the case of the right, how they have done a good job, like channeling that anger to the left in the Venezuelans. If you go to like Florida, to the very Venezuelan neighborhoods are at Doral, western parts of Miami. He's

like the Cubans like very conservative, right hardline right wing in the elections, they would like to support Trump, and that was used as an advantage. Trump for a long time promised that he was going to do something to help he did some stuff I got to give him that he was the only one that like sanction a lot of people that needed to be sanction. He like they put Maduro and others as like most wanted people by several like organizations, all right. But then you see how well like how is how propaganda works? Yeah, for one hand, you have a group of people that escape a country They're tired, they're exhausted, they're pissed. They're unhappy. They miss where they're from, and you give them and then you have the left doing all this stuff. It's so easy. It's like, oh, look, these people are trying to turn us into Venezuela. And that has been my biggest issue in my time here, especially last year with the election. Like the way Venezuelans and the Venezuelan cause has been weaponized. Because for their right it's, it's just like a campaign tool. Don't vote for wherever the vote for Bernie don't vote for Biden, because it turned us into an a swell, and we can't allow that. And then you see, like, they got the ferry guy from the insurrection. The sending guy, I hope, the Venezuelan people get their freedom, you know what I mean? And then you get like, the machines were hacked by Hugo Chavez and or whatever. And then you get the left. And you see Bernie Sanders AOC on them, never condemning Maduro No, they keep it like he not very they keep it in the gray area. He's the president. He's bad, but he's the President even though like there's like a constitutional precedent. That is one way though. Right. That is that's like the other part in Assam parallel government thing, but it's that it's like, a lot going on there. But then you get that Bernie Listen, say anything. AOC keeps it like low key Ilhan Omar says some very ridiculous remarks and they just never are like, oh, yeah, my the worst like terror. He needs to be out. Yeah. Right. Even though like the brutality is absurd from from

Ray Abel 36:39

him. One of the things actually So Bernie Sanders is I think we talked about him before in the show, whether you like his policies or not, which I don't, generally speaking, he seems to be pretty consistently seems like a real dude. Like, I'd love to grab a beer with Bernie, that would be a cool thing and talk to him. I will I did read recently, he did say some things about Maduro and condemned him. I know now the rest of the the squad. I haven't seen it from them. But at least he kind of came back and going back to kind of using it as a pawn. When I was doing some research into what Bernie had said about Venezuela, it popped up that he had said that the American dream lives in Venezuela. And then when I researched a little more, I found out that that was an article that was posted on his website that was attributed to him. And I agree 100%. And it's not just Venezuela, but it's everywhere, where everything is, well, yeah, this is bad. But the other side is worse. And this is why Venezuela is gonna be used to show you that socialism is bad. And then it's like, well, but they get free health care. And you go back and forth. And I think that everyone should take a look that documentary, I was trying to think of the name earlier on, I forgot it. But it's once upon a time in Venezuela and seeing that seeing documentaries about what's actually happening there when you put a face to it. And you say one of the most heartbreaking moments that I saw in that documentary, there was a boy who was in the water. It was in Maracaibo, a large lake there, that's one of the largest resources for oil in Venezuela, and they were swimming in their feet were covered in oil, eminent sister, and they found this turtle that was swimming in the turtle was just coated, they had top to bottom and oil in the kid got really excited and said, Wow, these are really good soup. And the sister was like, Well, it's a small hurdle. And he's like, I don't care. They were so excited. That should be a moment where it's like, oh, that's cool. Two little kids playing in the water. But you see these kids covered in oil, about to eat a turtle that they are so excited

to have because it's food. And it just, it should break all of our hearts. And that should be what the focus is on. And when we look at I mean, we talked early on \$1.4 billion in aid over the past, you know, five years? And I'm not sure I think it's what 2 million or 3 million migrants have gone to by Lumbee.

Gonzalo Veloz 38:44

If well, 5.5. Overall, Colombia? Yeah, to two to two on something. Yeah.

Ray Abel 38:50

jumping across the border there. And that's a country I think, 20 million people or 30 million people. And so it's a huge portion of the population. And we're just it's not talked about as other than a bargaining chip.

