

CATEGORY: VENEZUELA: NOW

CONCEPTS: RACE/ETHNICITY; migration

ACTIVITY: A READING ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF VENEZUELA.

This reading, which describes some of the people in a small town in Venezuela, points out the role of immigrants in the population of the nation.

OBJECTIVE: Above all, this short reading will break down the stereotype of a homogeneous Latin American population and will show that, just as in the United States, Venezuela's population is made up of many different ethnic groups.

MATERIALS: The following reading.

PROCEDURE: Read the story to the students or hand out copies. Before the reading you may want to discuss what the students imagine a typical Venezuelan to be. After the story, compare their impressions with what they have read. Students may also enjoy extending the exercise to their own community and searching out recent immigrants to discover their stories. Since the current topic is Latin America, if possible have them locate Hispanics.

LEVEL: MIDDLE GRADES

Source: Gibbs, Virginia G. *Latin America: Curriculum Materials for the Middle Grades*. Center for Latin America, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. 1985. 1989.

We walked down to the harbor to see about hiring a boat for a fishing trip and there I met Señor Ramos. Guillermo and Sue had already hired his boat several times and he was pleased to see us. Since I had now become so curious about people's backgrounds, Guillermo asked Señor Ramos to explain his. Guillermo translated: "I am a descendant of African slaves who were brought here many generations ago. After the abolition of slavery, my great-great-grandparents settled here. We have been fishermen for generations. Now I have earned enough money taking tourists on fishing trips to buy another boat. Many of us who fish these waters are the descendants of slaves, but not all." As we strolled back through the harbour I did notice that these were people of many colors and features, just like in many larger cities in the United States.

Back at the hotel, Guillermo explained that in Venezuela the population is mostly of Spanish, African and Indian descent. Over generations there has been a lot of mixing and so there is a rich variety of people. In this century many new immigrants have come from all over the world: Japan, Poland, Italy, Lebanon, Germany, more from Spain, and even some from the United States (like Sue!). My idea of a typical Venezuelan and a typical Latin American sure has changed. Now I know there is no "typical" Latin American.

Well, there is a lot more to tell you about, but I'll save it for my next letter. Sue and Guillermo send their love. See you in a few weeks!

Love,
Chuck