

Cases of Exclusion and Mobilization of Race and Ethnicities in Latin America

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and Ethnicities in Latin America

Edited by

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P U B L I S H I N G

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One.....	1
Introduction: Cases of Exclusion and Mobilization of Race and Ethnicities in Latin America Marc Becker	
Chapter Two.....	7
Nationalism and Republicanism: The <i>Patria</i> of Bolívar José Antonio Aguilar Rivera	
Chapter Three.....	30
Toward a Canon of Latin American Political Thought: Incorporating the Indigenous Writings Katherine Hoyt	
Chapter Four.....	45
Mexican Indigenous Past in Baja California Sur: A Case of Institutional Racism? Alexandra Sauvage	
Chapter Five.....	58
The Ethnic Dynamic of Anti-systemic Social Movements in Bolivia and their Aftermath under Evo Morales' Administration Magda von der Heydt-Coca	
Chapter Six.....	78
Political Representation of Indigenous Peoples in Peru: Perceptions of Indigenous Leaders and Characteristics of the Peruvian Model Aída Villanueva M.	
Chapter Seven.....	104
Mobilizing Against the Limits of Multiculturalism in Chile: Mapuche Hunger Strikes and Grassroots Alliances Diane Haughney	

Chapter Eight.....	130
(Peasant Farmer Native) Indigenous Autonomies in Bolivia: Developments and Shortcomings (2009-2012) Alexandra Tomaselli	
Chapter Nine.....	174
Empowerment through Ethno-Education in a Disempowering Context: “ <i>Ser Alguien en la Vida</i> ” and the Colombian Wayuu Esteban Ferrero Botero	
Chapter Ten	198
Photography and Racialism: Images of an Absence Rafael Acosta de Arriba	
Chapter Eleven	204
P’urhepecha Women in the Public Sphere: Contributions and Traditional Conditioning María de Lourdes Barón León	
Contributors.....	223

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: CASES OF EXCLUSION AND MOBILIZATION OF RACE AND ETHNICITIES IN LATIN AMERICA

MARC BECKER

Issues of race and ethnicity in Latin America continue to gain a growing amount of academic attention. The importance of these topics led to the organization of a section on Ethnicity, Race, and Indigenous Peoples (ERIP) within the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) that is dedicated to scholarly collaboration and an exchange of ideas with respect to the study of ethnicity, race, Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants and related issues in Latin America and the Caribbean. Contributions to this project draw on diverse academic disciplines including anthropology, history, sociology, political science, linguistics, Spanish and Portuguese, geography, literature, and law.

ERIP, together with the Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies (CILAS) at the University of California, San Diego and the *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* (LACES) journal, organized the Second Conference on Ethnicity, Race, and Indigenous People from November 3-5, 2011 at the University of California, San Diego. The event was part of a commitment to periodically organize an international conference following the establishment of ERIP and the launching of the journal LACES in 2006.

The conference covered topics related to all aspects of ethnicity, race relations, Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants and other ethnic and racial groups in Latin America and the Caribbean. Presenters discussed issues of immigration, *indigenismo*, racism and anti-racism, along with new forms of literature, film, dance, and music of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples across the continent. Following the tradition of the larger LASA meetings, this conference conveyed a large diversity of

perspectives, disciplines and issues reflecting the richness and complexities of the social processes that encompass the Americas.

The papers collected in this volume on race and ethnicity in Latin America, as well as those from a companion volume on Indigenous peoples and African descendants in Ecuador, draw on the strengths of the ideas presented at the conference. The volumes include contributions from junior, marginal, and lesser-known scholars in the field, including those who have not previously had the opportunity to address an English-speaking audience. While themes of ethnic identities, indigeneity, and race relations are commonly examined in our respective disciplines, it is less common to bring together essays with scholars from such a broad variety of disciplines. The first volume draws on a wide range of studies from across Latin America, including the examination of ethnohistory, the environment, and culture. A second volume focuses on Ecuador, and provides an opportunity to explore indigeneity in comparative perspective with the rest of the region, as well as to highlight historically important but understudied Afro-Ecuadorian perspectives.

This volume begins with three studies that examine various aspects of Latin America's ethnohistorical background. Political scientist José Antonio Aguilar Rivera studies themes of nationalism and republicanism in the thought of South American independence leader Simón Bolívar. Aguilar argues that Bolívar is unusual among nineteenth-century Spanish American caudillos in how he approached the task of nation building after independence. His strategy contrasted sharply with that followed by others, such as the Mexican *patriotas criollos* (creole patriots). At the core of Bolívar's predicament was the fact that he had some sense of how to forge a polity but very little idea of how to forge a people. This omission was no coincidence. Aguilar argues that Bolívar did not believe that he needed a strong notion of racial homogeneity to carry out nation building. Although some critics have argued that Bolívar's political understandings of state and *patria* borrowed heavily from classical republicanism, this essay contends that he did not conceive of citizenship in classical terms either. Unlike ethnonationalists, Bolívar believed that in the short run, cultural homogeneity—unlike political unity—was not critical to the functioning of representative government. On the contrary, he conceived of a patria based on racial diversity and cultural inequality. He constructed a theory of social harmony and cooperation based on deference. This logic ran counter to that of John Stuart Mill, who believed that a common nationality, understood in ethnic terms, was necessary for representative government.

The incorporation of non-European political theory into broader undergraduate and graduate education in political science is beginning but political thought from Latin America and the Caribbean is less often included. Political scientist Katherine Hoyt advances incorporation of that theory by looking at three works by Indigenous writers, composed at about the same time during the late sixteenth/early seventeenth century, as examples of universal genres of political philosophy. She explores the *Annals of the Cakchiquel Maya* as a foundation narrative, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* by Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala as an example of mirror of princes literature, and the *Royal Commentaries of the Incas* by El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega as utopian writing. Hoyt also examines controversies surrounding these writings.

If there is a topic rarely heard about in Baja California Sur, it is that of race. In the absence of contemporary members of an original Indigenous population, it is assumed that the entire question of institutional racism is nonexistent. In the final contribution to this section, cultural historian Alexandra Sauvage employs examples of the yearly reenactment of Cortes' landing and the tensions caused by the erection of the statue of Cuauhtémoc in downtown La Paz to show how a particular stance about indigeneity does exist and how, in turn, it is closely linked to a deeper tension related to the cultural identity of Baja California Sur within the Mexican federation.

The next group of essays in this volume examines environmental concerns and broader legal issues related to this theme. Sociologist Magda von der Heydt-Coca begins with an examination of social movements and new challenges facing Evo Morales's administration in Bolivia. As occurred across the region, ethnic-based social movements successfully resisted the neoliberal agenda in Bolivia, opposing a government that explicitly recognized Indigenous rights and multiculturalism. The resistance culminated in the election of the first Indigenous president on the continent, Evo Morales. This essay examines the ethnic dynamic of the anti-systemic protests against neoliberalism and the possibilities and limits of the ethnic agenda in Morales's government. It scrutinizes the alternative developmental path called *Sumaj Qamaña* that Indigenous social movements have proposed. The emergence of a positive perception of *Indianness* helped to unify diverse social forces against neoliberalism under the umbrella of ethnicity. Under Morales' administration diverse Indigenous groups were indeed incorporated into the nation. The inclusion of a specific ethnic agenda, however, proved to be more elusive, and the class interests of the once unified social groups started to play a role.

