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HILTON

Can You Name Five South American Countries?



KEITH O. HILTON

VENEZUELA, PERU, PARAGUAY, ECUADOR, CHILE. The world community today is much closer in proximity than ever before. For that reason, it is important that people of color know the difference between real and imaginary boundaries.

What happens in Thailand (Asia) impact on Tampa. What happens in Czechoslovakia (Europe) affects Chicago. What happens in Rumania reaches Richmond. What happens to Latino, Asian and African citizens in South and Central America certainly has real ramifications for U.S. Africans and Latinos.

In an earlier column, we highlighted several nations in the West Indies. Those nations as correctly pointed out, are predominantly comprised of people of color.

Likewise, many of the citizens of nations in South America are also culturally

connected to Africa and Asia. The following are a few highlights of some of these Spanish, Portuguese and English speaking South American countries.

As always, we strongly encourage students to ask international students and visitors about their cultures, customs and experiences. Until or unless one visits these countries, asking questions is the next best thing to being there.

1. BRAZIL. Capital, Brasilia. It is commonly stated that the three world nations with the greatest African populations are Nigeria (West Africa), Brazil (South America) and the United States.

This Portuguese speaking nation has the second largest river in the world, the Amazon. The majority of its people are officially Roman Catholic, yet many continue to maintain their African

religious practices.

2. COLOMBIA. Capital, Bogota. Colombia is the third nation of South America with a population greater than Canada.

In Colombia, there is an African story/myth concerning the origin of death which is also widespread throughout South Africa (Azania). God, it is said, gave humankind a choice between the stone and the banana.

The stone (which they rejected because of its inedibility) would have made them immoral; however, they preferred the banana because they could eat it. Hence came death - but also the perpetuation of the human race by begetting children, symbolized by the bunches of fruit on the banana tree.

3. GUYANA. Capital, Georgetown. This South American nation, on the Atlantic Ocean, is bordered by Venezuela, Brazil and Surinam. Like many nations of south and central America and the West Indies, its inhabitants are multi ethnic: African, Asian, Amerindians and European.

4. PANAMA. Capital, Panama City. Just as when the U.S. sent troops to Grenada in the 1980s, likewise when troops were sent to Panama last year, more than a few African American soldiers were shocked to come face to face with an "enemy" that looked like them.

If young people knew more about world affairs, probably fewer would be misled into taking up arms against their world community relatives. This is higher education.

When Head Start celebrates its 25th birthday this month, Dr. Angela A. Moore in Marshall, Texas will be one of its most enthusiastic well-wishers.

Head Start is the early childhood development program that offers education, health, and social services to low income parents and children, with emphasis on parental involvement.

In 1966, when Angela was four years old, she attended Head Start in Victoria, Mississippi. "I liked to listen to the stories, and I was good at putting puzzles together," recalls Dr. Moore.

"I'll never forget my Head Start teacher, Miss Robinson," says Dr. Moore. "She was always smiling. Recently she told me I was somewhat bossy as a Head Start student. I even tried to tell her how to do her job."

Dr. Moore says that without the opportunity to go to Head Start she would have stayed at home and played in the back yard. At Head Start, her active mind was stimulated and her high energy guided into productive channels.

"One day there was some

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CHILDWATCH

By Marian Wright Edelman
President, Children's Defense Fund

Head Start Celebrates Twenty-Five Years of Success

kind of preschool exam that I did very well on," says Dr. Moore. "I remember the excitement. Head Start made me feel good about myself."

Dr. Moore continued to be an enthusiastic student through elementary and high school. She attended Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, on an academic scholarship, then went on to Meharry Medical College. Af-

of eligible children to attend.

This year, Congress must reauthorize Head Start for another four years. The reauthorization bills that are now being considered by the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives would authorize enough funding over four years to maintain the quality of the program and expand enrollments so



WAITING FOR PRESIDENT BUSH -- Visiting children at a Washington, DC child care center, Congresswoman Pat Schroeder (D-CO), left, and Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund, say they hope President Bush this spring will sign national child care legislation to give hundreds of thousands more children the opportunity to receive safe, quality child care so their parents can hold down jobs.

ter receiving her medical degree, Dr. Moore decided to take a couple of years out of her medical career to join the faculty at Wiley College in Texas. "I wanted to go to a black college and give back some time," says Dr. Moore. "I wanted to inspire more students to go to medical school-or do whatever they want to do. I thought I could be a role model."

Dr. Moore says she is convinced that Head Start started her on the path to achievement. "In Head Start," she says, "I found out I was good at being a student. The incentive to learn started there."

During the past 25 years, Head Start has given hundreds of thousands of children like Angela Moore a strong boost toward lifelong achievement. All low-income children deserve the same good start, but Head Start's funding is large enough to enable only about 20 percent

that by 1994 all eligible three-and four-year-olds and a percentage of five-year-olds can attend. It is critical that these bills pass Congress.

Head Start students are more likely to meet the basic requirements for school than low-income children who did not attend Head Start. And Head Start students are less likely to be placed in special education classes or be held back in school. Later in life, Head Start graduates are more likely to graduate from high school, be employed, and stay free of problems with the law. For every dollar invested in preschool programs such as Head Start, the nation gets a return of \$4.75 in savings in special education and welfare costs and in higher worker productivity.

As Dr. Angela Moore can tell us from her own experience, Head Start is an investment that pays off.

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