

CAMPUS VOICES - VENEZUELA

Venezuela is collapsing and Americans don't seem to care



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Venezuela, which is the United States' third-largest source of crude oil, is going through an economic and humanitarian crisis. But the average U.S. citizen seems either unaware or unfazed by the country's situation.

Americans are often characterized as being uninformed about international affairs. A recent survey conducted by National Geographic shows a "deficit in knowledge regarding foreign relations, geography and other global issues" among young Americans.

When it comes to what is happening in Venezuela, U.S. citizens should start paying more attention, for the nation's crisis is directly affecting the United States.

Even though the country is 2,000 miles away, the effects of the crisis can still be felt here. Venezuela's economic crisis could lead to an increase in oil prices across

the United States. Currently, the world's largest oil reserves reside in Venezuela. As production declines, the United States will need to shift to another country for oil imports, which will potentially raise gas prices.

The United States prides itself on fighting against countries that do not value or uphold democracy. The Venezuelan government has dismantled its country's democracy. There is no longer a separation of powers or free and fair elections in Venezuela, according to the U.S. State Department. The government even banned opposition leaders from running in the recent presidential election.

As the United States takes steps toward sanctioning the Venezuelan government, other foreign powers have offered a helping hand. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, China has lent Venezuela \$60 billion since

2001, and ties between Russia and Venezuela have also been strengthened.

The United States has more to worry about than just the relationships Venezuela has with other countries. The two nations are members of many of the same international organizations. With this in mind, what happens in Venezuela will impact the international affairs of the United States.

Both countries belong to the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, among many others.

Beyond the repercussions of Venezuela's condition in the United States, the Obama and Trump administrations have issued multiple sanctions on the South American nation. These measures include economic sanctions as well as others targeted at specific government officials.

Another aspect of Venezuela's situation that is affecting the United States is the displacement of its people. According to the International Organization of Migration, nearly 1 million Venezuelans have fled the country in the last two years. While the majority of the migrants are fleeing to neighboring Latin American countries, the United States is not immune to the migration. The population of Venezuelans in the United States has increased by 14 percent from 2015 to 2017, according to the International Organization of Migration.

While the economic and political effects of this turmoil are important, the main reason Americans should care about Venezuela's crisis is the detrimental impact it is having on fellow human beings. Venezuela's political and economic crisis has turned into a humanitarian one. Venezuelans lack basic

needs and are struggling to survive. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, in 2016, 85 percent of basic medicines were unavailable or difficult to obtain in Venezuela. More than 87 percent of the population didn't have enough money to purchase essential foods, and 30 percent of children were malnourished.

In addition to a lack of basic needs and resources, Venezuela is also plagued by high rates of violence. In 2016, the country experienced its highest-ever homicide rate at 91.8 homicides per 100,000 residents.

The humanitarian crisis in Venezuela is becoming increasingly worse, and it's far from over. It is imperative that U.S. citizens remain informed on the country's situation. Not only is it impacting them, but it is affecting the lives of millions of Venezuelans.

CAMPUS VOICES - NICARAGUA

Nicaragua, estás en mi corazón



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El 18 de abril fue el día en que Nicaragua cambió de la noche a la mañana y, por ende, mi vida. El presidente de Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega, anunció que iba a aumentar las contribuciones de trabajadores y empresarios e imponer una retención del 5 por ciento a los jubilados.

Esta era una medida que iba a afectar de manera negativa a un grupo social que ya había sido suficientemente perjudicada por la mala administración y escasos recursos del gobierno.

Al anunciar estas medidas drásticas, la población decidió salir a las calles a protestar. Los manifestantes fueron atacados violentamente por el gobierno de Daniel Ortega y sus grupos parapoliciales, los cuales causaron la muerte de varios, incluyendo un estudiante de 14 años.

Tras cuatro días consecutivos de protestas y varias muertes, el presidente anunció que iba a retirar la reforma. Sin embargo, ya era muy tarde. No era posible olvidar a todos los muertos, presos políticos y víctimas de la represión.

Ese 22 de abril fue el día en que me di cuenta que la situación de mi país iba para largo y que esto solo era el comienzo. Daniel Ortega lleva 11 años en el poder. Durante esos años hemos pasado por fraudes electorales y un gobierno corrupto.

En estos últimos meses, mi vida y todo a mi alrededor ha cambiado. Algunos de mis amigos se tuvieron que ir del país ya que cada día está más peligroso salir a las calles.