We move next to Peru where sociologist Aída Villanueva M. examines Indigenous representation in the Peruvian congress. The concept of special representation rights refers to a set of strategies designed to ensure that minorities are included in the decision-making mechanisms of political power. Efforts in this area are made with the understanding that individual rights are not enough to guarantee fair treatment of minorities or oppressed sectors of the population. Special representation rights also correspond to the acknowledgment of the need for political systems to offer legitimate channels to different interest groups—especially underrepresented ones—to negotiate with other groups in order to pursue their agenda. Descriptive representation has gained importance in this debate, highlighting the political value of such characteristics as ethnicity and gender, and demonstrating that political spaces should include members of disadvantaged groups, providing them with a political voice. The ideal of descriptive representation is affected into public policy through affirmative action measures.

In 1990, Chile's new Center-Left government, the *Concertación por la Democracia* (known familiarly as the *Concertación*) ended seventeen years of military dictatorship. As part of its campaign promises to its supporters, the *Concertación* had pledged to pass legislation to protect Indigenous lands and cultures. At the same time, however, the government endeavored to ensure investors and the Right that a Center-Left coalition could maintain economic growth, monetary stability, and the status quo in private property rights by continuing the neoliberal economic model based on open markets. Political scientist Diane Haughney analyzes how the administration shaped the pace and content of the political agenda through an explicit policy of “consensus” with the Right opposition that significantly reduced the scope of reform. Within this framework of restricted reform, a state policy of respect for cultural diversity within the Chilean nation became the basis for new laws that marked a departure from the military's efforts to legally eliminate Indigenous lands and “Indigenous” as part of Chilean society. These new policies (*políticas interculturales*) aimed to incorporate cultural diversity in policies for education, health care, and economic development for rural and urban Indigenous sectors.

In the final contribution to this section, we return to Bolivia and human rights lawyer Alexandra Tomaselli's study of Indigenous autonomies. In recent decades, Indigenous peoples' movements have played an undeniable role in the institutional and social changes occurring in Latin America. After what is known as the *emergencia indígena* of the 1990s, which mainly refers to the 1990 massive marches in Ecuador and Bolivia,

Indigenous movements have (re)gained a higher level of participation and have a stronger say in the political arena of their respective states. They have claimed a new role in their societies, at a collective rather than individual level. In the late 1980s and 1990s, the majority of Latin American countries experienced constitutional reforms that set new legal and political orders, and recognized ad hoc rights for Indigenous peoples living within their territories, which some authors call “multicultural constitutionalism.” Notwithstanding this (formal) radical change, problems arose with the implementation of these normative frameworks. Bolivia may run the same risk. Despite the courage and the determination that Indigenous peoples show, through an analysis of the new prototype of (Peasant Farmer Native) Indigenous Autonomies Tomaselli underscores that the path to realizing Indigenous claims still looks long and tortuous.

The final section of this volume probes various aspects of education and culture and their relation to Latin American states. We begin in Colombia and with a study of ethno-education among the Wayuu. Anthropologist Esteban Ferrero Botero observes how for the last four to five decades, global discourses of “equal rights” and the recent constitutional recognition of “indigeneity” in different Latin American countries have made Indigenous identity, at some levels, “empowering.” It is within the context of this new positionality made legal, in the case of Colombia, by the most recent constitution that we can begin to understand how forms of “empowerment” take shape, are lived, and function locally, and what their consequences are for the overall creation of a multicultural Colombia as a Latin American nation-state. Ferrero Botero explores how part of this “empowerment” stems from the support and push for modernity, and a certain kind of inclusion of Indigenous peoples by the Colombian state that, in this case, is materialized through the provision of ethno-education, while mostly focusing on how this type of education is locally conceptualized. Thus, Ferrero Botero argues that we need to begin by comprehending the experiencing of this “empowerment” and how it fits into and makes sense in a personal, local, and national context. Based on an ethnographic study in a Colombian Wayuu educational Internado (boarding school) and its surrounding rancherías, this analysis intends to elucidate how the process and effects of ethno-education are reconfigured and re-appropriated by the students, their families, and the Wayuu teachers of the Internado of Siapana in a way that becomes a source of empowerment structured within an Indigenous struggle for self-determination and the push of state ideals of development.

From education we move to essayist Rafael Acosta de Arriba’s innovative study of racial images. Acosta notes that if we look back a little

over a century and a half ago when photography emerged and was established both as an art and a documented record of reality, we discover a very well-known truth: that the first images dealing with the topics of racialism and otherness were marked by a strong Eurocentric accent that marginalized other ethnic groups. Under the guise of ethnologic and scientific inquiries, Europe observed colonized bodies with the astonished curiosity of an entomologist. In the case of Cuba, this development was not much different, despite the fact that radical changes that came with the Cuban Revolution imposed social and cultural dynamics never seen before in the country or the continent. Acosta contends that from its arrival in 1840, photography in Cuba did not have much to do with racial issues until the 1990s.

We close this volume with social scientist María de Lourdes Barón León's study of the participation of P'urhépecha women in public spaces. Literature indicates that before the Spanish conquest, P'urhépecha women participated in public spheres. They received newly conquered lands by the P'urhépecha Empire as heads of their communities while men went to war. Today, they continue to participate in the public sphere. Nonetheless, to participate in such arenas they need to show commitment to their communities and traditions. Their participation has to include a benefit to their families, communities and/or ethnic groups, and responds to gendered rules. Barón provides a detailed examination of women's activities and their commitments to develop them.

Taken as a whole, this broad range of studies on ethnohistory, environmental and legal issues, education, and culture advance our understandings of race and ethnicity in Latin America. In the process, these studies incorporate related issues of how historical and political developments in Latin America have, and continue to be, experienced differently based on varying gendered and class perspectives. These studies examine how those speaking from the margins continue to shape and reshape what we know as Latin America.

CHAPTER TWO

NATIONALISM AND REPUBLICANISM: THE *PATRIA* OF BOLÍVAR

JOSÉ ANTONIO AGUILAR RIVERA¹

Estábamos abstraídos, y digámoslo así, ausentes del
universo en cuanto es relativo a la ciencia del
gobierno y administración del estado.
—Simón Bolívar, *Carta de Jamaica*, 1815

Simón Bolívar is unusual among nineteenth-century Spanish American caudillos for a number of reasons. One of them is that he approached the task of nation building after independence in a way that sharply contrasts with the strategies followed by others, such as the Mexican *patriotas criollos* (creole patriots). At the core of his predicament was the fact that Bolívar had some sense of how to forge a polity but very little idea of how to forge a people. This omission is no coincidence. I argue that Bolívar did not believe that he needed a strong notion of racial homogeneity to carry out nation building. Although some critics have argued that Bolívar's political understandings of state and *patria* borrowed heavily from classical republicanism, I argue that he did not conceive of citizenship in classical terms either. Unlike ethnonationalists, Bolívar believed that in the short run cultural homogeneity—unlike political *unity*—was not critical to the functioning of representative government. On the contrary, he conceived of a *patria* based on racial diversity *and* cultural inequality. He constructed a theory of social harmony and cooperation based on

¹ I wish to thank Roberto Mostajo and Esteban Gonzalez for their help with the research and editing of this paper. This essay was originally published as “Men or Citizens? The making of Bolívar's patria” in Jorge J. E. Gracia, ed., *Forging People: Race, ethnicity, and nationality in Hispanic American and Latino/a thought*, Latino perspectives (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011).

deference. This logic ran counter to that of John Stuart Mill, who believed that a common nationality, understood in ethnic terms, was necessary for representative government.