Gonzalo Veloz 39:00

I think a lot of what's like condensing everything about Venezuela, that that happens in their ass and like in the spectrum of the world, a lot of us like Maduro wins, because he has more money. And because he's evil, of course. But when you take it to like smaller battles, and to give you some points that we're talking about propaganda, I may give you an example you said about the pollution and the contamination in the in the Maracaibo Lake. Like the how how, like the Amazon is being destroyed the way that it's been destroyed through like mining, all that stuff. There's like a lot of premises about like the left being ecologically conscious and all that, but when you see what's happening in Venezuela, it's horrendous. But it's never gonna be in the media because like Maduro is it's it's one of the boys in the club man. So like, you see like how, for example, Greta thumb burger whoever activist talks about Brazil on Bolsonaro that like what like Guy, it's it's a case, but they talk about him into the structure of the Amazon there. You know, yeah Bolson are destroying the Amazon all that because then you see what have what's happening event so that it's mud world that it's when stuff that it's way worse. And there's nothing, right. And that's the that's the sad thing. And that's what like, that's what angers me. Because there's, like, there's such, there's so many things going on. It's such like, like it's such an uphill battle for Venezuelans. And then in the case of the US, yeah, everything is happening, man. So and then you get a kid from Northeastern University come and tell you that maths was awesome, because x, y, z, they have never been there. Like, that angers me that pisses me off so much. I try to keep my calm. But then I try to understand like, Okay, where's this coming from? But then you realize that like, the people are too Paul writes like, they're I think they're it's very hard to be away back to fully understanding that the world is a bit less binary. Yeah, black and white, democratic Paul, again, communism fascism. And I think that's like, that's something that has been lost in a lot of people like that the world is not binary decisions are not binary. And, and when you see what happens in Venezuela, and the reflection of like how people carry that cross, because we're talking over 5 million people that have left, recently, right, plus that whole bunch of the left, as soon as Chow has gone in power, and the other bunch, around 2002, when when the coop, that they tried to get Chavis out. There's millions of people that they left, what they want, what their place, they're left their home, to go to places do new languages, to new things to carry something. And then you get every year humiliated by the Venezuelan Government. You don't get access to passports, there's no wham bam, you get no like, you are a fifth class citizen. Right? You are, you are an outsider in every situation, you have no rights. That's when it's hard. That's what it's hard. That's where that's, that's when I that's when I talk about it, and I get pissed. Because it's like, yeah, dude, it's not only how our country's awful God

destroyed and all that. It's just a we go out there, we put our best effort into, you know, carry on, and they they still manage to make our lives miserable. Right. They the Venezuelan Government. And, and, and in my case that I'm lucky to have a nice life, right that I have a good job, and I'm not, you know, that I haven't, that I don't have like seven roommates and I wash cars until three in the morning, like a lot of people do. I did at some point, like I went through my, like my thin son fix, but just just the fact that that I see my fellow Venezuelans going through what they're going for crossing from Venezuela to try to go to like Argentina or Peru on foot. Or I they I saw some news. I don't know if I was sure I couldn't research. They got they they arrested like 87 Venezuelans in the Mexican desert. Yeah. Awesome. Like imagine trying to come from Venezuela, to get to Mexico to drag cross over it. So can you imagine the level of desperation people have? So I so I have to listen to some kid here.

Gretchen Hurd 43:42

Yeah, that's what I that's exactly what I thought

Gonzalo Veloz 43:45

that's, that's when it's, that's the painful, that's the most painful thing about the situation. Damn.

Ray Abel 43:52

Well, I think that's even talking about Okay, gotcha. No, go ahead. No,

Gretchen Hurd 43:55

I was gonna say, so I don't know your story about how you came to the United States. Was it difficult whenever you came,

Gonzalo Veloz 44:03

I was fortunate enough. I came here to like a film school program, things thanks to like, my family and supported me with that. And then, you know, I made the decision to, to, to stay, I was very involved in like, the whole broad protest movement back home, and like the opposition, and I had a lot of involvement with that throughout the years. And then the last few years, when stuff got really hard. I was working for like a political organization. That was like neutral. It was more about like, elections and democracy more than like partisan stuff. But that's the thing like the government targets all sorts of organizations, even though they're in partial government targets them and you know, they would say that we are trained by the CIA to Ma'am you know, the cool ball, that's shit. You know, and so so I came My plan was there to stay here like I plan it was come here and then it come back and then you know life gone way harder and right now it's it's still bad it's it's better ah there's like a weird like there's like a weird economic bubble happening but still like it's a very bad thing but But you But I see I see this stories I know like people that that are that have gone through like very horrible stuff there's a comedian, wholesale Rafael Guzman he saw like our Seth Rogen like that's that's the equivalent, like very stoner guy he makes like very strange comedy. He was making like this, like, he will make this documentary series for a while in Mexico that he will like do like I'm gonna live like a homeless man for a week. And he was like, he looks like crazy stuff like that. And he did one that he decided to do the the walk from Venezuela to Peru with the migrants.

Ray Abel 46:06

How long is that walk? Do you know?

Gonzalo Veloz 46:08

It's like two weeks. It's like, it's like ridiculous, like people like hitch try hitch like, and then he made this group of people and like the histories are so sad. Like, oh, what do you have that this is all I have with me a little backpack with like two pairs of shoes and a T shirt and you're walking through like the Andes that is freezing? Yeah. Like, you know, they get to like a small town in Colombia. They pawn some stuff to get some cash for a boss. And it's millions of people are like that. Yeah, dozens have died frozen, ran over by cars. So it's it's just, it's just like the most. It's horrible.

Gretchen Hurd 46:49

It's heartbreaking. Because when

Gonzalo Veloz 46:50

you talk about you talk about the Syrian crisis, that it's really bad. Yeah, that's in the so so so far away.

Gretchen Hurd 46:59

This is here. Yeah. It's like we're talking about

Gonzalo Veloz 47:00

a flight Miami. Caracas is three hours. To 45 We get time, you know, like it's it's their is the backyard. Right. And then it's that plus, you know, having a government that it's like a criminal organization. Yeah, that drug traffic's kills, kidnaps, destroys. They do anything in their power, they have the money to cover their cover themselves. I was telling you that there, they arrested this guy that he supposed to be like the front man for Maduro as his money. He's in Cape Verde. He has been arrested for the US has been trying to extradite him for six months. So far, the cost of his defense has been over \$120 million. It's insane. In lawyers, wow, man, and brows and stuff. Wow. Yeah, no, go ahead.

