



VIA Joins Forces for Immigration Justice at New York Community Panel

On Sunday, April 27, VIA (Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid) participated as a local speaker at We Resist: Immigration Justice in the Midst of Turmoil, an event organized by the Methodist Federation for Social Action of New York. The gathering took place at St. Paul & St. Andrew United Methodist Church, bringing together more than 15 organizations and members of the New York Annual Conference (NYAC) who are actively supporting immigrant communities during an increasingly challenging time.

Facilitated by Rev. Paul Fleck (CEO of Immigration Law & Justice New York), the panel offered a platform for organizations to share their experiences, strategies, and hopes in the face of the ongoing immigration crisis. VIA's co-director, Niurka Meléndez, emphasized the organization's commitment to empowering immigrant communities through access to accurate and curated information.

"We don't aim to be the first to say something—we aim to ensure what we say is correct and based on verified facts," Meléndez noted during the discussion. "In the middle of this immigration crisis, where fear is being exploited, building trust through reliable information is essential. We want our community to be well-informed and to make decisions grounded in truth."

Alongside Adama Bah, Executive Director of Afri-kana, VIA answered questions about their work helping communities navigate systemic challenges and combat misinformation. Both

organizations shared insights into how delivering factual information helps safeguard immigrants from manipulation and empowers them to assert their rights.

The event concluded with a lively networking session, allowing participants to connect, share experiences, and strengthen the community bonds crucial to weathering the current immigration turmoil.

VIA's co-director says that the organization "is grateful for the opportunity to stand alongside so many dedicated partners. It remains committed to advocating for the dignity, rights, and empowerment of immigrant communities throughout New York City".

Meléndez also informed that VIA has been invited to participate in the Welcoming Interactive 2025, taking place in Detroit, Michigan from May 20–22, 2025. This biennial national conference brings together leaders and organizations from across the country to share successful practices and inspiring stories around immigrant inclusion.

"As a member of the Global Talent Leadership Network (GTLN), VIA will attend this gathering that brings together key voices in the field of immigrant inclusion to exchange best practices, strengthen national networks, and identify collaborative solutions to shared challenges", mentioned Melendez who emphasized that the presence of VIA and other grassroots organizations at this event is critical to ensuring that the voices of migrant-led, community-based initiatives are part of the broader conversation on economic inclusion and equitable policy development. More details about the event can be found at welcomingamerica.org/initiatives/welcoming-interactive.

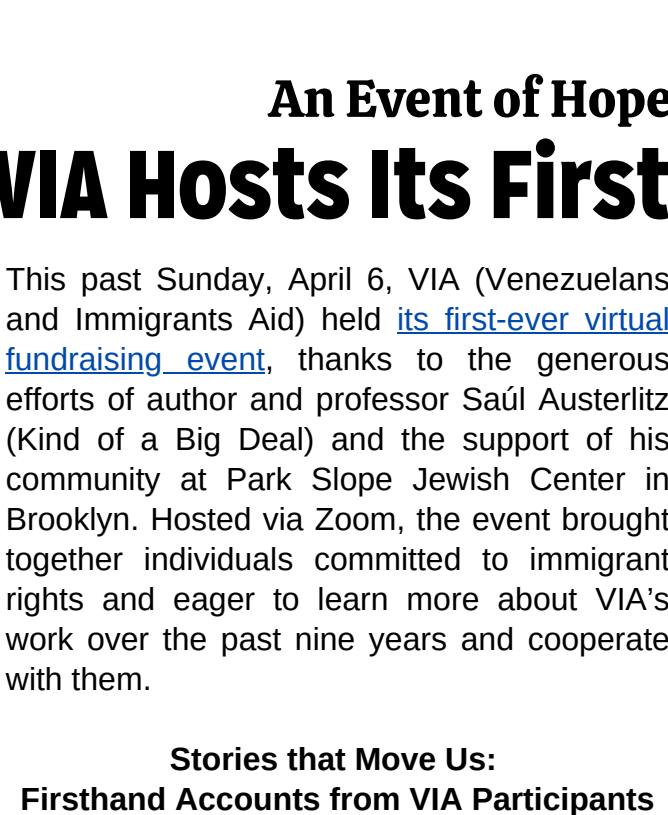
VIA releases 2024 Annual Report

— Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid (VIA) has released its 2024 Annual Report, a powerful reflection of a year marked by transformation, solidarity, and expanding outreach. From January to December 2024, VIA organized 200 events and directly supported more than 8,000 migrants in person while reaching over 4 million people through Instagram and 113,000 through YouTube.