Forging Peoples or Forging Citizens?

It is instructive to start with one of Bolívar's many failures, perhaps the most significant of them. Bolívar made clear in his address to the Angostura Congress in 1819 that institutions have to be shaped to accommodate the prevailing customs (mores) of a people. He asserted, "Good mores and not strength are the columns of the laws."² On these grounds he rejected American-style federalism and political decentralization. While the U.S. Constitution was a marvelous creation, it would not do for all peoples, and certainly not for the unruly Venezuelans. At the core of this belief was Montesquieu's insight in the *Spirit of the Laws* that without a powerful structure of such customs, habits, and attitudes—without, that is, a civil society already in place—it would not be possible to create a new republic. According to Anthony Pagden (1990, 149), perhaps this explains why "Montesquieu himself never offered any suggestions as to how the modern Lycurgus might go about doing so." The seminal paradox in Bolívar's thought was that he acknowledged the importance of mores, realized that South America was wanting in virtue, and still went ahead with his project of constructing a large republican polity. He compelled the constitution makers at Angostura to achieve something unheard of: "You have to constitute men perverted by the illusions of error and by noxious incentives."³

Bolívar faced the challenge of imagining the communities that could be created out of the collapse of the Spanish empire in America. While there has been some debate over Bolívar's political ideas—was he a liberal or a classical republican?—the truth is that he encountered very early in his career one of the vacuums in liberal theory: the absence of criteria to set boundaries of nationality between human communities. A citizen is a political, not a cultural entity. However, as Bernard Yack (1996, 200–201) has argued:

² "...las buenas costumbres, y no la fuerza, son las columnas de las leyes." "Discurso pronunciado por el Libertador ante el congreso de la Angostura el 15 de febrero de 1819, día de su instalación" (Bolívar 1947, 2:1134–35).

³ "Tenéis que constituir a hombres pervertidos por las ilusiones del error, y por incentivos nocivos" (Bolívar 1947, 2:1136).

Liberal democratic culture *itself* inspires people to think of themselves as members of prepolitical communities. This is especially true of the rhetoric of popular sovereignty. Popular sovereignty arguments encourage modern citizens to think of themselves as organized into communities that are logically and historically prior to the communities created by their shared political institutions. The doctrine of popular sovereignty insists that behind every state there stands a people, a community of individuals that makes use of the state as a means of self government and thus has the right to establish the limits of its power.

However, guidelines for defining what a nation is and who belongs to it are missing in liberal thought.

Bolívar perhaps might have turned to republican patriotism. According to Maurizio Viroli (1995, 1), patriotism is the “love of the political institutions and the way of life that sustains the common liberty of the people.” Patriotism, according to this view, has a cultural dimension, “but it is *primarily* a political passion based on the experience of citizenship, not on common prepolitical elements derived from being in the same territory, belonging to the same race, speaking the same language, worshipping the same gods, having the same customs” (Viroli 1998, 200–201). Republican patriotism differs from civic nationalism in being a passion and not the result of rational consent; it is not a matter of allegiance to historically and culturally neutral universal political principles but an attachment to the laws, the constitution, and the way of life of a particular republic. Bolívar certainly did not lack political passion. However, the problem was that he had little attachment to the “laws, the constitution, and the way of life” of colonial Spain. In fact, Spain was a tyrannical empire, not a republic, and the Spanish American colonies had the corrupt legacy of imperialism; they lacked any self-sustaining republican tradition of their own. Spanish Americans, according to Bolívar, had even been deprived of “active tyranny.” He lamented, “The position of the inhabitants of the American hemisphere has been for centuries entirely passive: their political existence was null. We were even lower than servitude and hence it was more difficult for us to rise to the enjoyment of liberty.” Bolívar asserted that states became enslaved “by the nature of their constitution or by the abuse of their constitution. Therefore, a people is enslaved when the government, by its very essence or because of its vices, treads upon and usurps the rights of the citizen or subject. Taking account of these principles we will find that America had been deprived not only of her liberty but also of active and dominant tyranny.”⁴

⁴ “Se nos vejaba con una conducta que, además de privarnos de los derechos que nos correspondían, nos dejaba en una especie de infancia permanente con respecto

In Spanish America even the tyrants were foreigners. “Love of the fatherland,” Bolívar (1947, 2:1149) wrote in his Angostura speech, “love of the laws, love of the Magistrates, are the noble passions that the soul of a Republican most absorb. Venezuelans love their patria, but they do not love her laws, because these [laws] have been noxious and were the source of all evil.” For Bolívar, neither purely rational civic nationalism nor republican patriotism would do.

Mexican liberals such as José María Luis Mora faced this same challenge in the early nineteenth century. However, their predicament was lessened by the conscious elaboration of cultural and historical theories of the nation—the mythical narratives of *patriotismo criollo* of Servando Teresa de Mier, Carlos María de Bustamante, and others. A strong undercurrent of ethnic, racial, and historical thinking—however incoherent—was present from the very beginning in Mexico.⁵ Yet it must be noted that in Mexico criollos patriotas were in the minority. They did not succeed in providing the symbolic framework for constitution making in the early republic. Most of the framers of the first constitutions relied more on Benjamin Constant than on Quetzalcoatl. As Charles Hale (1994, 253) asserts, “Mexican constitutional liberalism in the 1820’s had a strictly criollo orientation.” Mexicans like Mora were “civic nationalists,” but with a twist. They believed in the power of universal ideas such as legal equality and constitutionalism to constitute a polity. However, their “civicness” was somehow tainted by their ideas on the racial makeup of their society.⁶ Mora explicitly asserted that the character of the Mexican

a las transacciones públicas. Si hubiésemos siquiera manejado nuestros asuntos domésticos en nuestra administración interior, conoceríamos el curso de los negocios públicos y su mecanismo, y gozaríamos también de la consideración personal que impone a los ojos del pueblo cierto respeto maquinaal que es tan necesario conservar en las revoluciones. He aquí por qué he dicho que estábamos privados hasta de la tiranía activa, pues que no nos era permitido ejercer sus funciones.” Bolívar (1947, 1:164–65), “Contestación de un americano meridional a un caballero de esta isla,” Kingston, 6 de septiembre 1815.

⁵ On *patriotismo criollo* in Mexico, see Brading (1973). Mora himself, as Hale (1994, 221–55) has shown, was immune to the calling of ancient Aztecs. He believed that Hernán Cortés was the founder of Mexican nationality and that nothing prior to him was important. Cortés’s reference is on p. 225.