La población tiene que estar en sus casas a las seis de la tarde todos los días o corren el riesgo de ser atacados por fuerzas parapoliciales. La economía del país decae más cada día, dejando a miles sin empleo.

Extraño poder salir a la calle hasta la hora que yo quiera. Poder ir a casa de mis amigos o familiares. Poder ir a cenar a un restaurante sin tener la preocupación

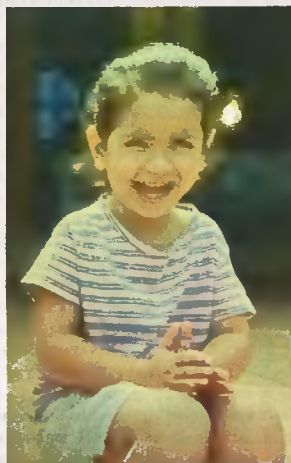
que algo me pase en el camino. Lo que se me hace más difícil es estar en la universidad y estar tan lejos de mi país cuando está pasando por tanto.

Me preocupó todos los días al pensar en el bienestar de mi familia y amigos que siguen en el país, sabiendo que su seguridad constantemente corre peligro.

Mi país bello y maravilloso se volvió la escena de mi peor pesadilla. Quiero mi vida devuelta, siento que me la han robado. Quiero poder regresar a mi país y tener esa sensación de hogar. No tener la sensación de melancolía y miedo.

Esto ha sido muy fuerte para un montón de gente, pero yo se que de esta vamos a salir. Admiro tanto a todas esas personas que están luchando el día de hoy para poder sacar a Nicaragua adelante. Yo se que pronto Nicaragua estará libre. Pero por ahora, hay que luchar por nuestro país.

¡Nicaragua volverá a ser Republica!



CORTESIA DE CARMENCITA ROSALES
Carmencita Rosales sonríe de pequeña en Nicaragua.

CAMPUS VOICES - ECUADOR

'No dejes que se acostumbren tus ojos'



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After two semesters of enlightening first-year classes, shrunken clothes in laundry machines and 15 extra pounds, I went home for my first summer after college. As one would be after a couple college classes, I returned home completely sure I had all the knowledge I would need for the rest of my life.

I was wrong. I remember speaking about how primary education functioned as if my 3-week winter term class on education made me wiser than my mother, a woman who has a master's degree in primary education and 23 years of experience. This illusion of wisdom also came with a need for independence. Needless to say, my rebellious streak ended just as I walked out the door and my mother's sweet voice said, "Where do you think you're going?"

My summer in Ecuador included some power struggles between my parents and me as I tried to convince them I was not a child anymore. The universal statement "As long as you live under my roof..." seemed to be tailored to my daily life. But my summer was filled with much more than rebellion, and it shed light on various realizations.

When I left for college, a year before, I left behind the poverty of my country; I left behind the half-painted houses and the Christmas lights that were still hung in August because they were the only decorations at the corner store. I repressed the uneasiness of seeing children selling candy in the streets and the banners of populist leaders camouflaging the graffiti in the public green buses.

I did leave all this behind, but coming back made me realize what I had failed to see in all those years. I had spent 18 years of my life counting the potholes and cursing at the speed bumps. That chaotic beauty is what makes Ecuador more than a small Latin American country. That's when I realized my city, my country, is beyond magnificent.

My grandfather used to say, "No dejes que se acostumbren tus ojos," which roughly translates to, "Don't let your eyes get used to what they are seeing." My eyes were used to seeing the monumental mountain range with every peak dipped in snow. I became oblivious to the genuine smile of the vendor at the corner store, the vibrant colors of the artisanal market and the beautiful stones that build the Historic Center. I forgot about the importance of my chaotic family — 15 people gathered around a table with a toddler sitting on it, having six different conversations in which all the members somehow understood every word of it. I had gotten used to the absence of my grandmother's advice.

But I came back.

That's the thing about leaving — it makes coming back so much better. Before college, it was as if I was standing too close to a painting. I could only see blurs, smudges and some colors, but there was no cohesion. This summer, my surroundings became a masterpiece I hadn't been able to admire. I had to fly 4,018 kilometers away to Elon to experience college, savor independence and ignite my rebellion in order to see the whole painting — that amazing, diverse, spectacular painting that Ecuador is to me.