What continues to define VIA's work is a deep commitment to the "human touch and sense of community." Every program — from legal orientations to English classes and peer support circles — was guided by empathy, shared experience, and trust. VIA's community-driven model empowers migrants by centering their voices and involving them directly as volunteers and leaders. These volunteers, often migrants, became increasingly trained in legal accompaniment and support services, contributing to a compassionate and informed assistance network.

A profound impact in the community

In 2024, legal orientations remained the cornerstone of VIA's work. With 77 online and in-person sessions, VIA reached approximately 5,500 people who sought to understand their rights and immigration pathways better. At the same time, English classes — particularly Saturday sessions — experienced growing participation, showing that access to language learning remains a vital need for newly arrived migrants.



Key Partners that make a difference

Collaboration was another central pillar of VIA's 2024 impact. Partnerships with key institutions such as St. Paul & St. Andrew Methodist Church, PSPP (Pro Se Plus Project), United Healthcare, Co-Counsel NYC, VES, IRC, TENT, Hot Bread Kitchen and ESU-ARNIC expanded the reach and depth of programs. These collaborations increased resources and helped strengthen cross-sector support for migrant communities.

VIA was recognized nationally and internationally as a voice of expertise and advocacy. In 2024, VIA was invited for the third year in a row to teach human rights awareness and forced migration issues in partnership with The School of The New York Times. The organization also participated in the National Immigrant Inclusion Conference (NIIC) in Houston. It was the only community-based organization to speak at the inaugural Hispanic Voices for Human Rights Summit at the Organization of American States.

This year's report reaffirms VIA's mission to walk alongside migrants — not as distant service providers, but as part of the community itself. By combining educational tools, advocacy, peer support, and digital outreach, VIA ensures no one faces displacement alone. As the organization looks toward 2025, it remains dedicated to building a more just, informed, and compassionate future.

To learn more about VIA or to support its mission, visit www.vianyc.org.

An Event of Hope and Commitment: VIA Hosts Its First Virtual Fundraiser

This past Sunday, April 6, VIA (Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid) held [its first-ever virtual fundraising event](#), thanks to the generous efforts of author and professor Saúl Austerlitz (Kind of a Big Deal) and the support of his community at Park Slope Jewish Center in Brooklyn. Hosted via Zoom, the event brought together individuals committed to immigrant rights and eager to learn more about VIA's work over the past nine years and cooperate with them.

Stories that Move Us: Firsthand Accounts from VIA Participants

According to VIA co-founders Niurka Meléndez and Héctor Arguinzones, the event was more than just a fundraiser. "It was a day of inspiration, empathy, and real action," they said. Throughout the evening, attendees watched four powerful video testimonials highlighting the human impact of VIA's work.

Vanessa, a Venezuelan anesthesiologist, shared how VIA's "Building Bridges" program and partnership with Upwardly Global helped her successfully enter the U.S. job market, dramatically improving her family's life. Julian spoke about how a VIA crochet workshop helped him overcome emotional and social isolation while providing crucial immigration guidance. Patricia explained how a virtual emotional support group became her most trusted network as she navigated motherhood and the asylum process during the pandemic. Carlos described how VIA provided legal resources and guidance that enabled him to apply for asylum, build a new life in the U.S., and receive his work permit.

Strengthening Strategic Partnerships

For event organizer Saúl Austerlitz, the motivation behind this fundraiser is rooted in a deep sense of ethical responsibility. "We're concerned about the future of immigrants and asylum seekers, especially in such an uncertain political climate," he said. "Supporting VIA is a tangible way to uphold values like justice, hospitality, and human dignity."

Meléndez and Arguinzones expressed heartfelt thanks for the initiative, saying: "These kinds of collaborations not only strengthen our operational capacity—they remind us that we're not alone. Every dollar donated, every story shared, every person who joins our cause brings us closer to our mission: to support, inform, and empower immigrant communities with compassion and justice."

