

The Venezuelan Legal Diaspora: Human Talent for Reinstitutionalization and Foreign Investment

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Introduction

The Venezuelan legal diaspora trained in the United States represents a first-order strategic human resource for the reinstitutionalization of the country and the attraction of foreign investment in a potential democratic transition process. In the context of institutional capture, systematic repression, and the collapse of the rule of law in Venezuela, programs such as those of the *National Association for Foreign Attorneys* (NAFA, 2025) have played a fundamental role by facilitating the recognition of degrees and training in U.S. law. These programs strengthen competencies in arbitration, international contracts, corporate compliance, and governance—areas that are essential for rebuilding a reliable legal system and reinserting Venezuela into the global economy.

Dual legal training in Venezuela and the United States positions these professionals as natural bridges between legal systems, capable of transferring best practices, designing trustworthy regulations, and generating credibility with international actors. Their collective contribution transcends individual practice: the legal diaspora emerges as a technical and ethical force with the capacity to drive reforms, strengthen human rights, attract cooperation, and reinforce the legal security required for economic development and institutional reconstruction in the country.

This essay analyzes the role of these professionals in Venezuela's institutional reconstruction, showing how their training in the United States and their integration into networks such as NAFA make them key drivers of transformation. It argues that their participation in judicial reforms, the design of solid regulatory frameworks, and dialogue with international actors is essential to reinstall the rule of law and create an attractive climate for foreign investment.

Institutional Collapse and Diaspora

The institutional collapse of Venezuela must be understood as a prolonged process of democratic erosion that began in 1998, when a political project presented as a renewal alternative evolved into the progressive concentration of power in the Executive and the weakening of constitutional checks and balances. The subordination of the Supreme Court of Justice, the National Assembly, and other oversight bodies to government will created a scenario of institutional capture that nullified judicial independence and dismantled the separation of powers (*International Commission of Jurists*, 2023).

This institutional weakening was accompanied by systematic policies of repression and the criminalization of dissent. International organizations such as the *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* and *Human Rights Watch* (2024) have documented arbitrary detentions, torture, and restrictions on freedom of expression—practices that consolidated an authoritarian regime. Expropriations of private companies and state intervention in the economy undermined confidence in property rights and generated a hostile environment for investment, deepening the governance crisis.

The loss of legitimacy was further aggravated by the international designation of the regime as a narco-state, due to its links with drug trafficking networks and transnational corruption (*Bernaldo de Quirós, 2025*). This stigma led to international sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and the loss of credibility as a reliable sovereign state. The most visible consequence of this deterioration has been the massive diaspora: more than 7.9 million Venezuelans have left the country since 2015, constituting the largest migration crisis in Latin America (*UNHCR & IOM, 2024*).

In the United States, the magnitude of this migration is reflected in figures from the *Migration Policy Institute* (2025), which estimates the presence of approximately 770,000 Venezuelans, corroborated by the *American Community Survey* (ACS, 2023), with more than 720,000 people of Venezuelan origin registered—mainly in Florida, Texas, and New York (*U.S. Census Bureau, 2023*). According to the *Pew Research Center* (2023), the Venezuelan community has consolidated itself as one of the most dynamic within the Hispanic population. Although no official data exists to precisely quantify the number of legal professionals within this community, demographic and academic evidence suggests that a significant proportion have joined training and accreditation programs, opening the possibility of constructing a specialized census in future research.

In this context, various sectors of the democratic opposition have put forward transition proposals that include the recovery of the rule of law and Venezuela's reintegration into the international community. Speeches by figures such as María Corina Machado have emphasized the need to rebuild institutional frameworks and open the country to foreign investment. While the path toward transition depends on multiple internal and external factors, the preparation of professionals abroad—especially in the legal field—becomes an essential component to ensure that reconstruction is carried out on solid foundations and with international credibility.

Training in the United States – Strategic Role in the Transition

The U.S. legal system is distinguished by judicial independence, respect for due process, and the protection of private property—values that contrast with Venezuela's current reality and represent fundamental pillars for any democratic transition. The training of Venezuelan lawyers in this system enables a process of knowledge transfer and legal practices with standards and tools that can be applied to the reinstitutionalization of Venezuela's justice system and the creation of a trustworthy environment for foreign investment.

