Why do so many people want democracy?

Your grandparents came to the United States because they wanted to live in a democracy. Although that was more than 50 years ago, you know that people in many parts of the world still seek democracy today. On the news, you watch stories about protesters, who are demanding more democracy and freedom. Their demonstrations are often led by students and sometimes help to bring about democratic reform.

One evening you and a friend are watching a news story about a leader who has promised his people greater democracy. What might you answer when your friend asks why so many people want democracy?

Protesters march in Caracas, Venezuela, in favor of democracy.

EXAMINING the ISSUES

- What rights and institutions are necessary for a government to be democratic?
- How do citizens participate in a democracy? How can participation be encouraged?

Discuss these questions in class and list important points on the board. For your discussion, consider what you know about democracy in ancient Greece and in the United States. As you read this chapter, think about the challenges many countries face in trying to develop democratic systems.