Ray Abel 47:55

No, I was gonna say talking about kind of the resistance. You said you're involved in that. And I, I didn't want to hear the story earlier, because I didn't want to ruin it for today. But you talked about being as part of the protests in 2008. I think it was. And what happened to you in 2008?

Gonzalo Veloz 48:11

No, I mean, in 2000, I was just in school, right? Like, I was just like, protesting. And the thing with me was every time that there was like a protest every time that I was there, since I was very young. Yeah, I was always present. I was always there. Because I wanted a change. I wanted something better. I've always wanted something better. And like I will go there and I be there tear gas and all that stuff. And there were time so we're almost will get arrested. And there will be time said like the government would like release their gangs and people would shoot and like there were time sights. I saw some like I remember in like the craziest bro the cycle that was 2014 I remember like, the first day of that brothers there was like if I'm not wrong, like four people die that day. And I remember I was there. Like in the place where it all started like two blocks away. There's the one of the more famous people at die there that it was the skid that got shot by like the military police. He was running he got shot in the back. And

and that was that was three months of protests. I've never stopped. It was every day. And he was it was before comparing it. That was one leg they will cry Ukrainians were protesting and people were like getting a lot of parallels. I think they were braver than us. But I also think the events ongoing was it's way more ruthless. Yeah. Because they arrested over 3000 people and torture them. I have a cousin a friend that he has been arrested for four years or five years. He was arrested around that time. And they just move his audience all the time. I know a lot A couple people that got tortured in very messed up ways about like, damn, like sexual torture, like men.

Ray Abel 50:09

And going back to what you're saying, this is the problem, okay, in general, the media, the national media, something I've obviously had a problem with for a while. And, you know, it doesn't get covered in the liberal press. And in the right wing press, you have people like Tommy Lehren, who's just yelling and saying, we're gonna be like Venezuela, but there's no actual discussion about the text until you start talking to someone from Venezuela until you start looking at documentaries. It just we have no concept in America, I was watching a BBC documentary where a guy had been taken in jail. And when he was doing his interview, they had his arm, his arm at a big scar running through it. And they released a video that while he was in jail, one of the guards was sympathetic to him. So that's something too that I felt was interesting, because there apparently are a lot of the guards and cops that are still sympathetic to the cause and are trying to do something different. And seeing they went back to a clip of when he was actually in custody and his arms were just ripped open, there was iodine blood everywhere, it was open wounds, he was begging for someone to help him both locally and internationally. And he stayed in jail for several years until he was finally what out with no kind of uproar. And it's weird that we're hearing about these kinds of things. Now just because I happened upon a YouTube documentary in the BBC instead of something that should be talked about in the front pages everywhere.

Gonzalo Veloz 51:27

A couple days ago was the fourth year anniversary of this kid that got killed in a protest one personality so his name I think, and he got killed because he got shot there's make stories, but pretty much he got National Guard a police officer, whatever it was, shot him a tear gas grenade into the chest. I like lit a fracture his chest and kill him on the spot. Man there so is it's just a matter of like, that's police brutality to that top. There, there, there were protests, stuff like that happen. The government would send gangs to shoot people, their military would use real bullets, or they would like shoot tear gas cans directly to people or they were like, there is a video you can find that their house like protesters got ran over by like that one of those police tanks that it's not like a full tank, but it's like, armored vehicle, they would use like this claw that it was like a like a claw. They would like throw with a chain, almost like fish and people. They would drag people in the motorcycles and beat them with the helmet. Like that's the level of flavors that police brutality. And what happens in the media here in the States is what you're saying when when something gets talked in, in the liberal media. It's very watered down. Because they're trying to like they're they're trying to see, you know, but there's good people on both sides quoting a former president and and and and they they play that way. Right. So So when when like the whole thing about that one way they'll happen that he is constitutionally the president right there, you wouldn't see any media outlets putting press in white white, though they would put self appointed president or opposition leader. Yeah, and that's a great example of the bias that there exists like that people can get

passed to the through the like to the PRO Pack and lender minds. And, and then late they know this, the news that you'd see that are critical or more like economic. And they touch a little bit on like the sanctions thing. That you know that the sanctions are not really doing anything. They they're sanctioning people, because like they're sanctioning like a bunch of like military people to come here and spend their money in this new world. That's what it's avoiding. That it's the sanctions. What are they doing? It's like we've one of those people tries to come here and like buy housing Miami, they're gonna get arrested on the spot, because they're human rights violators. That's what the sanctions are doing. But then you're talking about how the sanctions are not letting the vaccines in. And then on the other hand, you find out in the league, you find out that the organization that is in charge of distributing their vaccines is offering 3 million doses of the Astra Zeneca and they say no, because screw that people. And we just we just want to get the Russian vaccine. Yeah, like the sanctions are undoing anything. And the sanctions plus having this huge machine of propaganda. It's the perfect storm, because you can attribute everything to the sanctions. This thing happened sanctions now get sanctions, like it's just it's too easy. It's just like there's no you don't even have to look for any other culprit that it's there. The Yankees and the sash. And,

