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THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF MEXICO'S FIRST BLACK INDIAN PRESIDENT, VICENTE GUERRERO

By
Theodore G. Vincent*

This article surveys the contributions to the political foundations of Mexico by the general and president Vicente Guerrero, 1781-1831. Guerrero was of African, Indian, and Spanish heritage, and he was raised in a colonial setting in which anyone African in Mexico was subjected by the Spaniards to special legal disadvantages, including the stipulation that only Africans could be made slaves. Guerrero's life shows a consistent struggle to achieve equal rights for Afro-Mexicans, and also for those on the Indigenous side of his family.

Guerrero is called "the consumator of independence" for his role as commander in chief of the Mexican army during the last years of the 1810-1821 war with Spain; and he is called the Mexican "Abraham Lincoln" for issuing his country's presidential slavery abolition proclamation. He is also credited with creating a grass roots-oriented political tradition. A century after Guerrero's 1810 struggle for independence, there came the 1910 Mexican social revolution associated with Emiliano Zapata, for which Guerrero was the posthumous leader emeritus; according to historian Rafael Ramos Pedrueza, who declares in his book, *Vicente Guerrero: Precursor del Socialismo*, that Guerrero was "the brother of the workers — of the thought and the action of that fertile laboring class . . . (for whom) his sturdy *Sureño* machete had been flashed many a time." Guerrero was at the root of the 1910 struggle because "he was the precursor of the agrarianism that redistributes the land to the enslaved peasant." Guerrero would also appear to have a link with the Zapatista rebels of the 1990s in Chiapas, who claim to struggle for the goals illuminated in 1910.¹

For his accomplishments Guerrero has a state in his name, one of only four citizens so honored in Mexico. And yet biographical study of Guerrero is scant. In this article we will survey his contributions in two parts; one, the specific life and times of Guerrero, and then the expression of his ideas carried forward by his voluminously published literary grandson Vicente Riva Palacio after Guerrero's tragic assassination in 1831.

Guerrero's African root appears to have come mostly from the future president's father Pedro, who was in the almost entirely Afro-Mexican profession of mule driver. Vicente's mother Guadalupe was known for her light complexion. Vicente's political career appears to have started with his baptism. He was born in a period of quiet resistance to Spain's caste system: its occupational discriminations and racially different tax rates, military obligations, degrees of punishment for criminal offenses, etc. Acts

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of resistance to caste included poor record keeping. For instance, the priest of Guerrero's town of Tixtla broke caste rules and omitted racial designations on baptism certificates during the year of Vicente's birth. A year after Vicente's birth Father Saucedo Caballero was replaced in Tixtla by a priest who reinstated the required racial labeling on new baby records. In addition to priests who failed to record race, there was resistance against the Spanish racial census takers in this period. In the 1791-1793 census, for instance, there were villages where Indigenous, Blacks and mixes thereof banded together to intimidate the census taker into declaring everyone "Spanish," thus avoiding taxes, military duty, etc. Some villagers hid when the head counter arrived, as reflected in the census' remarkably high number of Afro-Mexican "widows."²

Vicente's father Pedro Guerrero was an intense opponent of slavery. One of the customers on Pedro's mule runs was Gabriel Yermo, who owned one of the biggest slave plantations in Mexico. In 1790 Yermo celebrated the birth of his first child by freeing all of his more than 400 slaves. Pedro Guerrero was elated. Apparently, he made such a fuss over the matter that some early biographers of President Guerrero reported that Yermo had freed Pedro. Newer evidence shows Pedro was born free. However, there was at least one family member in slavery as late as 1723, date of a slave manumission paper in the Vicente Guerrero archives. The admiration of Pedro Guerrero for the Spaniard Yermo was enhanced when Yermo freed an additional 200 slaves on a second plantation Yermo had purchased.³

During the 1810-1821 Mexican war for independence Pedro Guerrero supported the Spanish side, believing that Yermo had showed that racial progress could come without revolt. Six weeks into the 1810 war Pedro and Vicente Guerrero had a heated political argument in the family mule corral. Vicente had packed his bags and Pedro assumed his only son was heading to join the revolution. Vicente claimed he only wanted to visit his out-of-wedlock daughter Natividad on her tenth birthday. Pedro didn't believe it and disowned his only son, declaring that no family member should ever again talk with Vicente.⁴

At Natividad's village of San Jerónimo on the Acapulco coast Vicente Guerrero met a small army of Mexican revolutionaries under General José Mariá Morelos y Pavón, the African, Native Mexican and Spanish descended priest who had earlier been a mule driver in Guerrero's region. Morelos assigned the 27 year old Guerrero to serve under officer Hermenegildo Galeana, descendant of an AWOL sailor on a British pirate ship who settled on the coast northwest of Acapulco where he was said to have "stood out brightly" among the "blacks and mulattos" who comprised the vast majority of the population on the coastal strip. According to the Spanish census, the people of San Jerónimo were virtually all "pardo," census term for a person of African descent. Actually, a local historian records that the village was one of many on the coast where the "Africans" were almost all Asians who had been brought to Acapulco on the galleons the Spaniards sent from Manila. The Asians were declared "African" because the Spaniards wanted more slaves, and by law only Africans could be slaves. Most of the Asian slaves were dark skinned, having been taken from their homes in Borneo, New Guinea, Malaysia, and southern islands in the Philippines, such as the island of Negros; so named because the Negritos lived there.⁵