⁶ Yet Mora (1950, 1:65–66) did not subscribe to the theories of racial superiority. The fact is that “never has it been defined exactly what superiority means.” “Se parte de un principio cierto y se deducen de él consecuencias erradísimas. El principio es que la diversidad de conformación funda la diversidad de facultades, y esto nadie puede dudarlo. Pero de esta diversidad de aptitudes se deduce la superioridad de unas razas sobre las otras y este es un error imperdonable. Téngase

nation must be sought in the white *population* (Hale 1994, 229).⁷ The “short and wretched remains of the ancient Mexican population,” even if they were the source of “pity,” could not be considered the foundations of a progressive Mexican society.⁸ Mora believed that “every caste of known men has an organization which is peculiar to them, it is in consonance with their character and it influences not only the color of their skin, but what is more important, their physical strength, psychic and industrial abilities.... It does not seem plausible to deny the difference, in aptitudes and faculties, between the bronze race, to which the Indians of Mexico belong, and the whites that have settled in the country.”⁹ Indians were stubborn

presente para resolver esta cuestión que muchos pueblos reputados estópidos por siglos no sólo han hecho después grandes progresos, sino que han sobrepujado también en todos los ramos científicos e industriales a los que antes los veían con desprecio.” Yet education could overcome ancestry and race. The truth, Mora claimed, “is that races improve or worsen with the centuries, as individuals with the passing of years, and that with races as well as with individuals education is all mighty.” *México y sus revoluciones* was originally published in Paris in 1836.

⁷ Note, however, that the reasons for this preponderance were not racial (thus Mora does not speak of the white “race” but of the white “population”). It was simply that since whites were at the top of the social and cultural ladder it could hardly been otherwise. Mora (1950, 1:74) asserted, “La *población* blanca es con mucho exceso la dominante en el día, por el número de sus individuos, por su ilustración y riqueza, por el influjo exclusivo que ejerce en los negocios públicos y por lo ventajoso de su posición con respecto a las demás: en ella es donde se ha de buscar el carácter mexicano, y ella es la que ha de fijar en todo el mundo el concepto que se deba formar de la República” (my emphasis).

⁸ “Sería sin disputa, interesante una descripción circunstanciada de las costumbres, carácter, estado físico e intelectual de estos cortos y envilecidos restos de la antigua población mexicana, pues la opresión en que han vivido tanto tiempo ha excitado en su favor la compasión de todo orbe civilizado, y aun ha extraviado el juicio hasta atribuir exclusivamente al gobierno español y a la dureza de sus agentes lo que en mucha parte depende del aislamiento de la raza de que descenden, cuyos hábitos sociales estuvieron por muchos siglos en entera divergencia y secuestación del resto del mundo civilizado” (Mora 1950, 1:63).

⁹ “No parece pues que pueda dudarse de la diversidad y aptitud de facultades entre la raza bronceada a que pertenecen los indígenas de México, y los blancos que se han establecido en el país” (Mora 1950, 1:64). However, note that Mora also speaks of the “alleged” superiority of the whites over the Indians as false (“privilegios acordados por las leyes para compensar la superioridad supuesta de los blancos”). He chided the so-called protectors of the Indians, Las Casas and Vasco de Quiroga, for believing that the Indians were incapable of self-rule. “Decir que no serán ni son capaces para regirse y gobernarse por sí mismos es un despropósito; lo han hecho por muchos años y esto basta: es verdad que su estado actual y hasta que no hayan sufrido cambios considerables no podrán nunca llegar

and not imaginative but also sober and hardworking (although physically they were not very strong) (Mora 1950, 1:70-71).¹⁰ These ideas on race and nation suggest a fledgling theory of *mestizaje* based on “whitening,” the mixing of European immigrants with the native population.¹¹ Mora believed that through a concerted effort of European colonization, Mexico could achieve the complete fusion of the Indians and the “total extinction of the *castas*.” However, the fusion of Indians would be more troublesome than that of Blacks: “In the end they [Indians] will follow the same course and will merge in the general mass, because the impulse is there and it cannot be contained nor its course be shifted; but it will take longer and perhaps a century will not suffice to complete the process.”¹² According to Hale (1994, 246), “Mora...could not conceive that nationality rested in a group other than his own.” Two decades later, Mora, scared by the Indian uprisings of the 1840s, called attention to the pressing need to “fuse all races and colors” by means of colonization enterprises in the already populated regions of the country.

Bolívar, on the other hand, did not have at his disposal—nor would he have wanted—the symbolic assets of *patriotismo criollo*. According to

al grado de ilustración, civilización y cultura de los europeos, ni sostenerse bajo pie de igualdad con ellos en una sociedad de que unos y otros hagan parte, como está sucediendo en muchas de las nuevas repúblicas americanas” (66–67). The so-called inferiority of the Indian was not primordial or racial but rather the result of historical misfortunes, and their condition could be amended by education and progress, in a word, civilization.

¹⁰ On the relation between Indigenous communities and the state in Mexico, see Florescano (1997).

¹¹ Mora (1950, 1:73) asserted that Blacks were few in numbers and thus posed no threat to whites, as in other countries. Moreover, soon there would be no Blacks left due to miscegenation with whites and Indians. “El número de negros que ha sido uno de los elementos que han entrado a constituir su actual población, ha sido siempre cortísimo y en el día ha desaparecido casi del todo, pues los cortos restos de ellos que han quedado en las costas del Pacífico y en las del Atlántico son enteramente insignificantes para poder inspirar temor ninguno en la suerte de sus destinos: desaparecerán del todo antes de medio siglo, y se perderán en la masa dominante de la población blanca por la fusión que empezó hace más de veinte años y se halla ya muy adelantada.”

¹² “Si la colonización se apresurase, si el gobierno la hiciese un asunto de primera importancia y dirigiese a él todas su miras y proyectos con una perseverancia invariable...entonces la fusión de las gentes de color y la total extinción de las castas se apresurarían y tendrían una más pronta y feliz terminación. Mas según el estado presente de las cosas no hay que esperar nada de esto, y es necesario aguardar del tiempo y de otra época más remota, lo que no hay voluntad de apresurar” (Mora 1950, 1:74).

Pagden (1990, 150-51), the assortment of whites, *pardos* (mestizos or half-breeds), *mulatos*, and Blacks needed, in addition to the satisfaction of their own immediate interests, “an ideology—something that Bolívar loathed as much as Napoleon—that might provide the intellectual foundation for a new state.” That is, a nonpolitical ideology, an ethnocultural and historical theory of the nation. “What men like Viscardo had offered his readers, however illusory in fact, had been a vivid, densely narrative past, that, unlike Bolívar’s republicanism, could easily be linked to just such an ideology. The patria to which Viscardo, Hidalgo, and Morelos had appealed was an imaginary one, but the parts out of which it was composed were real enough. Bolívar’s patria, on the other hand, was a political ideal, an ‘Enlightment illusion.’”¹³

Bolívar had little patience with Indigenous mythical constructs, such as the legend of Quetzalcoatl. In his 1815 *Letter from Jamaica*, he was skeptical of the power of such myths. The English gentleman to whom Bolívar was responding believed that “happy and important changes were often the result of individuals. Do you conceive the effect if an individual appeared to them showing the qualities of Quetzalcoatl, Buda of the Forest, or Mercury, of which other nations have talked so much? Don’t you think that this will tip the balance?”¹⁴ Skeptically, Bolívar (1947, 1:173) answered:

I think like you that individual causes can have general results; most of all during revolutions. But the one capable of producing the prodigious effects that you propose is not the hero, the great prophet, or the god of Anahuac, Quetzalcoatl. This personage is barely known to the Mexican people and not in a good light, for such is the fate of the vanquished even if they are gods. Only historians and literary men have busied themselves in carefully researching his [Quetzalcoatl’s] origins, true or false mission, prophecies and the end of his career.... General opinion has it that Quetzalcoatl is a divine legislator among the pagan peoples of the Anahuac where he was lieutenant of the great Montezuma from whom he derived his authority. From here it follows that our Mexicans would not follow the genteel Quetzalcoatl even if he were to appear to them in the most identical and

¹³ For a comparison between Bolívar and Mexican patriotismo criollo, see Brading (1988).