Ray Abel 55:01

well, we get blamed for a lot. And I think that I mean, obviously, we have done a lot of bad things. But I think, you know, I'm clearly often very frustrated with the left media. But I'm also frustrated by things where Donald Trump, I think, actually had a chance to do something good. And there are two things that really bothered me in that situation. Number one, in general, whether it's republican or democrat in office, I always feel very uncomfortable. We have our State of the Union addresses, and they bring up some war hero, or a family member of someone who died. And we just stare at them and clap. And it's, I don't, I want to support them. And I want to say, wow, like you are all heroes. But in that setting, it's completely propaganda. It's our American version of propaganda. And it comes from all all all presidents. And they brought one guaido to the State of the Union. And they stood him up and I actually texted my friend, the one who was shot in a protest and I, I thought something good was going to happen. I said, you know, if this is starting to get press, at least on the right, cuz that's the problem with the press in the right is unless Trump was saying it was good, you weren't going to hear about it. And it was all about what the what the narrative was, but I thought that was a chance. Okay, we're talking about one guaido, there might be a change. I was excited for her and for my friends are from Venezuela. And then apparently, John Bolton worked behind the scenes, which we talked a little bit about him earlier, when we were off air. He's someone that I think liberals will say, Well, that's one of those terrible conservatives and conservatives generally don't like the guy. He's a war hawk. But in a situation where there was actually a chance for change. There were, I think, and correct me if I'm wrong here. I think there were what a convoy of aid that was coming in from Colombia that was brought there by the Americans going across the border, and they wouldn't let the aid

Gonzalo Veloz 56:38

and only the Americans, it was like OLC all people there was like a life aid style concert. Yeah, that was a very strange day. And yeah, the National Guard burned dead. And it was like, dang, yeah, those a

Ray Abel 56:51

National Guard of Venezuela burned medicine supplies. And

Gonzalo Veloz 56:55

then there was like an article that saying, like, like American news media article saying that he was the protesters burning it to just blame the government. Like, he was just like a whole thing. And yeah, I remember those days when Bolden and Abraham's was, what's his name? The guy that did like the Nicaragua thing. I forget that he is awesome that he was awesome. The government that yes, that famous video of Ilhan Omar questioning him for being a war criminals stuff that I saw a lot of my friends sharing, and I will say this, like, it's crazy, because like these people were known to, you know, pick wars in a few years ago. And in this case, they were just like, No, we're trying to figure out how to make put medicines in like this. That's pretty much how far we're growing. And then in terms of, of the promises of the past administration, and as well as for years, there was the whole thing about the TPS the temporary protection status for Venezuela. Trump could ever approve that with a signature. Yeah, he promised it for months. Biden approved it like, like two weeks into his term like, so. So that says a lot. This guy prom, like he, the past administration wanted to capitalize on the Venezuelan, you know, that the support he had from the Venezuelan community. And they he never gave him anything.

Ray Abel 58:15

Right. And that's the thing in general, like our government say that our government is better than what's happening in Venezuela, by far, obviously, but we don't get things done. And that's where it becomes so politicized if Biden signs that there's gonna be a lot of people on the right, who are like, Well, why are we doing that? Why are we protecting these people that are our citizens. And then if Trump would have signed that people have been like, look at us, like we are helping people. And the same goes on the left, and nothing gets done. And when you look at what's happening in Venezuela, it's just, it's so so disappointing. And I just hope at some point, people can actually start talking about these problems and moving something forward. But I don't I don't know. Do you ever see that day happening? I mean, I think that goes to either of you, because that's my biggest fear in this country is we become so polarized that we can't move forward. And I don't know, does that ever change? What makes that change?

Gonzalo Veloz 59:08

I mean, I told you early. My thoughts. I love that. You know, Biden's by far not perfect. I find him that he's a very charismatic guy. And he's doing he's doing his thing. But I appreciate that he's doing a better job than everybody expected him to do. And that that is pissing off the far right on the far left. And that's awesome. Yeah. Because do you see them? Like, everybody's just absolutely livid. Because the bar was pretty low. It was us because the bar was, you know, you have one side. You know, you have what's the name of the guy that it's like sex trafficking and like all those weird

Ray Abel 59:50

Matt gates, okay, let me just say, I hate when people use matt gates as an example of Republic. I think most people hate that dude.

Gonzalo Veloz 59:57

But but but it's everybody it's dad guy. And then like the the woman that would like set all the insurrection stuff, and then yeah, and then you have AOC and the other people on the other side, like

just trying to make everything about them. And the Biden like doing his thing, you know, like he shows up, he does it work. There's things that he could do better. Yes. But that's the other part of that is funny hilarious about politics here. Biden got on the office, and you will see all that like the Marxist youth. Oh, why are you having done this? When you haven't done that? I'm like, it's just like, they think they think politics is just whatever they do, like, the people wake up and you make stuff happen this way. And then you have the right on the other side, this guy is going to destroy it. One thing that I find hilarious, for example, with like, Biden talk about, like the tax things, and then you see somebody that makes like, \$10,000 a year and whatever. How is he going to talk to people make for more than \$400,000 a year? Like, you're literally not never gonna see amount of money? Why do you care so much? Yeah. And so yeah, I think I think we are, I don't think that's going to happen, what you're saying that we're gonna get into this back into this groove. But I think since there's been there's a generational change happening. Yeah. And a more humane generation coming in. Right now, a lot of that generation is very radicalized. Yeah. But I think once they age, yeah, they, you know, they graduate college, and they start getting jobs and stuff.