Vicente Guerrero lost contact with Natividad and her mother María Nievas during the independence war. In 1818 he married Guadalupe Hernández. At that time the two

already had a daughter Dolores, the only known surviving child for Vicente. The war that cost him contact with Natividad took the lives of over a million people. Spaniards burned villages and herded inhabitants into what we call in modern times "strategic hamlets." The revolutionists purposely destroyed the mines and sugar processing machinery in hope of driving out the Spaniards. To dissuade the rebels, the Spaniards dotted the roadsides with crucified and impaled bodies of captured insurgents.⁶

The independence struggle in Mexico was more intense than in other Latin American countries, with the exception of Haiti. For both Mexico and Haiti independence was also a social revolution. The main historian of Afro-Mexico, Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, writes in his *La Población Negra de México* that the "one transcendent" feature of the "revolution for independence" was the shift from "caste to class."⁷ Guerrero played a crucial role in the abolition of caste at independence in 1821, and three months into his presidency in 1829 he issued his country's slavery abolition decree. The basic philosophy of Guerrero, followed in updated form by generations of his descendants, was that political democracy was essential, and that to achieve it Mexico needed to militantly champion racial equality.

Guerrero explained in 1821 that he and others on the freedom side had been eager to make peace with Spain in 1812, and on terms that would have left Mexico a part of the Spanish Empire. But that year a racist clause was voted into a new Spanish constitution passed in Madrid. The constitution was a divide and conquer document that offered political rights and an end to caste for all of Spain's many colonized Indigenous, Indigenous-white mixed races and whites, while retaining old caste law for anyone with an African root (which included the Asian "pardos" as well). Guerrero noted that people in the colonies with at least some African in their blood far outnumbered those with European, and perhaps even Indigenous heritage. He declared that the constitutional congress denial of rights "to the greater part of the population . . . was horrifying conduct, so contrary to all rights natural, divine and of society." Because of the racist clause, he wrote, Mexico had no choice but to fight on from 1812 to complete independence in 1821.⁸

Although it was Native Mexicans rather than Africans who were the majority in the colony of Mexico, Africans were numerous. They were an officially 10.2% of the population, and Aguirre Beltrán estimated that at least 30% of the Mexican people had African heritage in 1810. Some "passed" as whites or "mestizos." A great many more were Black Indians, the descendants of slaves who ran away to Indian villages, and the offspring of African slaves who desired Native women because there were few Black women imported, and because a loophole in Spanish law said that any child born of a slave and an Indian woman took the mother's free status. Flight, rebellions and the loophole helped to reduce the number of slaves to around 15,000 of the 634,461 Afro-Mexicans in 1810 (98% were mixed race).⁹

An important factor in the Black Indian Guerrero's life was his positive relations with Native Mexicans. He was raised in the traditionally all Indigenous barrio of Tlaltelulco. There he learned Native languages. His barrio was in the mountain town of Tixtla, located in the center of the present state that carries his name. Guerrero envisioned a future Mexico built on majority rule by those of his African and his Indigenous roots. While he was but one among many Afro-Mexicans with an officer's rank in the independence army, he was one of the few with a special closeness to the In-

Indigenous people. One of the others was Morelos (who, like Guerrero, has a state in his name). Morelos was the ideological mentor to Guerrero; and was Generalissimo of the struggle until his capture and execution in December 1815. Morelos' close tie to the Indigenous world was through María Almonte, the pure-Indian mother of the priest's four children.¹⁰

Guerrero has no recorded speech prior to 1815. Until around that time he was used primarily to recruit Native Mexicans into the war cause. Indigenous language discourse did not get in print. Winning over Nativos was not easy. Many had long standing treaties of peace with the Spaniards. Village revolts between 1780 and 1810 resulted in many new peace pacts, historian William B. Taylor shows in his study of rural life in the period.¹¹ In the 1810 war the Mexican side needed Indigenous people because Mexican whites deserted the revolutionary ranks as the going became difficult. The war effort became a struggle against Spain led disproportionately by Afro-Mexicans. This is apparent in the officers under Guerrero during the three tough 1818-1820 years of the war. The officers in this period for whom a city or county is named are: the Afro-Mexicans Guerrero, Juan Alvarez, Gordiano Guzmán, and Francisco Atiliano Santamaria; the Afro-Asians Isidoro Montesdeoca and Luis Pinzón; the Indigenous Antonia Nava and Mariano Olarte; the mestizo Guadalupe Victoria; and the so-called white, Nicolas Catalán, who appears from census records to have had people of color in his family.¹²

