



### Percussion Musicians, Barlovento

Realizing the potential cultural damage incurred by United States-produced pop culture like *reggaeton*, a Puerto Rican pop music style lyrically influenced by gangster rap's misogyny and ostentatious display of wealth, Venezuelans now actively undertake efforts to reclaim the music which their unique history of immigration has produced. Barlovento, for instance, is an important Afrovenezuelan region due to the importation of African slaves to work the cacao plantations in the colonial period. Music there is primarily percussive, setting Spanish lyrics to musical traits shared by the world African diasporic community, like polyrhythm and call-and-response lyrics.



### Harvesting Black Beans

Many Venezuelans display an unwavering faith in the cooperative model. At Misión Felix Ribas, the agricultural cooperative's first president stole the entire first growing season's profits. Though the cooperative members voted him out of office, they could still not recover the money and had to start the next year again from scratch. For most members, this setback means they must continue working their previously held technical jobs. Still, they are determined and optimistic about the project's eventual health. One man at Felix Ribas compared their experience there with learning to swim – though the danger of drowning exists, one still works towards a goal while minimizing their risks.





### Padre Mario Gripo

The history of social programs in Venezuela does not start with the Chavez government in 1999. La Cooperativa Alianza, near Sanare, has operated using the cooperative model for over 30 years. Pioneers like Italian-born Father Mario Gripo, who studied agriculture in Santa Fe, Argentina before becoming one of this project's founding members, hope that the recently redistributed petroleum revenue will go to starting more economically and environmentally sustainable programs like Alianza, who has instead learned by 3 decades of trial-and-error.



### Boy in Montecarmelo

During one session organized by our guide, Lisa Sullivan, a group of teenagers involved with the Frente Francisco de Miranda youth group came to talk to us. They told us of their firm commitment to the revolution's principles, telling us that “el joven que no es revolucionario no es un joven verdadero,” the youth who is not a revolutionary is not a true youth. While we listened to their talk, this young boy, a neighbor of Lisa's, played on the porch. Though his attention rarely strayed from a fascination with our video camera, he seemed to take for granted the revolutionary language surrounding him. Youths like this boy now grow up in a sociopolitical climate that encourages them to support the revolution and take advantage of the opportunities the state now provides, such as access to health care, education, and job training.





### Man on a Bus, Barquisimieto

The procession of La Divina Pastora takes place every year on the 14th of January to commemorate Father José Macairo Yépez, who, as legend goes, offered his own body to cholera in order to stop the epidemic afflicting the city in 1855. Each year on that date, some 2 million people flood the streets of Barquisimieto to get a glimpse of the Virgin on her 8 mile route from the Santa Rosa Church to the Catedral Metropolitana de Barquisimieto. At the end of a long, hot day, I took a picture of this man at the back of the bus before it filled and I was once again surrounded by excited worshippers.



### Boy Riding Bike, Sanare

Though the Chavez government's rhetoric and programs support endogenous, or inwardly-creating, economic institutions as an antidote to the World Bank's neoliberal policies, the effects of US economic and cultural imperialism are still keenly felt. This boy rides his bike in front of a store which, like many others, advertises Levi's, Tommy Hilfiger, Nike, and other products whose sale benefits US investors and businessmen.



### Men in a Truck in a Funeral Procession

One of the cultural obstacles to our appreciation of the revolution was our initial failure to understand the communal mindset of the Venezuelan people. The citizens of Lara state, which consistently registers the highest national voting return rates, have a firm commitment to both political and social public life. As we descended from the small mountain town of Montecarmelo one morning, we found ourselves in the middle of a large, funeral-procession induced traffic jam. The entire town took the day off work and school to mourn together the sudden passing of a schoolteacher.