

Contemporary Brazil: The Social Dimension

Objectives

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

- differentiate between needs and wants.
 - compare and contrast personal wealth in USA with personal wealth in Brazil.
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Materials

- Student Handout: **Deus lhe Pague**
 - Student Handout: **Life in a Favela**
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Activities

1. Write the following question on the chalkboard: What is the “good life?”
 - a. Ask the students to share their responses. Discuss what they believe to be the “good life” and list the characteristics on the chalkboard.
 - b. Following the discussion, write the following question on the chalkboard: How wealthy do you have to be to lead the “good life?”
 - c. Ask the students for volunteers to share their responses. Based on their responses, ask them to define what it means to be “wealthy.”
 - d. Share with the class the following statement by “The greatest wealth is to live content with little.”
 - Ask the class to analyze the statement. What do they think he means? Do they agree or disagree with him? Why or why not?
 - e. Share with the class the following statement by Oscar Wilde: “Ordinary riches can be stolen, real riches cannot. In your soul are infinitely precious things that cannot be taken from you.”
 - Ask the class to analyze the statement. What do they think he means? Do they agree or disagree with him? Why or why not?
 - f. Based on the statements by Plato and Wilde, ask the class to reevaluate their definition of wealth. What do people really “need” to be wealthy?
 - g. What do you “need” to be wealthy?
 2. Distribute the student handout entitled **Life in a Favela**.
 - a. Direct students to read the section entitled “Rio.”
 - b. Ask students to explain why misconceptions might arise between the haves and the have-nots as well as tourists. How might lack of interaction contribute to that misconception?
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Activities

3. Direct students to read the section entitled “The Favelas” on the first page of the handout.
 - a. Ask students to evaluate the conditions described in the handout. Would they consider the residents of the favelas “wealthy?” Why or why not?
 - b. Ask students to speculate about life in a favela. How would it be different from their lives?
 4. Direct students to read the section entitled “The Favelas (continued)” on the second page of the handout.
 - a. Ask students to focus on the comments of Carlos Antonio. Do they think he would agree with the comments of Plato and Wilde? Why or why not?
 - b. What do the writer’s comments regarding the shared sunset reflect? What is real “wealth?”
 5. Distribute the student handout entitled **Deus Ihe Pague**.
 - a. Ask students to analyze the stanzas for meaning. Is the speaker happy or sad? For what is he grateful?
 - b. Ask students to compose a short essay in answer to the question “Is the speaker in Deus Ihe Pague “wealthy?” Why or why not?”
 6. Extension Activity
 - a. If available and time allows, show excerpts from the film *Favela Rising*. (The film is a documentary about a man trying to escape a favela in Rio through a nonviolent cultural movement known as Afro-reggae. It will lend itself to many open ended discussions about wealth, needs, culture, and life choices.)
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Deus Ihe Pague

A popular songwriter/singer in Brazil, Chico Buarque, wrote the following song in 1971.

Portuguese	English Translation
Por esse pão pra comer, por esse chão pra dormir A certidão pra nascer e a concessão pra sorrir Por me deixar respirar, por me deixar existir Deus lhe pague	For this bread to eat, for this ground to sleep The certification to be born and the ability to smile For letting me to breathe, letting me exist May God reward you
Pelo prazer de chorar e pelo ``estamos aí" Pela piada no bar e o futebol pra aplaudir Um crime pra comentar e um samba pra distrair Deus lhe pague	For the pleasure to cry and for the "we are here" For the joke in the bar and to applaud soccer A crime to talk about and a samba to distract May God reward you
Por essa praia, essa saia, pelas mulheres daqui O amor malfeito depressa, fazer a barba e partir Pelo domingo que é lindo, novela, missa e gibi Deus lhe pague	For this beach, this skirt, for the women from here The botched quick love, shave and to leave For Sunday that is beautiful, novels, mass and comic books May God reward you)
Pela cachaça de graça que a gente tem que engolir Pela fumaça, desgraça, que a gente tem que tossir Pelos andaimes, pingentes, que a gente tem que cair Deus lhe pague	For cachaça that we have to drink For the smoke, disgrace, that we have to cough For scaffoldings, pendants, that we have to fall May God reward you
Por mais um dia, agonia, pra suportar e assistir Pelo rangido dos dentes, pela cidade a zunir E pelo grito demente que nos ajuda a fugir Deus lhe pague	For another day, agony, to withstand and watch For the creaked teeth one, for the busy city and for demented scream that helps us escape May God reward you

