

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

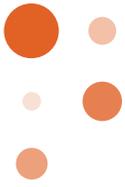
- Towards the beginning of the video, Mrs. D'Souza explains that, "In 1999 then candidate for president Hugo Chavez promised to lead the people of Venezuela to a socialist paradise. His theme was 'Esperanza y Cambio,' – Hope and Change. Venezuela is a nation of great wealth, Chavez said, but it's being stolen from its citizens by the evil capitalists and the evil corporations." Why do you think that progressives so frequently mischaracterize free market enterprise as having sides where the job-creators are 'evil' and the beneficiaries of those jobs are 'victims?' What parallels can be drawn from Chavez's campaign and its socialist consequences to the former President Obama administration's campaign and its socialist consequences?
- Later, Mrs. D'Souza points out that, "Under Chavez, the government of Venezuela took over industry after industry. The government, he assured everyone, could run these businesses better than private enterprise, and the profits would be "shared" by the people. With great fanfare, he tore up contracts with multinational oil and gas companies and demanded that they pay much higher royalties. When they refused, he told them to leave. They did." If his intentions were legitimate, how do you think Chavez thought he could give money 'to the people' if he chased the wealth-creators away? Do you think that Chavez ever intended to actually share money with the people? Why or why not? Do you think people actually believed that the government could run industries better than private companies, or do you think that they just naively hoped for that to be the case as they were duped by a charismatic narcissist into believing that they would all prosper financially? Explain.
- Mrs. D'Souza goes on to lament that, "Still, Maduro holds onto power. Opposition leaders and journalists who report the truth are jailed. Venezuela is a cautionary tale. Once a country goes down a socialist path, there's no easy way back. And the longer a country stays socialist, the harder it is to reform it. Venezuela has been socialist for two decades." Considering its current condition of corruption and dictatorship, and considering other examples of authoritarian states such as North Korea, do you think that Venezuela will ever recover from the awful state that it is in? Why or why not? What do you think needs to happen in order for Venezuela to return to an actual path of prosperity and security for its people?
- Towards the end of the video, Mrs. D'Souza warns, "If you don't think it can happen here, whether "here" is the United States or Europe or anywhere else, you're fooling yourself. When people get used to depending on the government – no matter how poor they remain – that dependency is hard to break." Why do you think that such a dependency is so hard to break? What do you think can be done to break it? Do you think that the U.S. and other Western nations such as England are heading towards such heavy government dependency? Do you think that the U.S. and other Western nations such as England should be heading towards such heavy government dependency, perhaps even outright socialism? Why or why not?
- Mrs. D'Souza answers this last question by stating that, "Socialism is a drug. And like a drug, it feels great at first. But eventually it will ruin your country – just like it ruined Venezuela." Do you agree with Mrs. D'Souza's conclusion? Why or why not?

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: The Maduro Diet

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “Going Hungry in Venezuela,” then answer the questions that follow.

- What percentage of Venezuelans are eating less than they did last year? How much has ‘extreme poverty’ increased since 2014? How often are Venezuelans allowed to shop for food? What conditions have contributed to the current food crisis, even though more food is being imported? How will CLAP work, in terms of logistics? Why does Liliana sometimes go to bed in tears? Who is Zulay Florido, and what does she have to say about the conditions in Venezuela? What does the colectivo do?
- Why are Venezuelans going hungry? What is the government doing to try and solve the problem, if anything? We learn in the video that some Hollywood celebrities used to visit Venezuela and support the socialist government- why do you think that those same celebrities (and others) are not visiting anymore? Do you think that they should? Why or why not? Why do you think that the military, and others, still support the Maduro government? Explain.
- In what ways, specifically, does this article support the points made in the video? Which points are supported?



QUIZ

HOW'S SOCIALISM DOING IN VENEZUELA

1. Who ran for President of Venezuela in 1999?

- a. Fidel Castro
- b. Nicolas Maduro
- c. Hugo Chavez
- d. Tomás Páez

2. Many international airlines refuse to fly to Venezuela.

- a. True
- b. False

3. Does socialism ever work?

- a. Always.
- b. It never works.
- c. It takes roughly six years to work.
- d. Always, but only in the beginning.

4. A recent survey found that _____ percent of Venezuelan adults lost an average of 19 pounds in 2016.

- a. 25
- b. 50
- c. 75
- d. 100

5. The longer a country stays socialist, _____.

- a. the easier it is to move to capitalism
- b. the harder it is to reform it
- c. the more inclusive society becomes
- d. the better off they are



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-36913991>

Magazine

Going hungry in Venezuela



This mother eats so little that she cannot breastfeed her baby

It's one thing to talk to people you've never met before who are suffering from hunger, and it's a completely different thing when they are from your own family, as the BBC's Vladimir Hernandez discovered when he returned to his native Venezuela to report on its failure to get food on people's tables.

Travelling through the country this month I saw endless queues of people trying to buy food - any food - at supermarkets and other government-run shops.

I was stopped at a roadblock in the middle of the countryside by people who said they had eaten nothing but mangoes for three days.

I saw the hopeless expression of a mother, who had been eating so little that she was no longer able to breastfeed her baby.

I met a woman affectionately known as *la gorda* - "the fat one" - whose protruding cheekbones indicated just how much weight she had lost in the last year.

I felt sympathy for all these people, but it was my family who really brought it home to me.