When Guerrero finally got into print, it was a transcript of a speech given in the basically Indigenous region of Tlapa in the state of Guerrero. He called upon the Nativos to think of "citizenship" in the large nation. He urged that they look beyond their traditional village councils and form larger ones "not for my liberty, nor for that of your own benefit, nor that of other private interests, but instead for that great general Liberty . . . and of the common benefits that bring honor to this very noble pueblo." The word "pueblo" connotes in Spanish both "a village" and "the people" in the sense of an entire nation's people. In this speech Guerrero gave "pueblo" both meanings, which provided a communal definition to "citizenship," rather than the European individualistic definition. That the future president envisioned in 1815 a communally organized people, such as the Tlapa Indigenous population, using the power of "citizenship" was something of an invitation to socialism before socialism had been invented.¹³

A final attempt by the rulers at racial divide and conquer in Mexico was made during the negotiations early in 1821 over a plan to bring peace and independence. Commander-in-chief Guerrero was in negotiations with the General for Spain, Agustín Iturbide, who was an upper class White Mexican. A collapsed economy and political changes in Spain had made the elite toy with the idea of independence; moreover, Iturbide had been beaten in a two month series of battles by the soldiers of Guerrero. Iturbide offered to switch sides and join with Guerrero if certain "guarantees" could be offered to the rich and powerful in an independent Mexico. Part of the protection sought was that political rights would be granted to Indigenous and Indio-whites, but not to Blacks or mulattos. Guerrero angrily declared that he could not be signature to any agreement that did not include full rights for "all" Mexicans. Subsequently, the Plan of Iguala, agreed to by Iturbide and Guerrero, included Clause #12, "All inhabitants . . . without distinction of their European, African or Indian origins are citizens

. . . with full freedoms to pursue their livelihoods according to their merits and virtues.”¹⁴

Six months after the February 24, 1821 issuing of the Plan of Iguala Mexico was free. Thousands of conscripted Mexicans on the Spanish side had switched to the freedom cause and thus ensured victory. Law #279 of the first congress of the new nation was a version of the Iguala equality clause. In 1823 Guerrero declared that it was time to move beyond racial equality to equality of class, because it is now clear that “the way of the true freedom . . . (is) living with a knowledge that no one is above anyone else, that there is no title more honored than that of the citizen, and that applies be the person in the military, a worker, a government official, a cleric, a land owner, a laborer, a craftsman, (or) a writer, . . . because the sacred belief in equality has leveled us before the law.”¹⁵

During 1823-24 Guerrero served for a time on the three person Junta which ran the country until the election of the first president of Mexico, the mestizo Guadalupe Victoria. In Victoria’s term of office Guerrero played a large role in organizing what would be called a “People’s Party,” which was actually a political organization acting out of newly formed York Rite masonic lodges. The Party ran him for president in 1828. It was a contentious election because much was at stake. Throughout Mexico, peasants had created village and town councils elected without regard to race or economic status. An abundance of the councils had elected illiterate mayors, and many a council was composed of Indians who spoke no Spanish. It was a flowering of the democracy Guerrero had urged in Tlapa in 1815, and it would be severely curtailed in the year following Guerrero’s presidency.¹⁶

In his presidential inaugural address on April 1, 1829 Guerrero aggressively championed a village council movement, declaring that the interests of the people were best served by the closest political body that represented them. The day after his inauguration Guerrero addressed congress in untamed words that summed up his overall commitment to democracy.¹⁷

The administration is obliged to procure the widest possible benefits and apply them from the palace of the rich to the wooden shack of the humble laborer. If one can succeed in spreading the guarantees of the individual, if equality before the law destroys the efforts of power and of gold, if the highest title between us is that of citizen, if the rewards we bestow are exclusively for talent and virtue, we have a republic, and she will be conserved by the universal suffrage of a people solid, free and happy.

Guerrero’s vision of a democracy of all classes and races was not shared by either of the two political factions of the suit wearing “gentlemen” of the nation. These designated “liberal” and “conservative” politicians felt that it was anathema that Indigenous and Black villagers who could neither read nor write should elect their own councils. What Guerrero proposed in answer to the “liberals” and “conservatives” is called by historian Peter Guardino a political Third Way. It is one that flows throughout modern Mexican history. The Guerrero course flowed, for instance during the 1910 revolution. After the “liberal” Francisco Madero overthrew the “conservative” Porfirio Díaz, peasants under the Black Indian peasant Emiliano Zapata rose up against both. The Guerrero political ideology of peasant elected self-government at the local level surfaced again in 1994 in Chiapas in the revolt of the Indigenous rebels

who took the name The Ejercito Zapatista Liberacion Nacional. Much of the turmoil during the 1990s in Chiapas involved conflict between villagers who had elected their own councils, and federal government agents of narrowly selected rival councils.¹⁸