Life in a Favela

About the author

Dana Mathews is a sophomore majoring in journalism and women's studies at Penn State University. The following excerpt from her blog references her observations from her visit to Brazil during her Semester at Sea experience.

Rio

It is common for the people of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to say "Deus e Carioca," which when translated means "God is a Rio-dweller." Rio is a city with a soul and a strong identity. Its culture winds through every street corner and ascends each of its lush mountains. The locale in Rio is stunning: sandy, white beaches and blossoming green peaks reaching for the sky near every beach. The people are equally as striking. Early morning joggers move swiftly along the shoreline alongside a backdrop of crashing waves and palm trees. Ipanema Beach draws crowds thousands deep every day with each person sporting a golden tan and a tiny Brazilian swimsuit.

The classes are divided into the rich and the poor with no middle class, and the residential areas in Rio are also divided accordingly. Generally, there is little interaction between the haves and the have-nots because of the misconceptions each group has. Tourists also have a lot of the same misconceptions about how the poor live.

The Favelas

But like many other cities, Rio has its nice areas and its run-down slums. The slums of Rio, called "favelas" by the natives, weave up the mountainside overlooking the gorgeous Rio beaches. The favelas are thousands of tiny shacks practically on top of each other, many of which do not have roofs or running water. The roofs that are in place throughout the city consist primarily of tin roofs covered with Oriental rugs. The sides of the houses are painted, with most of the paint peeling. The incontestable presence of the favelas is devastating. There are miles upon miles of favelas in all of Rio. Whereas many American cities have specific sections for poor and low-income housing, Rio's favelas are everywhere.

There are 78 different favelas in Rio, each with its own unique atmosphere. Rocinha, Brazil's largest favela, is home to over 127,000 inhabitants. About 80 percent of the favelas are located north of Rio and are considered very dangerous. Tourists and even locals are advised to stay away from the area because of the prevalence of crime, specifically assaults and robberies. The other 20 percent of the favelas in Rio are located west and south of the city.

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**The Favelas
(continued)**

Carlos Antonio, who grew up in Rocinha, stated "We need each other, we take care of each other. Favela is a big family. Just because we're poor doesn't mean we're not happy." Antonio continued to explain that residents of the favelas have the second-lowest average salary in the world, at about only 150 American dollars per month. "Our own government doesn't invest in the favelas. Ninety-nine percent of the investors are from Europe," he said. "The rich communities next door won't come in because they are afraid. It's a shame, they should really get to know us."

The poorest people live at the top of the mountain. Upon entering a stereotypical favela home, I was surprised because there really wasn't much in this home and just like many others, there wasn't a roof. We ventured down the favela through passageways winding through the houses. As we got further down, the homes were getting nicer. As if the sight of the nicer homes weren't enough to indicate the change in wealth among the residents, the putrid rotten-egg smell at the top of the favela faded into the welcoming scent of an evening dinner being cooked as we continued down the mountain.

The differences between the lives of the rich and poor are glaring across the area, but both groups equally enjoy celebrating the day. People celebrate the sunset and the end of the day everyday at Ipanema Beach. I was fortunate enough to go, and I saw thousands of people watching the sunset. Once the sun had completely set, there was a roar of applause and people talking, each of whom was thanking God for the sun that day and for the many days to come.
