

My Venezuelan Adventure

A collection of photos

Abby Frackenpohl



The mountains made an incredibly lasting impression on me. The rising slopes were covered with shacks piled almost on top of one another. Picturesque yet depressing, this view is bittersweet. It has so much potential to be an object of beauty but in actuality the shacks are falling in, full of holes and crowded, oftentimes with more people than beds. Seeing this and understanding the living situation of the people in the barrios, Chavez seems more and more like the ray of hope and the force of action that these people need.



- Early on in the trip, I was taken aback by the amount of what we as Americans might consider graffiti, but in actuality were murals dedicated to promoting a, often political, cause or message. Many such as this were aimed at relaying a message of how politics affect each citizen directly. One of the main aspects that is changing in their government is the voting rate and the increase average citizen's knowledge about the government. This mural presents a startling statistic that many Venezuelans can identify with. It persuades them to support the socialism of the 20th century for reasons that affect many of them and all starving people. I realized that Venezuelans go hungry while people in America, a model capitalist country waste food without a thought.



Crossing a bridge, overlooking a market, the colors of the goods and the vendors shone in the sun. The fruits and vegetables were tropical and varied, each sectioned off in their own compartment. Neat and organized, the exchange seemed to work flawlessly, symbolizing to me a constant rhythm of life.



Ledys is a prime example of how the people appreciate the reforms of Chavez and are taking advantage of what he has to offer. This pose seems like he is engaging his listeners not imposingly but knowledgably and intensely. He always had a story to tell, yet listened to our opinions too and wanted to know how we felt about the issues at hand. Volunteering his time was of utmost importance to him; it was hard not to admire all he had accomplished and the modesty and humor that he associated with it.



The dew speckled on the coffee beans makes me remember the rainy day which we toured the coffee plantation. Despite the rain, our tour-guide was enthusiastic and proud of his work. The beans look bursting with ripeness, symbolic of the fruits Venezuela has to give, the knowledge and passion they are all bursting with.



- The night we danced in Montecarmelo was aglow with laughter and kindness. We all worked up the courage to dance with someone out of our comfort zone be it professors or the residents of Montecarmelo. Talking to some of the children, we found out that music and festivities were the normal way to spend the evening. Living in such a small village, their sense of community seems as close as a family. Even though they have very little, they willingly shared all they had with us and let us indulge in their merriment as well.



- Ledys and his students are playing quitiplas, or hollowed out bamboo that they bang on the ground and cover with their hands to create varied rhythms. In this presentation the girls wore costumes typical of their cultural history--long, colorful skirts and loose tops. They began seriously, everyone singing the songs of their heritage and dancing the choreographed steps. As it continued though, the mood became more relaxed and it became less of a presentation and more just interactive fun. The children began to dance freely in the middle, everyone took a turn on the drums and we were beckoned to join in their fun.



- The amount of touching and grins in this picture makes me remember the children fondly every time I look at it. They are so warm and open and outgoing that I too was drawn into that frame of mind and couldn't stop hugging them goodbye. More than the music which brought them to the center to learn, the relationships that the center cultivated and the appreciation that they had for it amazed me.