A critically important act by Guerrero was his September 16, 1829 slavery abolition decree. Although not initially enforced in Texas, its eventual enforcement there contributed to the 1836 slave owner led secession of Texas from Mexico. Guerrero did not live to fight the Texas slavers. Three months after abolishing slavery he was driven from Mexico City and forced to engage in a guerrilla war against a new government of reactionaries. Kidnapped by agents of the contesting government, Guerrero was executed in February 1831. His cause lived on, however, through family. Three months after the execution, Guerrero's daughter Dolores married Mariano Riva Palacio. Mariano had been head of the city council in Mexico City during Dolores' father's brief presidency. The young couple's first child, Vicente, was born October 16, 1832. It was a day of curfew and gunfire in the capital that was signaling the spread of a revolt by "moderates" that would overthrow the government that had orchestrated the killing of Guerrero.¹⁹

Guerrero's death in 1831 had been followed by a truce which left many of his lieutenants free. His politically active wife Guadalupe had earned the nickname "La Generala;" and around "La Generala," her daughter Dolores, and son-in-law Mariano Riva Palacio, there developed a social world of Guerreroistas. When in transit they knew they could rely on Dolores to keep track of their mail. The crowd that "La Generala," her daughter and son-in-law gathered included former presidential cabinet members for Guerrero, José María Bocanegra and Francisco Moctezuma (pure Indian), along with generals "covered with medals" who had fought for Guerrero, notably the Afro-Mexican general and future president Juan Alvarez. Known to the family as "Uncle Juan," Alvarez took under his wing a youthful campaign worker for Guerrero's 1828 election, Benito Juárez, the pure Indigenous Oaxacan who would become Mexico's most noted mid-nineteenth century militant. The Guerreroista political world can be traced today through the enormous correspondence archives of Guadalupe Hernández Guerrero, her son-in-law Mariano Riva Palacio's archives, and the correspondences of "Uncle Juan" Alvarez. These letter collections show that the Guerreroista crowd was rooted in the countryside. They were the Third Way in action. Opponents called them "the puro" political faction for pure liberal (a.k.a. they believed in true democracy that included all colors and races) as opposed to the liberals in the capital city who felt that Native Mexican and Black Mexican villagers were too ignorant to be permitted in political circles. The elitist liberals can be traced today in the enormous correspondences of the upper classes' leading "liberal" Valentin Gómez Farias. This crowd was centered in Mexico City.²⁰

Grandson of Guerrero, Vicente, once commented that he learned his politics as a boy, while nestled in "the soft lap" of his mother. He got his chance to intellectually express those politics in 1861 thanks to "the puro" president Benito Juárez. In 1861 Juárez told Vicente to clear out the massive archive of the Spanish Inquisition in Mexico and to publicize from those 38,000 little boxes of data the evidence of Spain's oppression and Mexico's resistance against it.²¹ This would be the start of an intellectual adventure in defining his nation. Vicente Riva Palacio would end up going far beyond

the Inquisition files to produce novels, short stories, essays, political tracts, and an enormous multi-volume history of Mexico.

Vicente Guerrero never had the time to create a large written record of his political beliefs; nor did he have the higher education that helped his grandson Vicente. But it seems safe to consider the grandson's work an extension of the basic outlook of grandfather in that grandson was raised in a household of Guerreroistas, lived for a time in grandfather's home town, and spent additional time in his youth on the ranches of ex-generals and political aides of the fallen president.²²

When Guerrero's grandson got the opportunity to go over the Inquisition records he made the most of it. Historian Díaz y de Ovando evaluated Riva Palacio's subsequent novels and short stories and concluded that among their "principal themes were the problems of the caste system, slavery, the adventurous rebellions of the Blacks and the Indios, and their punishments." Newspaper serializations of Riva Palacio's historical fiction were wildly popular. An editor in 1868 reassured readers that while Riva Palacio's current novel would end Friday, a new one would start Monday. The villains of the stories included the Spanish conquistadors, greedy landlords and the Inquisition, described as "intellectually mordant, and the enemy of racial and political tolerance." The heroes included molders of a new culture and fighters for respect for the people of Mexico.²³

Of the literally few thousand pages of writings by the grandson of the Black Indian Guerrero, it seems fitting that one of the first national heroes written about would be Gaspar Yanga, the leader of a 1570 slave revolt in Veracruz. A native of Gabon, Yanga created a maroon colony of nearly 500 people. In 1609 he evaded a Spanish army effort to defeat him and obtained a treaty for freedom and land for him and his people. Riva Palacio titled his Yanga account, *Los 33 Negros*, in memory of the 29 men and 4 women executed in Mexico City three years after Yanga got his treaty. Whites in the capital, on hair trigger nerves over rumors that Yanga was organizing a colony wide slaughter of whites, panicked and rounded up blacks after hearing noise created by a herd of pigs being driven through the streets at the midnight hour. "Thus was snuffed the smell of conspiracy in the year 1612," Riva Palacio wrote in conclusion. His Yanga story has remained in print through the years, the most recently seen edition was published in 1997.²⁴