Gretchen Hurd 1:01:30

And living life, living life.

Gonzalo Veloz 1:01:32

Yeah, I see, I think stuff is gonna get a bit more stable. Because I also, because I also think that people are also very tired of the polarization.

Ray Abel 1:01:43

Yeah, I definitely agree with that. I'm afraid though with I mean, this is this is gone borderline cult like, and I think that's even going back to when I watched that documentary, it was so funny. Seeing that woman hold, she was holding a doll, an action figure of Hugo Chavez, and talking about how she she was hugging it, she makes anyone that comes into her bedroom, touch a picture of his face. It was amazing how much he worshipped Him. And all I saw on that, I thought I saw a bunch of people with their big Trump signs hanging off the back of their truck. And then I saw a bunch of people that talk about how AOC is the next coming of Christ. And it's we idolize these politicians in America, or that's destroying us like that. And this is again, coming from someone who eventually does potentially want to run for office. You can't trust politicians, like that's no politician out there. I can look at and say, You know what, I mean, Bernie Sanders, a Mitt Romney, they seem to do what they want to do. And you can pretty much mostly count on them, even if they disagree. Yeah, you can say, all right, well, at least it seems like you're you're coming from a place where you're actually believing what you're saying. But I mean, that's part of the problem with Trump following John Bolton versus people who are actually living through what was happening in Venezuela, and you bring up these props on both sides, it's, here's the process that we're going to use these people for, and then not solve anything and wait until we need to have something happen, where we can bring them back into the mix, oh, there's a crisis over here. Let's bring those poor Venezuelans in to show that we need to go fix this. And it just become a mix. But I think you have a little more hope than me because I feel like we've been so indoctrinated now. And because of social media, we get these bubbles. But I think that's why it's important to have conversations like this where we can hear it from from the horse's mouth. No, but what's actually happening,

Gonzalo Veloz 1:03:23

ultimately, for me, I love the US, honestly, like, I mean, I have days, I'm just like, Why the hell is going on with people here? Why are they doing that? Yeah, but ultimately, I I love it here. The opportunities that I have gotten here have been incredible the amount of people that have made that have been there is so influential in the world, you know, that that I have met and I have had the opportunity to talk to and, and all the jobs and stuff that I have done. And ultimately, I'd like that's what I what I take what that's what I take, yes, there are days late because it goes from like a crazy illusion that you think is the best place on earth. And there's like, because, like, that's what you get from the movies and all this stuff. And you think that it's awesome. And then you get here and you realize, like, oh, there's a lot of flaws and there's a lot going on. But when I take it to my personal, my personal experience, like this place has given me so much in so little time like that, that I had to cram years of life in five years, like I to and to be, you know, up to one my peers are up to and this is the kind of place that lets you do it. Sure. It's it's tough because like sometimes I feel like yeah, this is a country like Iran on how much you work. Yeah, there's not a culture of rest. Now, but definitely not. But if they I visit this country, if you want to be rich, you're gonna be rich. Like that's, that's how it you know, there's many, many ways to In a cat, that's one of my favorite American sayings. But But then, but but if you just try to do what you need to do you get there. Like, I feel there's a lot of systematic and institutional issues that don't allow people to get to where they want or should be. Absolutely. But there's, I feel like there's also workarounds, I feel there's also a matter of, and this is like, very, very, like, you got to pick up yourself from the bootstraps. And but But it's true, like you, you show up and you do what you got to do, and you and opportunities are real and true. And that's never gonna change the American dream. It's absolutely alive. Even despite what people might say, but it's, I think it takes a little bit more of humanity, for it to to be to be better. Yeah, I think I think the work part is pretty good. But I think once this place, achieves a better state, in how their humanity and and people like appreciation and all that stuff, like I think that's, that's when it will be back to be

Gretchen Hurd 1:06:12

that's what it was. Yeah, yeah.

Ray Abel 1:06:15

Well, I think that um, the humanity is a great way. Gretchen I have a couple questions wrap up, but as before I do Is there anything else you want to ask Gonzalo? No,

Gretchen Hurd 1:06:22

I this was like, really wonderful. Actually. I do have actually one question that I thought of you said your cousin is down there in prison, but are your are your parents? Where are your parents at?

Gonzalo Veloz 1:06:37

So yeah, the my my parents live in two different cities. Hmm. Um, and then my boss this guy this cousin of mine it's more like a family friend Allah to clarify that No, I don't want I don't know my dad texted me it's like who's in jail? But um, but yeah, my dad lives in the capital Caracas My mom lives in Valencia though.