VIA Leads Seminar on Combating Infoxication and Fake News to Empower Volunteers

— Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid (VIA) successfully hosted its second seminar to equip its volunteers and the broader community with critical tools to navigate the challenges of today's overwhelming information environment. The seminar, "Infoboxation and Fake News: How to Protect Our Minds in the Digital Era," was led by Jesse Rylander, VIA's Communications Coordinator, during the organization's second volunteer meeting of the year.

Building upon VIA's commitment to strengthening resilience among immigrant communities, the seminar focused on recognizing the dangers of infoboxation—the overwhelming overload of information—and identifying the psychological impact of fake news. Rylander outlined the emotional consequences of constant exposure to alarming and often false information, including anxiety, stress, and emotional fatigue, particularly during times of immigration crises.

Participants learned how emotions like fear and outrage can make individuals more vulnerable to disinformation and how to apply practical methods such as the PRUEBA test (Purpose, Responsibility, Usefulness, Links, Base, and Actuality) to evaluate information before accepting or sharing it critically. Rylander also shared professional journalistic strategies adapted for everyday life, including verifying sources, avoiding impulsive sharing, and utilizing fact-checking tools like Google Reverse Image Search and Snopes. In addition, the seminar stressed the importance of setting healthy digital boundaries, limiting time on social media, and prioritizing mental health through conscious information intake.

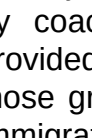


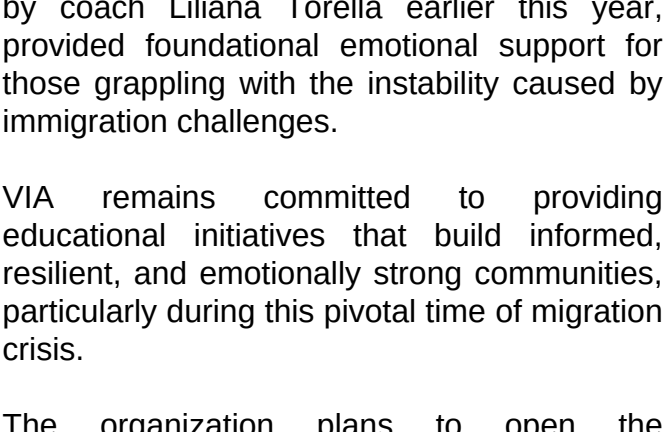
VIA's Future Plans

The event also inspired new donors and potential long-term partners. Thanks to Saúl's network and the community's enthusiasm, there are now conversations underway to explore future collaborations.

VIA is seeking funding to scale and strengthen our capacity-building work, equipping migrant leaders and communities with the tools to thrive. Our programs have already connected thousands of immigrants with critical information, education, and a powerful sense of belonging—and with your support, we can reach even more. With over 25,000 followers on Instagram, nearly 4,000 profile visits, and 574,000 views recorded in April alone, our impact continues to grow across platforms. Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp serve as our primary windows to the community, allowing them to share timely, accurate information and foster deeper connections with those we serve. Strengthening these channels is crucial to expanding our reach and sustaining our mission.

VIA welcomes anyone who wants to support its mission. Donations can be made via [Zelle](#), [PayPal](#), or Pledge through vianyc.org, or by mailing a check to 167 W 136th St. #7, New York, NY 10030.

 www.vianyc.org/donate



Rylander emphasized the essential role of discretion and critical thinking when facing sensationalist or fear-driven news, encouraging participants to cultivate spaces for discussion and reflection instead of reaction.

This seminar marks the second in VIA's ongoing series addressing emotional coping strategies amid the immigration turmoil many face today. The first seminar, "Strength in Times of Uncertainty: How to Face Fear and Anxiety Amid Deportation Risks," presented by coach Liliana Torella earlier this year, provided foundational emotional support for those grappling with the instability caused by immigration challenges.

VIA remains committed to providing educational initiatives that build informed, resilient, and emotionally strong communities, particularly during this pivotal time of migration crisis.