Riva Palacio wove together the saga of the different ethnic groups. In one of his numerous still in print historical novels, *Martín Garatuza*, Riva Palacio links Cuauhtémoc, who led the Aztecs in the last stages of their fight for survival, with the plight of the Jewish Carvajal family a century later that is noted for its members who were burned alive at the stake for their religious beliefs. In 1525 the captured Cuauhtémoc had his feet slowly burned off in a torture intended to get him to reveal secrets. In Riva Palacio's novel, the Aztec martyr has a child by a Portuguese woman of Jewish faith who had converted, whom he calls Isabel de Carbajal. Their son Felipe creates a large family, and he lives long enough to see three young women members of this Aztec/Jewish alliance put to the stake because of their origins. Riva Palacio describes how their bodies twist, their eyes flash terror, and their teeth clatter as they burn while priests intone holy words.²⁵

The rich tapestry that makes the culture of Mexico is praised by Riva Palacio. The heroine of his novel *Clavario y Tabor: novela histórica y de costumbres* is Alejandra

of the Afro-Mexican Pacific region. She is "a slender and graceful *morena*; but her elegance was but that which is common to the women of these coasts: her eyes, big black and bright, veiled by large curled eyelashes . . . She would give a person the passionate love of a painter, or the fevered tubercular brain of a poet." Alejandra's white blouse with its colorful embroidery on the sleeves is described as "an invention of the fair sex to stoke the fire of love and desire." "The mulatta" Alejandra is also favored by her upright posture which allows her to carry a package or a pot on her head without balancing it with her hands, "which is the custom of all the women workers who live on the coast."²⁶

The white elite badgered Riva Palacio because of his roots. He was called a "chinaco," a phrase with many meanings including, a guerrilla fighter, a mixed race person of African ancestry, an Indian who had left the homeland, and among many insulting meanings, a bent twig, a robber, a rustic person of the fields, and a person of multiple personalities. The elite used the phrase as an insult to those with substantial African or Indigenous roots; of a politician with the latter roots, a society matron was said to have quipped, he may wear a suit "but he still smells like a chinaco."²⁷ Riva Palacio threw the phrase back in the bigots' faces. He joined the staff of the magazine *Chinaca*, edited by dark folks. Riva Palacio wrote that a Chinaco was to Mexico what the proud Gaucho was to Argentina. In a long poem, *El Chinaco: Romance Nacional*, Riva Palacio writes of a determined soldier in the fight against the French who occupied Mexico during the mid 1860s. The poem reads in part:²⁸

On the strong back
of a sturdy chestnut horse
that scarcely leaves a footprint
from his light trot,
at the break of day
on the road to Tehuacán
comes Márgaro Peñadura,
the *chinaco* most complete.
The wide brimmed sombrero
covers his *moreno* face
blending its color with his serape
our national flag . . .
He peers restlessly through the mist
and discovers "the little place"
in an instant the horseman
is at the house's door . . .
he raps upon the window,
at which there appears a face,
a *morena* who can
pass for that female beauty,
one of those all
remember as our ideal vision . . .

The *moreno* is noble, the *morena* is the feminine ideal. They are a dark skinned couple, Mexicans who do not look European, but who might look African.

The main work of Riva Palacio is the five volume history of his nation *México a través de los Siglos*. He collected historians, anthropologists and artists to help amass

the fat and tall study. He was the principal author of volume two and he directed and worked on all five. The study's comprehensiveness on issues of race make it something of a Mexican version of Gunnar Myrdal's massive *American Dilemma*. But whereas Myrdal's work about the U.S. is largely forgotten, Riva Palacio's lives on. Biographer José Ortiz Monasterio asks, "How is it possible that a luxurious book such as *México a través de los Siglos*, more than a hundred years old, is still selling in book stores and publisher promotions? What is the key to its success?" Primarily, it is that the volumes are pro-Mexico. The dramas of Yanga, Cuauhtémoc, the Carvajals, grandfather Guerrero and other heroes are brought to life in a manner that honors the nation's diversity. The degree to which colonial oppression created much to overcome is shown, and the writing suggests that Mexico will overcome. Riva Palacio's attitude brought him in conflict with the corporate slant in the Porfirio Díaz government; and after a term in prison, he spent his years before his death in 1896 "between diplomacy and exile" as Ambassador to Spain.²⁹

Vicente Guerrero was a political founding father of Mexico, and his grandson Vicente was a foundation builder for the nation's fierce cultural nationalism. Mexico is today the only nation in the hemisphere with a truly "national" culture. Cuban and Brazilian culture is really African. The culture of Peru, Ecuador and Guatemala is Indigenous. Cultural originality in the United States is African American. But Mexico has Mexico. And the people are intense about it. While in most cities of the world the millennium was ushered in with fireworks and jumping up and down, when the magic moment came in Mexico City, 300,000 people in the Zocalo square launched into a folksong sing-a-long to the accompaniment of 250 mariachis.