My brother told me all his trousers were now too big. My father - never one to grumble - let slip that things were "really tough". My mother, meanwhile, confessed that sometimes she only eats once a day. They all live in different parts of Venezuela, but none of them is getting enough to eat. It's a nationwide problem.



The roadblock erected by people who have been surviving on mangoes

A study by three of the country's main universities indicates that 90% of Venezuelans are eating less than they did last year and that "extreme poverty" has jumped by 53% since 2014.

There are a number of causes - shortages of basic goods, bad management, a host of speculators and hoarders, and a severe drop in the country's oil income.

Plus, of course, the highest inflation rate in the world.

The country's official inflation rate was 180% in December, the last time a figure was made public, but the IMF estimates it will be above 700% by the end of the year.



Inflation obliges Venezuelans to carry fistfuls of banknotes

Getty Images



Boxes of bran cereal were available in this Caracas supermarket in June

Getty Images

In an attempt to stop speculators and hoarders, the government years ago fixed the price of many basic goods, such as flour, chicken, or bread. But Venezuelans can only buy the goods at these fixed prices once a week, depending on the final digit of the number on their national identity card. If it's 0 or 1, for example, then you're allowed to buy on Mondays. For 2 or 3, it's Tuesdays, and so on.

Because there is a risk of the goods running out, people often arrive at supermarkets in the early hours of the morning, or even earlier. At 6am one morning in Caracas, I met a man who had already been in the queue for three hours. It was pouring with rain, and he didn't have an umbrella.

"I'm hoping to get rice, but sometimes I've queued and then been unable to buy anything because the rice runs out before I get in," he said.

Even if they are lucky, shoppers are only allowed a restricted amount of items per day. Those who can't get enough have to wait a full week until their turn comes round again - the tills will automatically reject anyone's shopping if they arrive on the wrong day.

As inflation rises, the incentive grows for people to queue to buy these goods at regulated prices and then sell them on the black market, where a pack of flour can cost 100 times more. The government has promised to crack down on the practice, but so far hasn't been able to stop it.

For years this oil-rich nation has been increasing food imports in an attempt to guarantee a supply of basic goods, but critics say that price controls and the nationalisation programme of the late president, Hugo Chavez, contributed to the current crisis.

President Nicolas Maduro, who was elected by a slim margin three years ago, after Chavez died, has also had to deal with a drop in oil prices that has reduced the country's foreign earnings by about two-thirds.



His latest step has been to create Local Committees of Supplies and Production, better known by the Spanish acronym, CLAP.

The CLAPs essentially mean that the government will stop sending imported food to supermarkets and start handing it over to local community councils.

These entities will register people in their community, assign them a day for shopping, and sell them a plastic bag filled with a number of goods such as flour, pasta and soap, at a fixed price. You cannot choose what you want to buy. You just get what you are given in the bag.

"But this will only be available once a month!" a young mother, Liliana, exclaimed at the roadblock manned by people eating nothing but mangoes.

She admitted to going to bed in tears on days when she had been unable to give her two children any dinner.

In western Venezuela, in the oil-rich province of Zulia, I visited several small towns where people didn't know what they would eat the following day.



Zulay Florido: We call it here "the Maduro diet"

"We've always been poor here, that's true, but we've never been hungry," said Zulay Florido, a community leader in her 50s.

"Since (President) Maduro took power we are in a very bad situation. We call it here 'the Maduro diet'.

"When Chavez was in power this didn't happen."

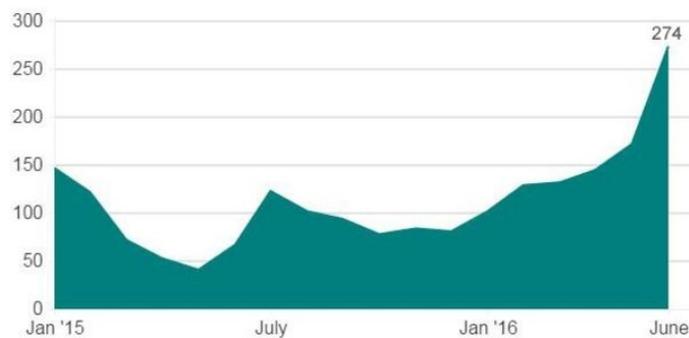
In Zulia, food was already in the hands of the community councils rather than the supermarkets.

The ultimate aim of the CLAPs is to create self-sustaining communities, where people grow their own food.

I was taken to one of these places by Alejandro Armao, a member of a *colectivo* - a group of hardcore government supporters, often armed, who are sometimes accused of acts of violence against opposition activists.

Food protests in Venezuela

Food shortages, oil prices and rising inflation have led to an increase in outbreaks of food-related protests this year



Source: Observatorio Venezolano de Conflictividad Social (OVCS)

BBC

Armao introduced me to several colectivo members in a slum called Catia. They appeared to be armed, and were carrying walkie-talkies.

After threatening to kick me out of the area, they agreed in the end to show me what the CLAP was aiming to achieve. I was taken to see a barren field - "which we aim to have ready for crops in eight months" - and several chili plants waiting to be planted.

It was, to say the least, disheartening.

I thought of my mother, and wondered whether this could be the solution for people like her, struggling to eat properly three times a day.

My mother, who's a staunch government supporter, truly believes it is.

"It will take time but it will happen," she says.

But I cannot help wondering whether other Venezuelans will be as patient.