¹⁴ “¿Concibe Vd. cuál será el efecto que producirá, si un individuo, apareciendo entre ellos, demostrase los caracteres de Quetzalcoatl, el Buda del bosque, o Mercurio, del cual han hablado tanto las otras naciones? ¿No cree Vd. que esto inclinaría todas las partes?” (Bolívar 1947, 1:173).

favorable lights, because they profess a religion which is the most intolerant and exclusive of others.¹⁵

Sometimes, Bolívar (1947, 1:173, 174) mused, happy chances could help the cause of liberty. In Mexico even fanatical beliefs could be put to the service of emancipation:

Happily the directors of Mexico's independence have taken advantage of fanaticism with the best of lucks, they have proclaimed the famous Virgin of Guadalupe queen of the patriots and they invoke her at every hardship, and they fly her in their banners. Hence political enthusiasm has produced a mixture with religion which in turn has resulted in an ardent fervor for the sacred cause of liberty. The veneration that this image instills in Mexico is greater than the most exalted veneration that the most skilled of prophets could have inspired.¹⁶

But this was far from the rule. Mexico was an exception. In general terms, religious fanaticism was at odds with enlightened liberty.

Bolívar was not immune to the appeal of the past, but the history of ancient Americans was not a source of inspiration for him, as it was for Mier and other patriotas criollos; it was rather the fountain of aesthetic contemplation. In Cuzco, Bolívar (1921, 333) wrote:

Yesterday I arrived to the classical country of the Sun, of the Inca, of the fables, and of history. Here gold is the true sun; Incas are the viceroys and

¹⁵ "Pienso como Vd. que causas individuales pueden producir resultados generales; sobre todo en las revoluciones. Pero no es el héroe, gran profeta, o Dios del Anahuac, Quetzalcoatl el que es capaz de operar los prodigiosos efectos que Vd. propone. Este personaje es apenas conocido del pueblo mejicano y no ventajosamente, porque tal es la suerte de los vencidos aunque sean dioses. Sólo los historiadores y literatos se han ocupado cuidadosamente en investigar su origen, verdadera o falsa misión, sus profecías y el término de su carrera.... La opinión general es que Quetzalcoatl es un legislador divino entre los pueblos paganos del Anahuac del cual era lugar-teniente el gran Montezuma derivando de él su autoridad. De aquí se infiere que nuestros mejicanos no seguirían al gentil Quetzalcoatl, aunque apareciese bajo las formas mas idénticas y favorables, pues que profesan una religión la más intolerante y exclusiva de las otras."

¹⁶ Thus "felizmente los directores de la independencia de Mejico se han aprovechado del fanatismo con el mejor acierto, proclamando a la famosa virgen de Guadalupe por reina de los patriotas; invocándola en todos los casos arduos y llevándola en sus banderas. Con esto el entusiasmo político ha formado una mezcla con la religión, que ha producido un fervor vehemente por la sagrada causa de la libertad. La veneración de esta imagen en Mejico es superior a la más exaltada que pudiera inspirar el más diestro profeta."

prefectos; the fable is Garcilaso's history; history is the account of the destruction of the Indians by Las Casas. Apart from all poetry, everything reminds me of higher ideas, deep thoughts; my soul is captivated by the presence of primitive Nature, developed by itself, creating its own elements from the model of its most intimate inspirations, without taint of foreign remains, of alien advice, of the whims of the human spirit, or infected by the history of crimes and nonsense of our species. Manco-Capac, Adam of the Indians, left his Titicaco paradise and created a historical society without trace of fable, sacred or profane.¹⁷

For Bolívar, the past was past; he had no political use for the Inca. His approach mirrored that of Rousseau when he rhapsodized over the primitive nature of man.

The conundrum of Spanish America after independence was similar, according to Bolívar, to that of the Roman world at the collapse of the empire. But in other respects it was, he thought, unprecedented. In his *Address of Angostura*, Bolívar (1947, 2:1140) told his countrymen:

At the time of independence from the Spanish monarchy America found herself in similar conditions to the Roman Empire, when such a tremendous mass fell dispersed in the midst of the ancient world. Every part then formed an independent nation in accordance to its situation or its interests. The difference is that those parts reclaimed their first associations. We do not preserve even the vestiges of other times. We are not Europeans; we are not Indians; we are but a mixed species of Indians and Spaniards. Americans by birth and Europeans by law, we find ourselves engaged in a dual conflict: we are disputing with the natives for titles of ownership, and at the same time we are struggling to maintain ourselves in the country that

¹⁷ “[H]e llegado ayer al país clásico del Sol, de los incas, de la fábula y de la historia. Aquí el sol verdadero es el oro; los incas son los virreyes o prefectos; la fábula es la historia de Garcilaso; la historia, la relación de la destrucción de los indios por Las Casas. Abstracción hecha de toda poesía, todo me recuerda altas ideas, pensamientos profundos; mi alma está embelesada con la presencia de la primitiva Naturaleza, desarrollada por sí misma, dando creaciones de sus propios elementos por el modelo de sus inspiraciones íntimas, sin mezcla alguna de las sobras extrañas, de los consejos ajenos, de los caprichos del espíritu humano, ni el contagio de la historia de los crímenes y de los absurdos de nuestra especie. Manco-Capac, Adán de los indios, salió de su paraíso titicaco y formó una sociedad histórica, sin mezcla de fábula sagrada o profana.” Bolívar a José Joaquín Olmedo, 27 de junio de 1825.

gave us birth against the opposition of the invaders, thus our case is the most extraordinary and complicated.¹⁸

Bolívar (1947, 2:1141) recognized that ethnic diversity posed a distinct challenge, although the solution to this problem seemed to lie in the realm of politics, in particular in institutions (centralized executive power) and ancient prudence: “Diversity of origins requires an infinitely steady pulse, an infinitely delicate touch to handle this heterogeneous society whose complicated device [*artificio*] breaks down, divides, and dissolves with the faintest of changes.”¹⁹ It is worth noting that this is not a republican preoccupation with contingency, the fear that the fragile republic, based on virtue, succumbs to corruption. Bolívar’s concern is not with fortune but with social order. It was not ethnic heterogeneity per se that he dreaded but the particular mix that Spanish colonization had brought about. Bolívar’s idea of ethnic diversity was a secular version of original sin. As Bolívar (1947, 1:1390) put it to General Santander in a letter dated July 8, 1826: “Our being has the most impure of origins: everything that preceded us is covered with the dark mantle of crime. We are the abominable product of those predatory tigers who came to America to shed its blood and to