A son of Vicente Riva Palacio, Federico, became a Congressman. And numerous descendants of Vicente's brothers show up in twentieth century political and intellectual life. Carlos Riva Palacio Carrillo, for instance, was a governor, senator, presidential cabinet member and an important aide in the electoral campaign in 1934 of president Lázaro Cárdenas (the fourth "Black Indian" president — following Guerrero, Alvarez and Morelos' son Juan Almonte). Cárdenas is best known for two actions: he nationalized oil, and he redistributed massive amounts of land to the peasantry. The latter action addressed conflicts over lands of Indigenous and Afro-Mexican poor that dated back to independence — and to Guerrero. In the years following the Cárdenas presidency the descendants of Guerrero included congresspersons, two governors, an economist, two ecologists and Carlos Riva Palacio Valasco, who rose in trade union ranks to become Secretary General of the national government workers labor federation, the CTN.³⁰

Emerging into the limelight in the 1990s was Raymundo Riva Palacio, a crusading journalist. Raymundo was instrumental in making three Mexico City dailies, *El Financiero*, *La Reforma* and *Milenio* into popular anti-establishment papers. Raymundo previously was as a foreign correspondent, and in 1987 he published a book of his reports from Central America that condemned the U.S. C.I.A. involvement with the Contras fighting the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. In appearance, Raymundo is merely a brown Mexican without specific African features, but he maintains the fire of the old "Black President." Raymundo has said that he is proud to be a descendant of Guerrero.³¹

Also expressing an understandable pride in his ancestry is the ex-senator and governor Antonio Riva Palacio López. Reminiscing about the long family line Antonio pointed out that the activists of the family seemed somehow to always get too involved in political conflict to elevate the family into the upper class. He recalls his father losing his hacienda in the last years of the dictatorial presidency of Díaz and being reduced to being a grain salesman in a valley with little grain to sell. Antonio married the daughter of one of the Chinese immigrants brought to Chiapas during the 1920s when a combination of Chinese and black work gangs built roads and railroad lines in that impoverished and then undeveloped state.³²

In a speech to the Mexican Senate delivered 176 years after the start of the 1810 war, Antonio Riva Palacio López summed up his ancestor Guerrero's dream for Mexico. Antonio declared, "Social justice and equality are the fundamental postulates of the society we seek to build; they are the constant in our battles, and the principal motivation for our popular movements. They are at one and the same time, the cause and the goal of all our struggles for redemption, the proposal and the means of the development we strive for and need."³³

In conclusion, it can be said that the Black Indian mule driver Vicente Guerrero was instrumental in establishing the politically radical tradition of Mexico. He showed his radicalism in abolishing slavery, and in arguing for democracy at a village level a century before Emiliano Zapata waged revolution for peasant rights, and nearly two centuries before the Zapatistas of Sub-Comandante Marcos and associates launched a similar struggle in the mountain jungles of Chiapas. Guerrero previewed the insistence of Emiliano Zapata and the Zapatistas of Chiapas that the Indigenous majority be brought into the body politic. In terms of Mexican cultural nationalism: Guerrero's grandson Vicente Riva Palacio is probably the single most important figure in terms of combined literary and historical work produced. Although grandson never knew his grandfather, the household where young Riva Palacio was raised was the center of organizing and political discourse on the part of Vicente Guerrero's former political associates, not the least of whom was the president's wife Guadalupe "La Generala" Hernández Guerrero. Certainly, Vicente Guerrero deserves deeper study than he has received.

NOTES

¹ Rafael Ramos Pedrueza. *Rusia soviét y Mexico revolucionario. Vicente Guerrero, precursor del socialismo*. Mexico: SEP 1922. p40-41.

² Microfilm *International Genealogical Index* (IGI) Church of Latter Day Saints, Tixtla baptisms; and see Herminio Chávez Guerrero. *Vicente Guerrero: El Consumador* (Cultura, Ciencia y Política, Mexico 1971) p18-19; on Afro-Mexican muleteers see Salvador Ortiz Vilades, *La Arrieria en México: Estudio Folclórico, Costumbrista e Histórica* (Botas, Mexico 1941) p117; troubles of census takers, Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *La Población Negro de México: Estudio Etnohistorico* (Universidad Veracruzana, Xalapa 1992, from 1946, 1972) p272-274.

³ Freedom paper for, "Alejo López Cottilla Caballero" 21 January 1723, in Vicente Guerrero archives, Benson Library, University Texas; mistake on Pedro and Vicente being slaves made by the French, *Larousse Universal* encyclopedia, *Biographie Universelle*, in Joel A. Rogers, "The Negro who Freed Mexico" *Negro World* 4 January 1930; Joel A. Rogers, *Sex and Race: A History of White, Negro, and Indian Miscegenation in the Two Americas* (Helga Rogers, New York 1942, 2 Vol.) Vol. 2 p186; IGI, baptisms, Tixtla, show Pedro born free.

⁴ Chávez Guerrero, *Guerrero*, *op.cit.* p28-30.

