Racial Recidivism in Peru:
A Forsaken Truth

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Subject: UH 493

Hi Matt,
Congrats on completing your summer research project. Before I can send a grade to the Registrar, I need an e-mail from Prof. Morgan verifying the quality of your work.
Best,
ML

Given by phone 9/2/05

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Introduction

Today, when we as Americans consider the black experience, it is easy to focus on problems of race that exist solely in the United States. The reasons for this action are obvious: it is a significant characteristic of our culture, both in the past and present. We forget, however, that the problem of race is not solely limited to our nation—it is a global affair of which we are no more than an integral piece. The following analysis of the black experience in Peru attempts to create an awareness of the global implications of race that victimize blacks throughout the Americas. An examination of the background of Afro-Peruvians in slavery, their influence on the past and present culture of Peru, and their experience in the twentieth century will each shed light on why racism against blacks exists in Peru today.

Background

To create a better sense of understanding both the current problems of racism facing Peruvian blacks as well as the influence of African culture on the past and present culture of Peru, it is vital to examine Peruvian history in the context of black experience beginning with their arrival as slaves. Through an examination of black experience since slavery, the traditional demeaned position of blacks can shed light on why current problems of race exist and how they demean Peru's modern black population.

In addition to Brazil, Mexico and the area now known as Colombia (previously New Granada), Peru was one of the most important centers of African slavery on the Spanish American mainland during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[1] The history of black slavery itself dates back to the arrival of the first Europeans in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Spanish exploration and conquest brought slavery to Central and South America. In Peru, African slaves accompanied Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro from the outset of his conquest of the Inca Empire (c. 1532.) To Pizarro and other Spanish leaders, African slaves were more a symbol of wealth and status than they were manual laborers—they were a luxury; however, upon entrance into the New World, slaves would soon become an indispensable form of labor. In the early development of Peru, the Spanish had access to large numbers of Indian laborers; thus, the initial need for black slaves was slight. As a result of indigenous revolts, though, a rift was created between Spanish conquerors and Native Americans leaving African slaves to acquire an increasingly important role:[2] "Indeed, the Spanish were now forced to reconsider the whole question of the black man" (Bowser, 7).

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[1] Bowser, *The African Slave in Colonial Peru 1524-1650* (Stanford, 1974), preface
[2] Bowser, *The African Slave in Colonial Peru 1524-1650* (Stanford, 1974), pp. 1-26

Black slaves came to dominate much of the labor force along the coast of Peru for two reasons. First, aside from the cavity created by Indian revolts, black slaves became the dominant labor force because there was a moral debate between the Spanish Crown and its viceroyalties over the adoption of Indians as slaves. Second, as a result of European contact, the native Indian population of Peru suffered massive decline. This depopulation can chiefly be attributed to foreign diseases that Europeans carried with them across the Atlantic to the ill-prepared Native Americans. The local population, with no immune defenses to Old World diseases, suffered significant losses. Specifically, in Peru, depopulation was largely due to the introduction of yellow fever and malaria. It should be noted that depopulation was concentrated along the coast. This concentration is attributed to the barrier created by the nearby Andes Mountains, whose daunting presence limited interior migration. Thereby, the importation of African slaves along the coast became increasingly important as Indian workers diminished in number.

Blacks came to dominate the agriculture sector as the primary labor source. As such, black slaves began to grow much of the food on the farms and plantations that supplied the main Spanish coastal cities. They also comprised a large percentage of the work force in the urban centers such as Lima and Arequipa, where they were domestic servants, artisans, and manual laborers. As they were very adaptable, they were often put to work wherever workers were needed, no matter the job. Because of the malleability of their skills, black slaves became an invaluable commodity, and were quickly transformed from Spanish luxury to economical necessity.[3]

The Spanish colonial period continued into the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, wherein Spain's particular dominance of Latin and South America

[3] Blanchard, *Slavery and Abolition in Early Republican Peru* (Wilmington, 1992), pp. 1-19

began to falter as problems began to weaken the imperial structure. Because of such problems, the Crown needed to encourage financial support within their colonies, and there was an impetus to maintain the African slave trade at a strong level. This effort, though, met resistance as the transatlantic slave trade was opposed particularly by their British rivals. Conscious of the necessity for cheap labor, the Spanish Crown implemented legislation in the form of numerous decrees to meet demands although their stance on slavery was controversial. A 1796 decree eliminated duties on slaves imported into Peru. Shortly thereafter, the slave demand rose to a need for an importation of 1500 slaves every year. This augmentation caused the Peruvian slave population to grow by as much as 25 percent between 1795 and 1826.[4] After a presence spanning nearly two centuries, black slaves still constituted a significant portion of the labor force in both urban and rural areas.