¹⁸ “Al desprenderse la América de la Monarquía Española, se ha encontrado semejante al Imperio Romano, cuando aquella enorme masa cayó dispersa en medio del antiguo mundo. Cada desmembración formó entonces una Nación Independiente conforme a su situación o a sus intereses; pero con la diferencia de que aquellos Miembros volvían a restablecer sus primeras asociaciones. Nosotros ni aun conservamos los vestigios de lo que fue en otro tiempo: no somos Europeos, no somos Indios, sino una especie media entre los Aborígenes y los Españoles. Americanos por nacimiento y Europeos por derechos, nos hallamos en el conflicto de disputar a los naturales los títulos de posesión y de mantenernos en el país que nos vio nacer, contra la oposición de los invasores; así nuestro caso es el más extraordinario y complicado.” Bolívar elaborated on this topic: “Tengamos presentes que nuestro pueblo no es el Europeo, ni el Americano del Norte, que más bien es un compuesto de África y de América, que una emanación de la Europa; pues que hasta la España misma, deja de ser Europea por su sangre africana, por sus Instituciones, y por su carácter. Es imposible asignar con propiedad, a qué familia humana pertenecemos. La mayor parte de lo indígena se ha aniquilado, el Europeo se ha mezclado con el Americano y con el Africano, y este se ha mezclado con el Indio y con el Europeo. Nacidos todos del seno de una misma Madre, nuestros Padres diferentes en origen y en sangre, son extranjeros, y todos difieren visiblemente en la epidermis; esta desemejanza trae un reato de la mayor trascendencia.”

¹⁹ “[L]a diversidad de origen requiere un pulso infinitamente firme, un tacto infinitamente delicado para manejar esta sociedad heterogénea cuyo complicado artificio se disloca, se divide, se disuelve con la más ligera alteración.”

interbreed with their victims before sacrificing them—afterward mixing the dubious fruit of such unions with the offspring of slaves uprooted from Africa. With such physical mixtures, with these moral elements, can we place laws above heroes and principles above men?”²⁰

Simon Collier (1983, 42) has rightly argued that in Bolívar’s pronouncements, terms such as *patria*, *nation*, *state*, and *republic* were almost interchangeable. He himself rarely drew distinctions between such concepts. Thus, “aside from its semiautomatic acceptance of the inescapable criteria of birth and geography, Bolivarian nationalism cannot easily be viewed as a narrow or exclusive conception[;] it was not tied to closely defined ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or religious moorings.” Certainly, the ultimate criterion of nationality expressed by Bolívar was political in nature. Nationality “was open to all who accepted certain political principles.”²¹ As Collier (1983, 43) notes:

The absence of a genuine ethnic or cultural dimension in Bolivarian nationalism is perhaps worth underlining. As we have seen, Bolívar was well aware of the ethnic mixture that underlay Spanish America, and even suggested, in his Angostura speech, that a continuing dose of miscegenation was desirable for the future: “our fathers [are] different in their origin and blood...and their skins differ visible ... the blood of our citizens varies; let us mix it in order to unite it.” Yet there is no suggestion, in this hint of a future *raza cósmica*, that race of itself is a necessary badge of national

²⁰ “El origen mas impuro es el de nuestro ser: todo lo que nos ha precedido esta envuelto con el negro manto del crimen. Nosotros somos el compuesto abominable de esos tigres cazadores que vinieron a la América a derramarle su sangre y a encastar con las victimas antes de sacrificarlas, para mezclar después los frutos espúreos de estos enlaces con los frutos de esos esclavos arrancados del África. Con tales mezclas físicas; con tales elementos morales como se pueden fundar las leyes sobre los héroes y principios sobre los hombres?” Bolívar a Santander, 8 de julio de 1826. The ghost of a race war haunted Bolívar. To Santander he confessed, “We will have Guinea and more Guinea, and I am not joking, those who will escape with their white faces will be very lucky.” He added, “el dolor será que los ideólogos, como los más viles y más cobardes, serán los últimos que perezcan: acostumbrados al yugo, lo llevarán fácilmente hasta de sus propios esclavos” (1391).

²¹ “For a man of honor there can be only one *patria* –and that is where citizen’s rights are protected and the sacred character of humanity respected. Ours is the mother of all free and just men, without discrimination as to background or condition.” Bolívar (1947, 1:492–93) to Francisco Doña, August 27, 1820, cited in Collier (1983, 42–43).

identity. Ethnicity was in no sense the touchstone of nationality; other factors, especially political factors, counted too.²²

This does not mean, however, that Bolívar had no ideas on the racial and ethnic makeup of his society. Unlike nationalists such as Servando Teresa de Mier and others, he had two different and separate theories of politics and society. He did not believe in the necessity of a homogeneous nation in ethnic terms for a republic to exist, but he *did* have ideas on race and ethnicity. Bolívar did not simply “ignore” the human components of his patria. In other words, his political thought was not purely political.

Bolívar shared many of Mora’s ideas on the backward and miserable condition of the Indigenous peoples, but he did not develop a robust theory of race mixing as some early nineteenth-century liberals did in Mexico.²³ Moreover, he did not share Mora’s urge to melt the races as an issue of the “utmost importance” for nation building. Why? Part of the answer, I argue, is that miscegenation ran counter to one of Bolívar’s beliefs: natural ethnic and racial inequality. Like many other thinkers of the Enlightenment, Bolívar wished to create a polity of free and equal *citizens*. Legal and political equality was not only possible, but desirable.

However, race mixing was eugenics, *not* a political or legal issue. In fact, to consider race and race relations political was part of the rejected Spanish tradition. Bolívar believed in social inequality as strongly as he believed in *civil and political* equality. What were his ideas regarding the natural inequality of human beings?

In a well-known letter to Santander, dated in Lima on April 7, 1825, Bolívar reflected in turn on a letter he had received from Admiral José Padilla: “Legal equality is not enough for the spirit of the people, as they want absolute equality, in the public and the domestic areas alike; and next they will want *pardocracia*, which is their natural and unique propensity,

²² Likewise, Bolívar wrote in 1822, “I look at America as a chrysalis. There will be a transformation in the physical life of her inhabitants: finally, there will arise a new race out of all the old races, which will produce a homogeneous people.” Cited in Salcedo-Bastardo (1977, 101). The source of this quote is Fortoul, (1942, 674).

