

“Teleport to Venezuela: Mano Tengo Fe” – How Venezuelans in Gainesville are Reliving the Memories From Their Homeland

1,903 miles from the home they left behind, Venezuelans in Gainesville can reconnect with their culture through the marriage of art, culture and technology.

Wednesday night at Tinker Latin Restaurant at the Tioga Town Center, Whereisnoa held an immersive virtual reality experience, bringing the soul of Venezuela to Gainesville.

Created by a Japanese-American artist, Noa Limura, who decided to backpack around Central America, making his way to Colombia, spontaneously stopped in Venezuela.

Limura made a six-month-long stop where he captured different aspects of Venezuelan culture, people, communities and landscapes, according to the documentary. He produced a 35-minute documentary to be viewed through virtual reality called “Teleport to Venezuela: Mano Tengo Fe,” a phrase used colloquially meaning “I have faith,” creating an intimate look into Venezuela and bringing it to the U.S., more specifically, Gainesville, where Venezuelans from the Gainesville community can feel at home again.

I saw it with a whole new perspective,” said Carmelo Urdaneta, a 21-year-old University of Florida student studying political science and economics.

“I saw Venezuela again, with a very open mind,” Urdaneta said, explaining the nostalgia he felt while experiencing the VR world; it allowed him to reconnect with his community.

“There’s hope,” said Urdaneta, “there’s a lot of things that are worth fighting and improving for.” For Urdaneta, the documentary renewed a sense of resilience and pride that his people are still fighting to thrive.

For the rest of the community, Urdaneta said it can show them what Venezuela is really like; it can make people understand the spirit of Venezuela, not just the Venezuela people see on the news – the negative Venezuela.

“It was also a way to connect with my boyfriend's background in a way that I haven't been able to,” said Brianna Burke, a 21-year-old UF student studying chronology and sociology, and also Urdaneta’s girlfriend, who is not from Venezuela.

She said how Urdaneta has a strong love for his country and deeply misses it, and this experience allowed her to share that love with him.

“The magic of our virtual reality is that I make you feel like you are there,” said event organizer Jhonatan Charco.

Charco said most people that view this VR Venezuela get very emotional, oftentimes crying and laughing over the land and life they left behind that they can all-of-a-sudden relive.

Charco also said he thinks Venezuelan people are hopeful to see their country back the way it was – to see a prosperous Venezuela.