One of the main contributions of this training is the consolidation of a robust professional ethic and the reaffirmation of the autonomy of the legal profession. In Venezuela, lawyers have been subjected to persecution and criminalization, which has weakened their ability to act as defenders of rights and guarantors of justice (*International Commission of Jurists*, 2023). In contrast, the U.S. system emphasizes responsibility and professional independence—elements that strengthen the credibility of the profession and are indispensable for rebuilding citizens' trust in Venezuela's judicial system.

Another relevant aspect is exposure to international dispute resolution mechanisms, such as arbitration and mediation. The United States is a benchmark in commercial arbitration practice and in the application of corporate compliance standards (*NAFA*, 2025). Lawyers trained in these areas acquire competencies to design contractual clauses, structure guarantees, and advise on investment projects under international standards. In a transitional context, these skills will help reduce the risk perceived by investors and facilitate the arrival of capital essential for economic recovery.

Training in U.S. law also provides advanced knowledge in international contracts, corporate law, and regulatory compliance. The ability to draft contracts that include dispute resolution clauses in reliable jurisdictions, as well as the implementation of transparency and anti-corruption policies, are *sine qua non* conditions for attracting foreign direct investment.

Finally, in a country that has suffered expropriations and systematic attacks on private property, institutional reconstruction will require regulatory frameworks that protect investment and promote business confidence. Venezuelan jurists will be prepared to design laws and regulations that integrate international best practices, strengthened not only by the technical competencies acquired but also by the legitimacy conferred by international training. This legitimacy will be crucial for engaging with multilateral organizations, building bridges with global legal communities, and ensuring that democratic transition is grounded in a reliable and transparent justice system.

NAFA as a Training Bridge

The *National Association for Foreign Attorneys* (NAFA), founded in 1993 and headquartered in Florida and Puerto Rico, has established itself as a pioneering organization in the integration of foreign-trained lawyers into the U.S. legal system. Its primary mission is to facilitate the recognition of degrees and to offer academic programs that enable international professionals to acquire competencies in U.S. law and become international legal consultants (*NAFA*, 2025).

Its programs cover strategic areas such as corporate law, international arbitration, immigration law, and human rights. Through seminars, moot courts, and professional practice projects, the association provides a comprehensive training space that combines theory with practical experience. This approach allows lawyers to understand the structure of the U.S. legal system, become familiar with its terminology and procedural practices, and develop skills applicable to international transactions and dispute resolution.

For Venezuelan lawyers, NAFA represents a unique opportunity for professional continuity and international legitimacy. The impact of this association transcends individual training: its international network connects jurists from multiple countries, creating spaces for exchange and the transfer of best practices. This added value strengthens the integration of Venezuelan lawyers into global legal communities, which is strategic for addressing reinstitutionalization challenges and ensuring that legal reforms align with international standards of transparency and governance (*Chamber of Commerce, 2025*).

The contribution of this institution thus becomes an essential component for the Venezuelan legal diaspora to play a leading role in institutional reconstruction and in Venezuela's reintegration into the international community.

Conclusion

The Venezuelan legal diaspora trained in the United States has emerged as a reservoir of knowledge, credibility, and leadership capable of envisioning a different horizon for Venezuela. Its existence demonstrates that, even amid institutional collapse and forced migration, it is possible to preserve and strengthen human talent that can serve as the foundation for national reconstruction. These professionals embody not only a set of technical competencies but also the potential to articulate a new social pact grounded in justice, transparency, and trust.

The significance of this community lies in its ability to bridge international experience with national needs, offering a pathway to reinstitutionalization that rests not solely on politics but on the solidity of norms and ethical commitment. Within this diaspora resides the opportunity to transform displacement into a source of legitimacy and hope, restoring the legal security that is indispensable for sustainable development.

Ultimately, the Venezuelan legal diaspora conveys a vital lesson: reconstruction will not be possible without integrating the knowledge accumulated abroad and recognizing that justice is the cornerstone of democratic coexistence. The final recommendation is clear—Venezuela must open spaces for dialogue and cooperation with its legal diaspora, not as a peripheral resource but as a central actor in rebuilding institutions and restoring public trust. Only then can the nation aspire to a future where law once again guarantees freedom and justice.

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