Gretchen Hurd 1:06:59

Do you have like a lot of contact with them and yeah, I

Gonzalo Veloz 1:07:02

told my parents my mom every day my dad almost every day we wow good contact I talk with the other relatives or they're always trying to keep in touch with them try to figure out how they are so yeah, I mean contact as possible thank god

Gretchen Hurd 1:07:20

yeah. And there are they doing well are they

Gonzalo Veloz 1:07:23

you know well hanging in there sure as any other like Venezuelan that is abroad we send stuff money Yeah or whatever they they're they're spent there's a hide in like door to door like a carrier companies like there's so many companies that you can ship boxes of stuff. Oh, wow. And it's hilarious because it's just it's like a huge business huh? So it's pretty much like it's crazy how organized it is. At this point I sound send some boxes to my friends. And they you like they tell you oh yeah. To the boxes and they just to give you prices? The reference is the Home Depot boxes. So yeah, to send the Home Depot like the medium Home Depot box is 50 bucks up to 70 pounds. So you grab 70 pounds so you grab the box and fill it out with stuff that's cheaper than Sen box across the country quite a legal stuff, but it's through ship. So it takes like three weeks. Yeah. But you know, it's and then like they pick it up or they deliver it to like the address. Wow. And there's like companies so many of those companies there are some that like just take up the stuff in your house in this case they send you like a UPS thing. So you can send their box from where you are to their to their offices in like Florida and then they from ships and it's crazy. How like how it has become a system.

Gretchen Hurd 1:08:48

That's wild. No, I'm glad your family is okay.

Gonzalo Veloz 1:08:53

Yeah, that's watching

Ray Abel 1:08:58

Hello, Gonzalez dad. Now I have a question for you. I had this string. I forget what it's called. just tried to google it Quas it's fermented some kind of fermented or molted drink from Venezuela. Have you had this drink? Plus question? Quoz he said I don't know it's from like he's no it's it's a Malta. Is it? Malta?

Gonzalo Veloz 1:09:19

Malta? Hell yeah. Malta is the best. Martine. Yeah. How I see the best

Ray Abel 1:09:26

man I love so i i would love to go to Venezuela sometime once everything is when it becomes safe traveling. And I didn't mention this. But I did go to Colombia, which is right next door. And I absolutely love that country. It's

Gretchen Hurd 1:09:38

yeah, my sister went there to and loved it.

Ray Abel 1:09:40

Beautiful, beautiful country, amazing people. One of my two favorite countries I visited and I would love to check out Venezuela and I had so much good food in the area. I tried multum and my friend that was from Venezuela, the one who was shot she used to work at the plant that created that and she said that Currently they made dog food and the same plant. And I didn't know that because I, she tastes and she's like, What do you think that tastes like? And I was like, she was like, Isn't it amazing? And I was like, kind of tastes like dog food. She's like, well, you know, and she actually told me that there may have been the same plant. I don't think I that's one of the rare things where I feel like everyone I've met from Venezuela absolutely loves it, but man that his

Gonzalo Veloz 1:10:21

mouth is insane. It's so good. It's like such a failing drink. Like, we have a joke that it's like you, you you drink one of those and like you jump on your phone, and you can go to the next. Yeah, but But No, the thing is invest rather say there's one of the few companies have survived this call empresa spooler. And it's the biggest company in the country, and they pretty much feed that country. No, it has been one of the few companies that has managed to not be being taken out taken over by the government. Right? They have expanded at this point, like they realize that they knew that at some point that could answer they have expanded to like Spain, and here in the US and Colombia. But they make everything they're the ones that have like the license to make like Pepsi, unlike Gatorade. So like they, you know, they make all that stuff, but they make everything like we're talking for like sports drinks to like flour, and like cookies, and ice cream and everything. Everything that is food related, that it's them. Malda is the best.

Ray Abel 1:11:29

There's a great Venezuelan place in Pittsburgh that I had that's in the south side of Pittsburgh that a friend of mine, her family owns it and it's amazing food but that Malta? Well, that's the one thing I think we'll disagree on throughout this podcast. I just may I'll try to get it sideways. I'll have to try it again. That's what I want to wrap up with with you that we talked about family, we talked about Malta and I think that's where we talk about humanity. I think one of my questions for you as you know, I think what often gets lost the fact that you love America, which is so encouraging to hear because I feel like we do have a country that's we are all blessed to be in America. Oh, yeah. tough situations. But in general, we have so many opportunities here. But what gets lost is the fact that five years ago you were in your home country with your family and around people you knew and grew up with and now you're here and it's we I think we often forget about Wow, that's a gigantic change. It's I think what is what is it that that you miss most about Venezuela?

Gonzalo Veloz 1:12:27

That's something I we assume and I talk about a lot with my friends. Ray Well you have met undress and dresses yeah lives here. He's one of my best friends from back home. And we live here together I mean, not together in the same house but in the same goes by Yeah, and we talk a lot about the thing

about Venezuela that we miss moments, of course, but the thing about those moments is that those moments are never coming back because so many people have left that our friends from back home are just spread all over the world and times changed and it's harder to catch up because people are in different time zones people are living through different things some are having kids and all that and I miss a lot of that I mean that's how I miss a lot of those like spontaneous moments I will have I will have my friends spontaneous moments I will have my family I miss being with my mom and just you know my mom and I were very close and and you know we will go out and eat and hang out and you know, or with my dad that we would always go to like different restaurants and we will well different restaurants we will always go to like the same three restaurants. It was like an Italian restaurant a Spanish restaurant, and they like this more like Minnesota restaurant and we would go to those three all the time and I missed that I missed that a lot. And I and I cherish those moments a lot because it's a you know it's it's they're very important for me and a lot of those moments are not coming not happening again. And I think a lot about that and I think a lot about the weather for sure no best weather in the world like by far and I miss I miss being I miss this sense of belonging in my surroundings that I am from here and this people are my people. I have done a pretty decent job and adapting to to live here but but I'm always gonna be outsider and and I get it I am I made peace with it. But But I missed that. That sense of like, well, I'm from here, despite me not being super happy about the situation I I feel there's like a connection that you have with a place that you're from So yeah, yeah, completely understand