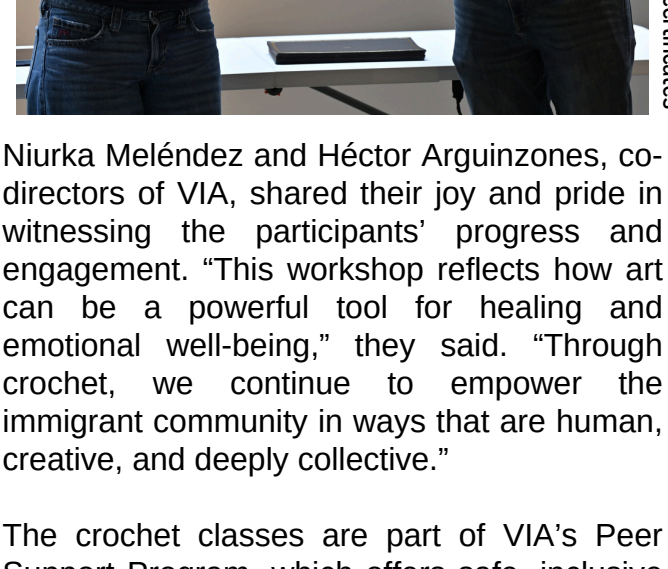
The organization plans to open the Infoboxation and Fake News seminar to the broader community in the coming months as part of its ongoing efforts to promote media literacy, emotional well-being, and social resilience.

Students completed the First Crochet Workshop Cycle of 2025

The James Cohan Gallery, in collaboration with Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid (VIA), proudly marked the completion of the first crochet workshop cycle of 2025. Over seven Sundays and 14 hours of instruction, 27 participants came together to learn, connect, and create through the art of crochet.

This was the third crochet workshop series since its launch last year and the first of the new calendar year. During the closing event, students received certificates of completion and presented their handmade creations, showcasing the skills and creativity developed throughout the course.

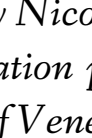
Niurka Meléndez and Héctor Arguinzones, co-directors of VIA, shared their joy and pride in witnessing the participants' progress and engagement. "This workshop reflects how art can be a powerful tool for healing and emotional well-being," they said. "Through crochet, we continue to empower the immigrant community in ways that are human, creative, and deeply collective."



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The crochet classes are part of VIA's Peer Support Program, which offers safe, inclusive spaces for mutual learning and emotional support. As part of the program's conclusion, an exhibition of the student's work is scheduled for June, along with the launch of a new cycle later that month.

For more information on enrollment and upcoming events, visit vianyc.org.

 www.vianyc.org/donate

Statement from VIA In Response to Recent Statements by the Maduro Regime on Venezuelan Migration

VIA is committed to building a more compassionate future for migrants. In that spirit, we firmly reject the recent statements made by Nicolás Maduro's regime and members of his administration regarding U.S. immigration policy—specifically, the transfer of migrants to El Salvador and the repatriation of Venezuelans.

At Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid (VIA), we strongly reject the recent statements made by Nicolás Maduro and members of his regime regarding U.S. immigration policy—specifically, the transfer of migrants to El Salvador and the repatriation of Venezuelan nationals.

While we oppose the deportation of individuals with no criminal background who are simply seeking safety and a better life, we recognize that some of those being repatriated do have criminal records, not only in Venezuela but also in the United States, despite having lived in the country for a very short time.

Many of these individuals were strategically deployed by the Maduro regime to create instability across Latin America and the United States, as investigated and documented by various reputable media outlets such as the [BBC](#), organizations like the [Center for Immigration Studies \(CIS\)](#), and international security agencies such as the [FBI](#) and Interpol, as well as several regional governments.

We must not lose sight of the root cause of Venezuela's ongoing migration crisis: the authoritarian regime led by Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro. This dictatorship has devastated the country's economy, dismantled its institutions, persecuted dissenters, and plunged the nation into profound social and political chaos for the past 27 years.

For this reason, we view the regime's recent

claims of "solidarity" with migrants as hollow, inappropriate, and fundamentally hypocritical. It is the Venezuelan government, through persecution, hostility toward its opponents, disappearances, and the imprisonment of civilians and political adversaries—along with multiple other crimes against humanity—that has provoked the most significant exodus of the last century in the Americas. The hardships faced by millions of forcibly displaced Venezuelans arise from a single, undeniable source: the Chávez-Maduro government itself.

At VIA, we denounce this performative stance as mere propaganda—an attempt to feign compassion while ignoring the true suffering of those who have been forced to flee.

We remain committed to supporting Venezuelan migrants through tangible actions, not empty rhetoric. Our work continues with purpose, grounded in empathy, justice, and the lived realities of those we serve.

