

The Venezuelan Tragedy - A Panel Discussion
Saturday October 3, 2020 at 5:00 pm EST via Zoom
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83261367279>

Background

For anybody who calls Venezuela their home, the current situation of the country is, in every sense of the word, a real tragedy. Until the beginning of the Bolivarian revolution in 1999, Venezuela was a universal attractor of entrepreneurs and refugees from the four corners of the planet. The Spanish Civil War (1930s), the Holocaust (1940s), and the dictatorships of Chile and Argentina of the 1970-1980s were prime origins. The discovery of an immense oil wealth in the 1880s led to the fast development, stability, and prosperity the homeless were looking for, but in the long run also became a curse: in the words of Juan Pablo Pérez Alfonso, a former Venezuelan oil minister, "the devil's excrement."

Except for the 40 years of democracy between 1959 and 1999, Venezuela has been in the hands of local warlords, who have governed the country like their own haciendas: Gómez, Pérez-Jiménez, Chávez, and Maduro, the latter still in power. During those 40 years of democracy, much was achieved in terms of good public education and health systems, electrical grids, infrastructure, industrial parks, oil technology, political decentralization, and culture, but above all, a capable and democratic middle class emerged. However, the mass migrations to the industrial and urban centers and distinctive wealth inequalities caused a disheartening wear of the political bipartidism. By the turn of the century, the doors for an authoritarian takeover were left wide open.

The Program

The Bolivarian revolution, also referred to as 21st century socialism, can be criticized not only for 20 years of inconceivable political and economic mismanagement, class conflicts, political prisoners and human-right violations, but also for offering the country to Cuban colonization, allowing an unrelenting stronghold within the armed forces, and to the international drug cartels. **Vladimiro Mujica** will speak about these important points in the context of possible democratic solutions to the political crisis.

Venezuela is at present completely devastated and dysfunctional at the most basic levels: food, transport, running water, electricity, fuels, medicines, information, and

public and private services. This situation has caused a massive exodus of nearly 20% of its population (more than five million), and due to a decimated monetary system, most have had to leave by foot looking for work and shelter in the Andean countries. **Tulio Hernández** has been documenting this endless migration of walking migrants, and **Luis Núñez** has been finding ways to compensate for the effects of the brain drain on the Venezuelan higher-education system.

In the current pandemic and with a completely rundown health system, Venezuela is a living hell. **Marielba Núñez** will talk about these serious circumstances blanketed under strong press censorship.

Panelists Biographies

Marielba Núñez - *Censorship and the Health Crisis in Venezuela*



Marielba Núñez is a Venezuelan journalist specialized in science and health. She worked as reporter and editor for Venezuelan newspapers and digital media El Nacional and Crónica Uno. She has also been a contributor to international science media as Scientific American in Spanish and Scidev.Net. She has received the Venezuelan National Prize in Science Journalism as well as other awards as a journalist and children's books author. She has been professor of Journalism at Universidad Católica Andrés Bello and Universidad Central de Venezuela in Caracas. She was selected as Knight-Wallace Fellow 2019-2020 at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Vladimiro Mujica - *A Problem of Continental Security*

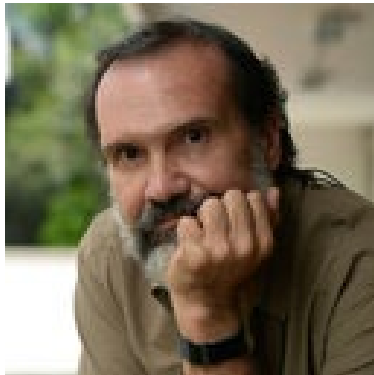


Vladimiro Mujica got his PhD at Uppsala University in 1985. He has been a Visiting Professor to the universities of Sao Paulo, Uppsala, Paris at Orsay, Tel-Aviv, Northwestern, Marseilles, KIAS, Fritz-Haber Institute, DIPC, and NIST and is a Dresden Fellow. He has been recently appointed a Fellow of Ikerbasque, the Science Foundation of the Basque Country. In 2009 he joined the School of Molecular Sciences at Arizona State University.

His areas of expertise include the theory of quantum relaxation and transport

phenomena in mesoscopic system, molecular electronics, spintronics, and nanophotonics. He has published over 150 peer-reviewed articles with more than 5000 citations and has been invited to more than 40 international conferences. Prof. Mujica is also interested in the development of bio-medical technologies and the creation of knowledge-based business opportunities.

Luis A. Núñez - *Academia, Heroes and Diaspora*



Luis A. Núñez is Professor in the School of Physics of the Industrial University of Santander, Bucaramanga, Colombia, and Emeritus Professor of Los Andes University (ULA), Mérida, Venezuela. He was Director of Academic Computing of ULA for more than a decade (1995-2009). He is currently involved in the setting up of virtual research communities with the Latin American Cooperative of Advanced Networks (CLARA), where he worked during 2001-2014 as Academic Relations Manager. He has a bachelor's degree in physics (Universidad Simón Bolívar, Caracas, Venezuela, 1979) and he is a Doctor in Science (Universidad Central de Venezuela, Caracas, Venezuela, 1988). His areas of interest are relativistic astrophysics, high energy physics, and information science. He is coauthor of almost 100 peer-reviewed articles in these areas and has been an invited professor in universities and research institutions in France, Spain, Italy, USA, Cuba, and Colombia.

Tulio Hernández - *Exodus: the 21st Century Pariahs*



Tulio Hernández is a Venezuelan sociologist and writer who combines academic activity with cultural management and op-ed writing. He was a researcher at the Institute of Communication Investigations (ININCO) of Venezuelan Central University and invited professor at the University of Barcelona, University of Girona and other Spanish universities. During 1992-1995 he was the President of the Foundation for Arts and Culture (FUNDARTE) of Caracas Mayor's Office. He is a Member of the Editorial Board of the Venezuelan national daily El Nacional and for the past two decades an op-ed columnist. He has been a consultant to UNESCO, UNICEF, Convenio Andrés Bello and

the Andean Development Corporation (CAF), among other international institutions. His articles have been published in El País (Madrid), the Spanish network of regional newspapers (Vocento), The New York Times in Spanish, El Tiempo (Bogotá), La Opinión (Cúcuta) and the magazines Arcadia, Nueva Sociedad and Revista de Occidente of Spain. He left Venezuela under government threat and currently lives between Madrid and Bogotá. In 2017 he published the book *Una Nación a la Deriva* (El Nacional Libros) and in 2018 *Memoria Compartida* (Fondo Editorial BOD). He is currently Professor in the Faculty of Political, International and Urban Studies of Universidad del Rosario, Bogota, Colombia. He is an influential political opinion essayist in his country.

+++++

Presented by the Vicksburg Cultural Arts Center
PO Box 209, Vicksburg, MI 49097 USA | (269)200-2223 | [Email](#)
[Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#)

Special thanks to Claudio Mendoza and Natalya Critchley

Destination Venezuela was made possible in part with support from these foundations and sponsors:

Irving S. Gilmore Foundation

Kalamazoo Community Foundation

PNC Foundation

The Mill at Vicksburg

Frederick Construction

The Art House

Main Street Pub