²³ Bolívar wrote to Santander from Cuzco: “Los pobres indígenas se hallan en un estado de abatimiento verdaderamente lamentable.” However, in 1824 he complained to Santander of the Peruvians in these terms: “los venezolanos son unos santos en comparación de esos malvados, y los quiteños y los peruanos son la misma cosa: viciosos hasta la infamia y bajos hasta el extremo. Los blancos tienen el carácter de los indios, y los indios son todos truchimanes, todos ladrones, todos embusteros, todos falsos, sin ningún principio moral que los guíe.” Bolívar (1988, 197) to Santander, Pativilca, January 9, 1824.

in order to then exterminate the privileged class.”²⁴ Three years later Bolívar had Padilla, who was a *pardo*, or mixed-blood, executed for allegedly stirring a race war in Colombia. According to Aline Helg (2003, 459), on March 2, 1828, Padilla rallied some officers of African descent and told them that if the Ocaña Convention were to adopt Bolívar’s projected constitution “they would kick us” for being *pardos*. Helg (2003, 462) writes, “The tragic conclusion of the life of José Padilla illustrates again the double standard that guided the Liberator. From 1826 to 1828, Bolívar pardoned and negotiated with the white *llanero* José Antonio Páez, despite the fact that the latter headed a full-fledged rebellion of Venezuela against the government in Bogotá, but he executed the *pardo* Padilla for a three-day bloodless coup in Cartagena.”²⁵ In a similar fashion several years before, Bolívar had punished General Manuel Piar, accusing him of “proclaiming the odious principles of the war of colors to destroy equality.” According to Bolívar (1939, 166), “All that was wicked, all barbarous, all of what was odious has been abolished and in its place we have absolute equality even in the domestic customs.”²⁶

Colors by Numbers

Bolívar had an aristocratic perspective of society. This vision was fully compatible with the principles of legal equality he embraced. He believed that the different races that made Colombia could intermix but that in the

²⁴ The term *pardocracia* meant for Bolívar mob rule with a racial undertone. Bolívar (1947, 1:1076) to Santander, Lima April 7, 1825. “La igualdad legal no es bastante por el espíritu que tiene el pueblo, que quiere que haya igualdad absoluta, tanto en lo público como en lo doméstico; y después querrá la *pardocracia*, que es la inclinación natural y única, para exterminio después de la clase privilegiada. Esto requiere, digo, grandes medidas, que no me cansaré de recomendar.”

²⁵ Helg (2003, 467) adds, “Padilla, despite Bolívar’s assertion that he was ‘the most important man of Colombia,’ could not transcend the limits imposed upon him by his race and class. Because he had often boasted of his *pardo* identity and his determination to defend his *pardo* class, he had exposed himself to accusations of *pardocracia* and of envisaging a revolution on the Haitian model in the Caribbean region.”

²⁶ August 5, 1817. “Qué se ha reservado para sí la nobleza, el clero, la milicia. ¡Nada, nada, nada! Todo lo han renunciado a favor de la humanidad, de la naturaleza, y de la justicia, que clamaban por la restauración de los sagrados derechos del hombre. Todo lo inicuo, todo lo bárbaro, todo lo odioso se ha abolido y en su lugar tenemos la igualdad absoluta hasta en las costumbres domésticas. La libertad de los esclavos que antes formaban una propiedad de los mismos ciudadanos.”

end racial diversity did not pose a threat to national unity. Why? We can gather some clues in a revealing letter Bolívar wrote to the editor of the *Royal Gazette* of Kingston in 1815, around the time he penned his famous *Letter from Jamaica*. Bolívar (1947, 1:179) believed that a particular equilibrium existed between numbers and qualities among the different racial groups that inhabited Spanish America: “Most of the European and American politicians that have reflected on the independence of the New World have felt that the most significant obstacle to obtain it is the difference among the castes that compose the population of this immense country. I dare to examine this matter by following different rules, deduced from positive knowledge and from the experience that our revolution has provided us.”²⁷ Bolívar acknowledged that whites were a minority of the population, but the white population possessed “intellectual qualities” that compensated for this. Moreover, both the moral character and the physical circumstances of the land favored the “union and harmony amongst all the inhabitants, in spite of the numerical disproportion between one color and the other.” A contributing factor to this state of affairs was inherited ethnic deference, a legacy from colonization times: “The first Spaniards in America were seen as superior mortals by the Indians. Such an idea persisted, due to superstition, the fear of force, superiority in fortune, the exercise of authority, the *culture of the spirit* and to many happy accidents. They [Indians] have never been able to see the whites without great veneration, as beings favored by heaven” (Bolívar 1947, 1:179).²⁸ Note here that oddly enough the Spanish legacy is viewed in a positive light. Even superstition could be useful. Social deference was not only compatible with legal equality, but perhaps even necessary to sustain a diverse social order, especially a numerically imbalanced one.

About the legacy of slavery, Bolívar (1947, 1:179) asserted that the Spaniards treated their slaves as “partners in indolence.” The Spanish colonist “does not oppress his domestic servant with excessive work: he

²⁷ “Los más de los políticos europeos y americanos que han previsto la independencia del Nuevo-Mundo, han presentado que la mayor dificultad para obtenerla consiste en la diferencia de las castas que componen la población de este inmenso país.”

²⁸ “Observemos que al presentarse los españoles en el Nuevo Mundo, los indios los consideraron como una especie de mortales superiores a los hombres, idea que no ha sido enteramente borrada, habiéndose mantenido por los prestigios de la superstición, por el temor de la fuerza, la preponderancia de la fortuna, el ejercicio de la autoridad, la cultura del espíritu, y cuantos accidentes pueden producir ventajas. Jamás han podido ver a los blancos, sino a través de una grande veneración como seres favorecidos del cielo” (my emphasis).

treats him as a partner: he educates him in the principles of morality and humanity that the religion of Jesus Christ prescribes.” The proverbial apathy of the Spanish race worked in favor of slaves. As the “sweetness” of the Spaniard is “unlimited,” he “exerts it fully with the benevolence that familiarity inspires. He is not goaded by greed nor by necessity that produce a ferocious character and a rigidity of principles that are so contrary to humanity.”²⁹ It took little to satisfy the “needs and passions” of South Americans. Fertile lands and precious metals made life easy for them. According to Bolívar (1947, 1:179), the abundance and ease of existence favored individual independence: “Since there is a sort of individual independence in these immense countries it is not likely that the factions of diverse races will form in such a way that one of them is able to overwhelm the others. The same extension, the same abundance, the diversity of colors, provides some neutrality to the pretensions and almost nullifies them.”³⁰ However, the causal logic between individual independence and race equilibrium is not fully spelled out in Bolívar’s argument. Was it that members of racial groups were first and foremost individuals, suspicious of warmongering by ethnic entrepreneurs? What exactly tempered the desire of racial domination? Did abundance prevent conflict over scarce resources? Did racial diversity pose significant collective action problems? One thing is clear: Bolívar dealt with these issues as a matter of preserving social order, not as a means of forging a people or a nationality.

Indians constituted the majority of the population in many countries, but Bolívar (1947, 1:179) thought that Indigenous peoples had a peaceful character. The Indian “only desires repose and solitude: he does not even aspire to lead his own tribe, much less to dominate those of others: happily, even if their number exceeds that of all other inhabitants taken together, this species of men is the one that demands dominance the

²⁹ “El colono español no oprime a su doméstico con trabajos excesivos: lo trata como a un compañero; lo educa en los principios de moral y de humanidad que prescribe la religión de Jesús. Como su dulzura es ilimitada, la ejerce en toda su extensión con aquella benevolencia que inspira una comunicación familiar. Él no está agujoneado por los estímulos de la avaricia, ni por los de la necesidad, que producen la ferocidad de carácter, y la rigidez de principios tan contrarios a la humanidad.”

