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We Are All Alejandro

Written with the hope that, in a few years, when the Venezuelan State once again sends thousands of young people abroad, it will be for studying, "trusting that their free minds will return to transform the country."

On December 10, 2025, coinciding with International Human Rights Day, La TV Calle officially presented Alejandro's Route to the United States, an interactive documentary that reconstructs, in the protagonist's own voice, the migration journey of a young Venezuelan who was forced to leave the country in 2023. The production is the result of five months of independent work, deeply committed to the duty of memory.

I had the honor of writing this story and of serving as the channel through which Alejandro's testimony was gathered, with narrative and emotional responsibility.

Alejandro is a young man who represents an entire generation expelled by a State that, far from guaranteeing rights, systematically violated them. The journey he recounts includes border crossings through Colombian trochas, the passage through the Darién Gap, the risks of extortion in Central America, and traveling atop the train cars known as La Bestia in Mexico. His story

is not exceptional. On the contrary, it reflects what thousands of young Venezuelans have experienced in recent years.

That same day, hundreds of kilometers away, in Oslo, Norway, the international community witnessed another deeply symbolic moment: the awarding of the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize to opposition leader María Corina Machado, who was unable to arrive in time for the ceremony due to adverse conditions and the security risks associated with the complex and clandestine route she had to take to leave Venezuela. However, in an episode that quickly became part of contemporary political memory, she managed to arrive in Oslo in the early hours of December 11, overcoming all obstacles, and her presence, though delayed, became an even more powerful symbol of Venezuela's democratic struggle and of the epic civil resistance against a dictatorship.

Her daughter, acting as her representative at the ceremony, delivered a speech that, without intending to do so, served as an echo to Alejandro's testimony.

"The economy collapsed by more than 80%. Poverty surpassed 86%. Nine million Venezuelans were forced to flee. These are not statistics; they are open wounds."¹

At the same time, Alejandro speaks through audiovisual storytelling, and his story resonates with the same wounds. As Machado's daughter described the regime's calculated method to "divide us by our ideas, by race, by origin, by way of life," and denounced how Venezuelans have been pushed to remain silent and distrust one another, Alejandro's documented testimony

1 Official Nobel Peace Prize lecture, December 10, 2025. Source: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2025/machado/lecture/>

reinforces her words through the language of the body, of mud, of exposure.

Alejandro is not a metaphor. He is a witness. His story is part of that cartography of exile that demands to be documented with ethics, care, and memory. In this sense, Alejandro's Route not only brings visibility to a single case, but also proposes a new way of narrating the Venezuelan forced exodus: from its protagonists, from the ground, from the traces left by the feet that walk in order to survive.

Who Are We, the Alejandros?

The question is not rhetorical. I write it as someone who feels it as well. Because if there is one thing I have understood while reconstructing Alejandro's testimony, it is that Venezuelan forced migration is not an exception. It is a shared condition, with multiple routes, causes, and destinations.

Indeed, Venezuelans do not migrate solely for economic reasons, although these are often decisive. They also leave because of the systematic denial of their civil and political rights, due to persecution, censorship, direct repression, or the gradual silencing of their life projects.

We can group these causes into two broad categories:

1. The inability to exercise economic and social rights: access to healthcare, education, decent employment, housing, and public services.
2. The violation of civil and political rights: freedom of expression, association, participation, organization, and protection against arbitrary detention.

Alejandro represents those who embody the intersection of both dimensions. His decision to migrate was the result of years of political harassment, enforced silence, and a growing sense of risk due to his ideas and his environment, as well as the impossibility of building a dignified life project. He was unable to study, pursue a profession, or access employment that would allow him to support himself. But he understood that none of this was a matter of misfortune or bad luck. It was the result of a political regime that stripped him of his rights. He did not flee hunger alone. He fled a dictatorship.

And while I was listening to him and writing his story, I was also going through my own process of forced migration. Unlike Alejandro, I did not take the jungle route, but the dispossession is the same. My destination was the southern part of the continent, yet the distance from my country is measured in the same way: in nostalgia, in helplessness, and in grief. Because migration is an inner fracture, and no one returns the same.

Alejandro is a symbol –but also a symptom– of what is at stake: the young Venezuelan body, with desires and aspirations, put to the test by exposure, violence, and criminalization. He represents those who have had to sleep at the edge of nothingness, hoping that one day they might become full citizens.

And when we say We Are All Alejandro, it is not to repeat an empty slogan. It is because Alejandro embodies a collective experience deeply rooted in the emotional memory of the Venezuelan diaspora. His story is not distant: it lives in thousands of disrupted, displaced, and violated young lives. In every Venezuelan home, there is an Alejandro: a brother who left without return, a cousin who wrote from a shelter in Texas, a father who disappeared in the jungle without a trace. He is also reflected in those who crossed the Andes on foot on their way to Chile, or

those who traversed Brazil's Amazon for ten days before reaching Argentina. Like so many others, Alejandro is one of those who said, "I'm going to turn myself in. I'm already inside the United States," while on the other side, their families were left suspended in silence, trapped in uncertainty —unsure whether they would hear from him again, whether that message announcing arrival to "safe ground" would be the last or the first of a new chapter.

In those hours, days, or weeks of waiting, the shared trauma of a migrant country reveals itself, a fractured citizenry forced to say goodbye without certainty. That is why we say we are all Alejandro: because his journey is a symptom of a deeper structural rupture: The rupture of the bond between citizenship and the State, between rights and their guarantee, between the country we dreamed of and the country that expelled us.

That emotional bond —both intimate and collective— is as powerful as Alejandro's story itself. Because what has been broken in Venezuela is not only the social contract, but the human fabric that held us together. It is the possibility of building a life within our own borders without being forced to flee by violence, authoritarianism, or institutional collapse.