Gretchen Hurd 1:15:03

that you've been kind of diva de like demonized or anything like that when you've like, after you came? Do you feel like there's a feeling that you because you're feel like you're an outsider? Is that coming from a specific place?

Gonzalo Veloz 1:15:16

It comes from a place of like, what? Were all the stuff that is happening here? You you feel so powerless and hopeless sometimes because I'm not from here. So I'm like that I feel like sometimes that makes you feel less than you are from here. And then you see what happens, you know, you see, like when people are racist towards Latino immigrants, or when you see like, you know, police brutality against Latinos, and specifically in the case of Latinos to not go any further on that, yeah, I talked about this with my girlfriend a lot that I that's sometimes I get scared, because it's like, it's such a sense of hopelessness, that my, my, my country and my government led me down. And the who else is gonna care for me, right. But at the same time that I try to, I try to go and just work around that, because, like, that's not going to change. That's, that's, that's the painful thing about the Minnesota situation that and this is something like, and this is like, the easiest explanation that I can give to people about why is it so painful when you mourn, or you grieve somebody, like somebody passed away, and that person passed away and, and you got to go through like the steps and figure it out. When you have to leave a place. You are pretty much it's a your own funeral, almost like because you are leaving who you are behind to go be somebody else in a new place. And in the case of Venezuela, it's like, there's like so many circumstances that just like you go, and there's like a door that locks behind you. Because yeah, there's no, there's no guarantees of going back. Mm hmm. And that's very tough. In my case, I, I accepted that. And I made peace with it. And I decided that my new life was going to be my new life. And there's a lot of people that have a really hard time dealing with that I see it, I talked to a lot of

people that they just process it in a way that they just feel they're going to go back at some point. I may make peace with the fact that I might never go back. Yeah. Or if I go back, it's when I'm in like my 50s. Or to like go and die there. You know. But, but, but I but but at the same time, I have a pretty awesome life here. And I have a better life and very successful life a very happy life. Not a lot of people can say they work doing what they love to do. In a different country. Yeah, doing their thing getting paid well and living a good life. The not even people from here can say that. So so. So why am I gonna just be myself with feeling less if I am doing so? Well?

Ray Abel 1:18:27

I love that. Gretchen. We're gonna wrap up. I'm going to come back to you Gonzalo. What but and just ask you what's next what we should be doing when we talk about Venezuela. But we always wrap up with things that Greta and I may have learned here in this conversation. So Gretchen, do you want to go and talk about what you learned through this conversation?

Gretchen Hurd 1:18:45

Yeah, I feel like it. It's just even thinking about humanity. And understanding what's going on in other countries really puts into perspective what's happening here. I think hearing you talk about being a transplant coming here and your feelings about being here. It's almost solidified my my view of what's happening at our border and how we are treating people that are coming here and how we I use the royal way because of course we're not all doing it. But we all have a hand in it. And we all can prevent it and we all can speak up about it. But the demonization of people coming here and how we how we treat people that are different than us in general and you know, people that are just different and why that's a bad thing and why people make it a bad thing and it's not a bad thing. It's actually really a wonderful thing. Also, just your stories have they were shocking and we're almost dumbfounding to me that they could happen and that they have happened and that they're continuing to happen, and that your poor family is still there, and that you're away from them. And I think Ray and I both know what it's like to go through loss. I mean, I think everybody well, unless they're very young, and they don't know what it's like to lose a part of yourself, meaning from family members, or marriages or whatever. Going through a trauma like that is very heavy, and it has lasting implications. And I feel like people that are coming here are really seeking help and seeking a better life. And you're kind of the poster child in my brain now of what it can be and what it should be. And yeah, that gives me a lot of hope that we can really change what is going on. Here more, you know, than what we can change anywhere else. But here most of all,

Ray Abel 1:21:04

well, I think piggybacking on that you've always been my poster child. I have a poster of you hanging up my bedroom since I met you up in Boston. So

Gonzalo Veloz 1:21:10

from that, from my date for the Boston Globe. Oh, my

Ray Abel 1:21:14

goodness. Actually, that was I wasn't planning on telling the story, but very quickly, Gonzalo was actually in a he was what was it a web? It was a newspaper tell the story. You're gonna tell him? Yeah,

Gonzalo Veloz 1:21:26

it's a it's a it's so the Boston Globe does a thing called Dinner with Cupid. So they match you to go to like on a blind date, and then they make you answer questions and write about it. And yeah, it was a big thing at the office that I used to work at. And of course, the The news spread pretty quickly. Um, Ray Ray had a photo, the article,