³⁰ “...habiendo una especie de independencia individual en estos inmensos países, no es probable que las facciones de razas diversas, lleguen a constituirse de tal modo que una de ellas logre anonadar a las otras. La misma extensión, la misma abundancia, la misma variedad de colores, da cierta neutralidad a las pretensiones, que vienen a hacerse casi nulas.”

least.”³¹ Indians were a barrier or buffer that contained other groups within the population. “The Indian is everyone’s friend because laws had not placed him in an unequal situation.” Indians were not prevented by the laws to climb the social ladder. They could obtain fortune and honor by normal means. For Bolívar (1947, 1:179-80), “normal means” meant the acquisition of wisdom and the providing of “services.” However, they were unwilling to acquire “wisdom” and to provide “services.”³² As a consequence of the character of whites and Indians, “we can count on the sweetness of more than half of the population, since whites and Indians make three fifths of the total population and if we add the *mestizos* who have blood of both, then the proportion grows and the fear of the colors is diminished as a consequence” (Bolívar 1947, 1:180).³³

Bolívar (1947, 1:180) then turned to African slaves. The African slave in Spanish America, he noted, “vegetates in oblivion on haciendas enjoying, so to speak, his inaction, his masters’ state and a great part of the goods of freedom, and since religion has persuaded him that to serve is a sacred duty, he was born and exists in domestic dependence, he considers himself in his natural state, as a member of his master’s family, whom he loves and respects.”³⁴ Bolívar knew that Spanish authorities had recruited slaves to fight insurgents. However, he contended that even when “excited by the most seductive incentives,” the Spanish American slave had not turned against his master. The Spaniards had to resort to threats of

³¹ “El indio es de un carácter tan apacible, que sólo desea el reposo y la soledad: no aspira ni aun a acaudillar su tribu, mucho menos a dominar las extrañas: felizmente esta especie de hombres es la que menos reclama la preponderancia; aunque su número exceda a la suma de los otros habitantes.”

³² “El indio es el amigo de todos, porque las leyes no lo habían desigualado, y porque para obtener todas las mismas dignidades de fortuna y de honor que conceden los gobiernos, no han menester de recurrir a otros medios que a los servicios y al saber; aspiraciones que ellos odian más de lo que pueden desear las gracias.”

³³ “Así, pues, parece que debemos contar con la dulzura de mucho más de la mitad de la población, puesto que los indios y los blancos componen los tres quintos de la población total, y si añadimos los mestizos que participan de la sangre de ambos, el aumento se hace más sensible y el temor de los colores se disminuye, por consecuencia.”

³⁴ “El esclavo en la América española vegeta abandonado en las haciendas, gozando, por decirlo así, de su inacción, de la hacienda de su señor y de una gran parte de los bienes de la libertad; y como la religión le ha persuadido que es un deber sagrado servir, ha nacido y existido en esta dependencia doméstica, se considera en su estado natural, como un miembro de la familia de su amo, a quien ama y respeta.”

violence to compel the slaves to serve in their armies. Yet those same slaves “returned to the party of the independents” even when the insurgents had not offered them absolute freedom as the Spanish had done.

Bolívar’s (1947, 1:181) reflections on the racial makeup of Spanish American society led him to believe in the possibilities of racial harmony. “We are authorized,” he boasted, “to believe that all children of Spanish America, of every color and condition, profess among themselves a reciprocal fraternal affection, which no plot can alter.” He countered the argument that civil wars had proven him wrong by arguing that civil strife in America had never been the result of caste conflict but of political differences and personal ambition as in other nations. The only “color” that had been proscribed in America was the European Spanish, “who is universally and deservedly detested.” Peaceful coexistence was a reality: “Up to this day we observe the most perfect harmony among those who have been born on this soil.” Bolívar attempted to prove that racial heterogeneity was not an insurmountable obstacle. Racial diversity meant in practice that “civilized” people were a minority in these lands. How can serfs build a free republic? However, he contended that even if the enlightened part of the population (the whites) was a minority, this did not preclude self-government and liberty. Since the Spanish American population was “balanced,” either by number, by “circumstances,” or by the “irresistible sway of the spirit,” why was it not feasible to establish new governments in that part of the world?³⁵ Were there not in Athens four times as many slaves as citizens? Bolívar asserted that in all of the East, in all of Africa, and in parts of Europe, the number of free men was inferior to that of serfs.

Bolívar’s idea of a qualitative equilibrium bears some similarity to the idea of a mixed constitution but without the institutional framework that enabled the latter to preserve class balance in Rome. In the Liberator’s case, equilibrium was the result of a balancing act of raw numbers and mores. Although dismissing the importance of majorities, Bolívar never lost sight of the demographic dimension. White and mestizo men had died in the wars of independence. This created an imbalance among racial groups, since Black men had not died in the same proportions.

The issue of the abolition of slavery in early republican South America is a complex one, but here I am only interested in the role it played in Bolívar’s political thought.³⁶ Already in his 1816 abolition decree, Bolívar

³⁵ “Balanceada como está la población americana, ya por el número y por la circunstancias, ya, en fin, por el irresistible imperio del espíritu, ¿por qué razón no se han de establecer nuevos gobiernos en esta mitad del mundo?”

³⁶ On the abolition of slavery in Colombia, see Bierck (1953).

(1939, 148-49) proclaimed the “absolute liberty of the slaves who have moaned under the Spanish yoke during the last three centuries,” yet three paragraphs later he conditioned manumission to active military service: “the new citizen who refuses to take arms in order to carry out the sacred duty of defending his liberty, will remain in servitude as will his offspring under fourteen years of age, his woman, and his aged parents.”³⁷

Bolívar had two very different reasons to free slaves. The first was purely theoretical and was inspired by Montesquieu; the other was practical: the numerical reduction of Black men. By recruiting them into the army, he achieved two aims: justification of their freedom in the eyes of their former masters and sheer mortality. In 1820 Bolívar (1921, 85) chided Santander for having confused “the liberty of the slaves with the levy [conscription] of slaves for active service.”³⁸ He added, “The political and military reasons that I have to order the levy of slaves are very obvious. We need tough and strong men, who are used to inclemency and fatigue, men who embrace with enthusiasm the cause and the career, men that identify their own cause with the public cause and to whom life is little more than death” (Bolívar 1921, 87).³⁹

Political reasons, Bolívar believed, were even more powerful. He cited Montesquieu’s (1977, Book 15, chap. 12) reflections on “the danger of a large number of slaves”:

In moderate governments, it is a point of the highest importance that there should not be a great number of slaves. The political liberty of those states adds to the value of civil liberty; and he who is deprived of the latter is also bereft of the former. He sees the happiness of a society of which he is not quite a member; he sees the security of others, fenced by laws, himself without any protection.... Nothing more assimilates a man to a beast than living among freemen, himself a slave. Such people as these are natural enemies of the society; and their number must be dangerous. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that moderate governments have been so frequently disturbed by the revolts of slaves; and that this so seldom happens in despotic states.

³⁷ Proclamation of June 2, 1816.

³⁸ April 18, 1820.

³⁹ “Las razones militares y políticas que he tenido para ordenar la leva de esclavos son muy obvias. Necesitamos de hombre robustos y fuertes, acostumbrados a la inclemencia y a las fatigas; de hombres que abracen la causa y la carrera con entusiasmo; de hombres que vean identificada su causa con la causa pública y en quienes el valor de la muerte sea poco menos que el de su vida.”