⁵ Some historians deny Morelos had black roots. At least eleven say he did have them, including: Lucas Alamán, *Historia de Méjico* (Lara, Mexico, 1849-52 5 vol.) vol.2 p314-15; Ubaldo Vargas Martínez, *Morelos: Siervo de la Nación* (Mexico, 1977) p8-9; Rubén Hermensdorf, *Morelos, hombre fundamental de México* (Aeromexico-Grijalbo, Mexico 1985) p44-46; Aguirre Beltrán *La Población Negra*, *op. cit.* p154-66, 270, and on Asians p145-148; For Galeana see, Carlos Alvear Acevedo, *Geleana* (Jus, Mexico 1958) p9-14; on village of Natividad, Luis Hernández Lluch, *Monografía de San Jerónimo* (Acapulco, 1993) p11-13; census in *Archivo General Nacional* (AGN) Ramos Padrones 1791, Acapulco, Bancroft Library. Survey of the evidence on Morelos's roots in Theodore G. Vincent, *The Legacy of Guerrero: Mexico's First Black Indian President* (Tallahassee, Florida 2001) p78-81.

⁶ On war strategies see Christon I. Archer. *The army in Bourbon Mexico, 1750-1810*. University of New Mexico 1977); "Insurrection - Reaction - Revolution - Fragmentation: Reconstructing the choreography of Meltdown in New Spain during the Independence Era" *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicano* Winter 1994; "Where Did All the Royalists Go? New Light on the Military Collapse of New Spain, 1810-1822" in Jaime O. Rodríguez, *The Mexican and Mexican American Experience in the 19th Century* (Tempe, Arizona: 1989).

⁷ Aguirre Beltrán *La Población Negra*, p279.

⁸ Vicente Riva Palacio, *México a través de los Siglos* (Balleca, Mexico, and Espasa, Barcelona 1887-89, 5 vols) vol.3 p672-673.

⁹ Aguirre Beltrán *La Población Negra* p234; 30% of population estimate made in interview with Aguirre Beltrán, 1994. An unpublished 1998-1999 study by the "Latino Bone Marrow Donor Program" found in two northern Mexican cities that more than 2/3 of people tested had at least 1/32 African heritage. On number of slaves in 1810: Estimates of only 10,000 seen in some histories appear low from evidence in baptism and census records.

¹⁰ Chávez Guerrero *Guerrero* p18-20; Ubaldo Vargas Martínez, *Morelos: Siervo de la Nación* (Mexico, 1977) p17; see bio of son Juan N. Almonte in, *Diccionario Biográfico de la Historia de Méjico*, Juan López de Escelara, editor (Porrúa, Mexico 1964 & other editions, alphabetical).

¹¹ See William B. Taylor *Drinking, Homicide and Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages* (Stanford, California, 1979).

¹² Analysis of race and ethnicity of Guerrero's lieutenants in Vincent, *Legacy of Guerrero*, *op. cit.* p114-116; Ted Vincent, "The Blacks Who Freed Mexico," *Journal of Negro History*. Summer 1994, 79#3, p257-276; Also, for racial roots: of Guerrero, see Rogers *Sex and Race*, for Alvarez, H.B. Parkes, *México* (Mifflin, Boston 1969, from 1938) p234; of Guzmán, Jaime Olveda, *Gordiano Guzmán: Un Cacique del Siglo XIX* (SEP, Mexico 1980) p67; of Montesdeoca, dark Asian root, Ignacio Altamirano, *Morelos a la Veledero Obras* vol.2 p172; declares "I am African", Isidoro Montesdeoca, "Proclama del Sr. Brigadier Don Isidoro Montesdeoca" (Acapulco 1822 - copy in Bancroft); for Santamaria, see Pepe Jile, *Guerrero: Historico, Cultural y Folclorico* p93-94; Pinzón, Altamirano, *Morelos a la Veledero Obras* vol.2 p173; and see photo of his son Eutimio Pinzon, in Gustavo Casasola, *Seis Siglos de Historia Gráfica de México 1325-1976* (Mexico 1978) p712; Nava had Indian "patrons" at baptism, which only Indians had, baptism in Margarita De Mora, "Biografía de Antonia Nava de Catalán" in *Primer concurso Estatal de Cuento y Biografía* (Chilpancingo: Gobierno de Guerrero 1975) p72; on Olarte, L.S. García, *Monografía de la ciudad Papanitla* (Ayuntamiento de Papanitla, 1979) p45; Victoria, general knowledge; Catalán, see family in *AGN Ramos Padrones*, Chilpancingo 1793.

¹³ Mora Institute, *Documentos de la independencia* (Mora, Mexico, 1987) vol.2 p161-62.

¹⁴ Vicente Riva Palacio, *México a través de los Siglos*, *op.cit.* Vol.3 p673; see Plan of Iguala in *Diccionario Biográfico*.

¹⁵ *Colección de las Leyes Fundamentales que han regido en la República Mexicana* (Cumplido, Mexico 1857); Peter Guardino *Peasants and Politics*, p91-92.

¹⁶ Many village councils were actually hand picked by the local landowner, nevertheless, Peter Guardino claims that the village council movement of the 1820s provided more democracy in Mexico than has been seen at any time since then. See Peter Guardino, *Peasants, Politics and the Formation of Mexico's National State: Guerrero 1800-1857* (Palo Alto, California). Illiterate mayors are discussed by state legislature of Veracruz, see *Colección de decretos y leyes de Veracruz* (Enriques, Xalapa 1903) Año 1825: in particular see discussion of mayor in the Afro-Mexican town of Pueblo Viejo near Tampico. For "mulatto" mayor Atiliano Santamaria trying to redistribute land to peasants in town that now takes his name, Cuajinicuilapa

de Santamaria, see María de los Angeles Manzano Anorve, *Cuajinicuilapa, Guerrero: Historia Oral (1900-1940)* (Artesa, Oaxaca 1991) p20-21; Santamaria race noted, Jile, *Guerrero, op.cit.* p93-94.