Ray Abel 1:21:49

yeah, I took a picture of the article. And when I was texting him, I was like, oh, what does that picture I forget what it is. And I zoomed in, and it was him in the woman from the date like, that's his profile picture and my phone is that. So, yeah, that's that one blown up real big in my bedroom. But on a serious note, I think that I agree with, you know, what, everything you said there Gretsch. And I do think that the one thing that I've been a little different on is the fact that I, I still go back to kind of the hopeful side, there's parts that I'm obviously clearly there's parts that I'm down on. But you know, what's happening in the border. GONZALO and I talked about this earlier, kind of offline, it's been happening for so long. And again, yes, problems that has been used as a political football and no one tries to solve it. But generally speaking, I mean, we are, you know, a country of 360 million, 370 million people. And there are people who are racist, there are people who are communists, there's all these lists that we could use about other people. But at the core of it, we do have a pretty diverse nation. And when you look in world, that around the world, we have a very diverse country, and generally speaking, we're good people. And I think that's something that I really, it's so nice to hear you even though you've had struggles, you know, talking about how great America is and how much you you do love being here. I think we got to root out the bad but I think there's a lot of good to build on. And, you know, I've met you I think briefly after you got here apparently I didn't realize that but you got here around 2015. I was in Boston in 2016. So you were still fresh to the country. And I mean, I never thought of you as Gonzalo that Venezuelan guy that was never came to mind. I was just like, oh, Gonzalo is cool. And he's funny, because he went on this date, then, you know,

Gonzalo Veloz 1:23:28

and I partied like an American?

Ray Abel 1:23:31

Yes. Well, no, I think he partied like, from what I understand the Venezuelan parties like because we Americans couldn't keep up with. So yeah. But I think in general, that's like, I think that's the beauty of this country is yeah, we do have our problems. But I do feel like there's so much good. And I hope we can capitalize on that and start having these kinds of conversations and start moving forward and trying to fix something. But thank you for being on the show. And that's what I want to ask you is what's next for you? I mean, what is it that we could do to help Venezuela listeners could do? What is it that we could help interpersonal relationships, solve all our problems with immigration and Venezuela in the next 30 to 40 seconds?

Gonzalo Veloz 1:24:10

Well, I think first and foremost, you know, try to listen more to stories. There are a lot of journalists out there doing the job and talking about stuff that matters. And they're unmasking the propaganda, and

they're putting very active efforts and doing better. Second, you know, it's just a matter of find content that that you can see more of the stories like I told you that documentary, Once Upon a Time Event suela it's, it's heartbreaking, but it's very powerful because you really get to see how how the everything has happened in the very end. I'm like a micro cosmos of it. And the other part it I think In terms of what's next, I just think, you know, keep keep doing this kind of stuff. Because I think it's very important in this current world with all the news and the propaganda and people that are just out there to spread Ill Mind information. In a world that has a lot of very naive people. It's important that things like this happen, because it it, it takes the power away from them in, in code, it goes back to what the information and journalism and and the truth is. And more about, like, you know, like commercial, the commercial news that what it is right now. That's, that's the importance of this kind of initiatives. And that's the importance of the freedom of like press in countries like Venezuela like that, having the journalists that go there and do the research and come back with like the truth. So So I think, keep doing stuff like this, I'd really enjoyed this conversation, I'd really support this initiative. And, and I hope you guys keep like hashing out important stuff.

Ray Abel 1:26:14

Oh, thanks. That's our goal. And I will say, just to kind of wrap up here, where we have some links up on the website, already, the links to the documentary, some links to some of the other materials, we read going into this, I encourage everyone to go to research news.com and read up on what's actually happening. And I think we'll also to, I'm going to ask you, for some journalists that are good journalists, that would be someone that's giving unbiased information. But I think one of the moments and I'll just wrap up on a kind of a positive note that just I think would hopefully bring people together. If you watch the documentary, we talked about this right before we went on air. One of my favorite parts in that movie was this little boy was on a boat, and he was fishing with his sister. And he picked up a fish and cocked it. So he took the tail and kind of cocked it and started shooting when bang, bang, bang, bang. And I just thought of every little boy that I grew up with in the neighborhood, you know, using our airsoft guns, and it's just kind of a thing that weighs do around the world. And the little girls were dressing up and having their pageants. And it was just this beautiful moment of these kids. And this really terrible situation just being kids. And it breaks your heart. And you also see joy in such a bad situation. And they're still finding ways to be happy. And I think that's where if we if we see those kinds of things, hopefully people who are on the left that thing. Chavez and Maduro are amazing, can start seeing that maybe there's some problems there. And people on the right that have used Venezuelans, any population as pawns and only want to talk about the economic side of it can say, hey, there are real people being affected by these policies. It's not a point to just bring someone to a state of the union and say, Hey, look at me, I'm helping and then absolutely nothing happens, but you scored some local points. So seeing those children, it was both heartbreaking and also to just heartwarming seeing just little boys, little girls being kids. And I encourage you to watch those documentaries. And I thank you guys again, both for being on the show. Hopefully we'll have Gonzalo back again at some point, but check out the website. Feel free to share this podcast and we'll be coming back with you next week for another episode of research the news