As was also heard in the official 2025 Nobel Peace Prize speech: "They suffocated us, imprisoned us, killed us, and pushed us into exile."

And yet, we continue. Because even though they tried to erase us, we still tell our stories. We still exist. We still write.

And that is precisely what Alejandro's Route is: a way of not giving up. A way of saying that we are still telling our story. That we are still alive.

In the Absence of Protection Cooperation, Extortion Networks Proliferate

Alejandro's journey is not only harrowing because of the personal testimony it contains, but because of the mirror it holds up to us: the absence of minimum guarantees for Venezuelan migrants in transit. The passage through *trochas*, the trek across the Darién Gap, and the journey through Central America and Mexico are not merely geographic routes. They are territories of structural vulnerability where human life is negotiated daily among criminal networks, irregular armed groups, corrupt police forces, and local mafias.

Alejandro experienced this from the very beginning. In Urabá, Antioquia, the starting point of the Darién jungle, he witnessed how migrants' need is instrumentalized. Street vendors, improvised "guides," transporters, and a chain of services operating on the edge of legality together create a system of profit built on desperation. What should be a humanitarian corridor is in the hands of parallel economies. What should offer assistance and protection instead pushes migrants into new forms of violence, with inflated prices for a toothbrush or a bottle of water, and veiled threats if they refuse to "pay for safe passage."

Today, in December 2025, Noticias Caracol² documents the operation of these trafficking networks under "tour package" logics, where all-inclusive services are offered to leave the country through irregular routes. But Alejandro was already experiencing this in 2023.

2 Noticias Caracol, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DSSihGmjcXk/?igsh=NWk5c3ZqYnc0MzFw>

The bus that picked them up at 1:00 a.m. carried them on a journey that lasted between 12 and 14 hours, until they reached Necoclí, in the Urabá region of Antioquia. As soon as they got off, the conversation among migrants revolved around a key question: “Do you already have a guide?” Everyone knew it was not optional. The guides charged between 300 and 350 dollars and controlled the route.

That was how they met Mateo: a Colombian man, tall, stocky, dark-skinned. He introduced himself as a guide and offered them a “full package”: one night’s stay in a hotel, breakfast the next day, and the boat to the departure point to cross the Darién on August 31. The structure was clear: an entire logistical system designed to make money from migrant mobility. They shared a room with 15 people. One bathroom for everyone.

And even worse: many thought the hardest part would be the Darién. But it wasn’t. For Alejandro –and for many of the testimonies collected after the publication of this interactive story– the greatest lack of protection came afterward. The jungle is cruel, yes, but predictable in its brutality. In contrast, the transit through Central America involves a different kind of cruelty: arbitrary bureaucracies, systematic extortion, and a lack of coordination between states. No country seems to assume regional responsibility for the migration phenomenon. In that vacuum, migrants face corrupt checkpoints, express kidnappings, illegal fees for transit permits, and even detention centers without international oversight.

Migration has, in many stretches, become a business. And the migrant’s body has become a commodity. This is not a metaphor. Alejandro’s Route is not just one person’s testimony. It is an interactive denunciation. It is a chronicle of what happens when

forced migration becomes a market and humanitarian corridors do not exist.

Alejandro's Route: A Shared Responsibility with the Truth

Across much of Latin America, both governments that identify as right-wing and those that claim to be progressive have ended up using Venezuelan migration as an electoral wildcard. Not to build bridges of justice, but to extract political gain. To blame migrants for state failures, for insecurity, for the labor crisis. They have turned our presence into a problem. A symbol of chaos. A scapegoat.

The term “irregular migration” has served this purpose: to invalidate humanity. To turn the need to seek protection into a crime. To obscure the real reasons that force millions of Venezuelans to leave their land: persecution, poverty, repression, hunger, abandonment. Irregularity does not lie in the body of the person crossing a border, but in the system that expels them and in the States that choose not to look.

This closing is not just a conclusion. It is an act of memory. Alejandro gave his testimony not to awaken pity, but to remind us that the truth cannot be pushed aside. He understood this and embraced it: even though he now faces discrimination, even though he has not yet achieved stability in his destination, he knows his story is valuable because it reflects that of millions. And because when a young person speaks from pain without disguise, he also speaks for those who still have no voice.

Of course, host countries have responsibilities, by action or by omission. By building invisible walls, by promoting laws that criminalize migrants, by denying refuge or abandoning them. But

if we seek truth, we cannot stop there. We must go to the root, as Alejandro did.

And that root has a name: the destruction of the rule of law in Venezuela.

Today, more than nine million Venezuelans live abroad. Not because they suddenly decided to try their luck in a foreign country, but because their country denied them the possibility of living. Because an authoritarian regime dismantled justice, persecuted dissent, devastated institutions, dismantled public services, and distorted the relationship between the State and its citizens. From being a guarantor, the State became an oppressor. The Venezuelan exodus has a structural cause: the systematic and prolonged repression of power over the people.

Alejandro walked to save his life. And now he wants to build a future. But he also wants to build memory. Because without memory there is no truth, and without truth there is no reparation, no justice, no guarantees of non-repetition.

This narrative seeks to be part of that collective construction. A call to look beyond the numbers, to give a face to the tragedy, and to demand that the world stop relativizing the cause of the Venezuelan exodus. Because as long as the dictatorship in Venezuela continues to be normalized, as long as those who suffer it are ignored or the origin of this human tragedy is obscured, there will be no lasting solution, neither for those who have migrated nor for those who continue to resist inside the country.

Alejandro's route is the route of truth. And at some point, we are all Alejandro³.

3 Read the full story of Alejandro's Route to the United States, available in Spanish and English: <https://la-ruta-de-alejandro.latvcalle.com/>.