¹⁷ Inaugural speech in Chávez Guerrero, *Guerrero, op. cit.* Appn, III-VI, XX; and in *Correo de la Federación* 2 April 1829; to congress, *Correo* 3 April 1829.

¹⁸ The alternative grass roots political path explored in Guardino, *Peasants, Politics* p79-130; on Emiliano Zapata, see John Womack, Jr. *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (New York, 1968); program of Chiapas Zapatistas in Ben Clarke, & Clifton Ross, *Voices of Fire* (Berkeley, 1994) p80-86.

¹⁹ Clementina Díaz y de Ovando, *Antología de Vicente Riva Palacio* (UNAM, Mexico 1976) pV-VI.

²⁰ On Dolores and correspondences, see Mariano Riva Palacio archives, item #3606, 19 December 1849, Benson Library; also see Guadalupe Hernández de Guerrero archives, and Vicente Riva Palacio archives, and archives of Valentín Gómez Farias, Benson Library; for Vicente comment about learning in mother's lap, see José Ortiz Monasterio, *Vicente Riva Palacio: Ensayos Historicos* (UNAM 1997) p66-67.

²¹ Ortiz Monasterio *Ensayos Histórico* p11; The 38,000 total explained by curator Walter Brem of the U.C. Berkeley, Bancroft Library where a few of the boxes are now held.

²² In particular, see correspondences of Guadalupe Hernández de Guerrero for visits by grandson Vicente to Guadalupe's ranch near Acapulco.

²³ Clementina Díaz y de Ovando *Antología de Vicente Riva Palacio* (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico, 1976) p1-1i.

²⁴ Vicente Riva Palacio, *Los 33 negros y otros episodios nacionales* (Alianza Cien, 1997); original in newspaper, then in booklet 1870, *El Libro Rojo* (republished, Editorial Mexico, Mexico 1946).

²⁵ Vicente Riva Palacio *Martín Garatuzza (Memorias de la Inquisición)* (UNAM Mexico 1997).

²⁶ Vicente Riva Palacio *Calvario y Tabor: Novela histórico y de costumbres* (UNAM, Mexico 1997) p39.

²⁷ See Francisco Santamaria, editor *Diccionario de Mejicanismos* (Porrúa, Mexico 1983); Daniel Cosío Villegas. *Historia Moderna de Mexico* (Hermes, Mexico 1959 14 vol.) Porfirate vol.1 p81.

²⁸ Díaz y de Ovando *Antología* p3-5.

²⁹ Ortiz Monasterio, editor *Ensayos* p14; Ortiz Monasterio, editor *Cuentos del General Mexico*. (UNAM, Mexico, 1997) p11-27.

³⁰ Among the politically active family members: Dolores Riva Palacio Cruz, was the wife of 1923 presidential candidate and advocate of rural village political democracy, Carlos Zetina; Emiliano Riva Palacio Morales became a state governor and his son Fernando a member of congress. See Riva Palacios and Zetina in *Diccionario Biografico; Diccionario enciclopedico de México* Humberto Musacchio, editor (Leon, Mexico, 1989 4 vol.); Riva Palacios in *Diccionario Histórico y Geográfico de la Revolución Mexicana* (Instituto Nacional de Estudio Histórico de la Revolución Mexicana, Mexico, 1991, 4 vols) *Diccionario Telefonico de la Administración Publica* (1991-1992); Alejandra Lajous *Diccionario Biografico del Gobierno Mexicano* (Diana, Mexico 1987, 1989, 1992); Rafael Riva Palacio *Arbol geneologico* (Rafael Riva Palacio, Mexico 1964). Additional Riva Palacio's and descendants of Vicente Guerrero's uncles noted in Vincent, *The Legacy of Guerrero*, op. cit. p2-3, 270-272.

³¹ Interviews with Raymundo Riva Palacio, 1995; John Ross, 1998; Antonio Riva Palacio López 2000. Riva Palacio, Raymundo *Centroamerica: La Guerra ya Comenzó* (Claves Latinamericana, Mexico, 1987). Over the past few years Raymundo Riva Palacio editorials have appeared frequently in *La Opinión* of Los Angeles.

³² Interview with Antonio Riva Palacio, 2000; interview, John Ross, 1998; Antonio Riva Palacio *Pliegos de la Diplomacia Insurgente* (LIII Legislatura Senado, Mexico, 1987) pp. vii-viii.; Vincent, *Legacy of Guerrero*, op. cit. p271-274.

³³ Antonio Riva Palacio *Comentarios al V Informe Presidencial* (LIII Legislatura Senado, Mexico 1987) p11.