While the support of slavery was rooted in the economic necessity of slavery's upholding, there had also been significant support for its limitation. In fact, the Spanish Crown had long attempted to limit slavery by forcing slave owners to try to find alternative labor. While the Crown realized the economic need for slavery's existence, one of their most influential institutions, the Roman Catholic Church, cited slavery as an unchristian act. Despite the need for slavery, they began to pass legislation in favor of the Church's position. In 1789, for instance, the Crown issued a decree dedicated exclusively to black slavery and the upholding of human rights. It limited the amount of work that could be demanded as well as the length of the workday, and it restricted the means of corporal punishment (whipping was actually a lawful practice!) Despite such doctrines, the Crown's control of Peruvian slaveholders was weak, particularly as a result

[4] Dobyns and Doughty, *Peru: A Cultural History* (Oxford, 1976), p. 153

of a lack of physical presence in enforcing their decrees. Slave owners generally operated as they wished, often unaffected by the Crown's policies. Nonetheless, the Crown held a key advantage over the slave owners that could not easily be combated: the control of the international slave trade. In 1812, the last imperial-authorized shipment of slaves arrived in Peru. Further means of stifling the institution included the Spanish constitution of 1812 which contained a provision permitting persons of African descent to become Peruvian citizens. Although this provision would never be fully implemented (due to Peru's independence within the next decade), the liberal motive behind it undoubtedly helped create a more positive outlook for slaves themselves. Furthermore, in 1817, Spanish King Ferdinand VII officially abolished the Spanish slave trade altogether (largely due to British influence). Slaveholders were forced to trade for slaves within the more confined area of New Granada and South American countries. Moreover, the edict immediately drove up remaining slave prices to exorbitant amounts, creating a sense that the presence of slavery in Peru was in jeopardy.[5]

In the late colonial period, antislavery pressures were also mounting in Peru itself. Slaves contended with slavery by buying their freedom, claiming it through the courts by arguing they had suffered mistreatment, by creating close bonds with their owners (often resulting in a grant of freedom after the owner's death), or by simply running away.[6] It should be stated that these forms of slave resistance were not new in the colonial era, but the fact that such techniques were still being utilized as Spanish imperial power diminished suggests the antislavery power was mounting.

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[5] Blanchard, *Slavery and Abolition in Early Republican Peru* (Wilmington, 1992), pp. 3-4
[6] Blanchard, *Slavery and Abolition in Early Republican Peru* (Wilmington, 1992), pp. 4-5

With the decline of Spanish power came cries for national independence across much of Spanish colonial South America. The outbreak of wars for independence in Peru marked a precarious position for black slaves. In one light, the end of Spanish rule suggested an end to slavery and emancipation. In another, economic conditions in Peru indicated that slavery might continue after the fighting had ceased. Moreover, the call for slavery's demise had been particularly that of the Spanish Crown, and not by those in positions of power in Peru. On the whole, Peru's struggle for independence was markedly different than that of many other South American nations. For one, the population in power, a small group of whites, greatly outnumbered by Native Americans, blacks, mestizos, and other groups by a ratio of nearly eight to one, was split by a small minority of elite advocating independence and a majority remaining loyal to the Spanish Crown.

Interestingly, Peru's independence resulted largely from two outside forces: José de San Martín, an Argentine, and Simón Bolívar, a Venezuelan. First, in 1820, San Martín invaded with an army of Argentineans and Chileans and declared Peru independent; later, Bolívar invaded from the north with a Venezuelan army, acquiring military victories that helped to secure Peru's official independence in 1821. Under San Martín's control, decrees were issued with the intention of the eventual destruction of slavery in Peru. The first of these, issued in mid-1821, freed all children born of slaves after July 28 of the same year. The second decree, issued later that year, declared any slave arriving on Peruvian soil free. Such decrees lacked the power to eliminate slavery

immediately, but did usher in a sense that alternative forms of labor were going to be needed sooner, changing the economic outlook and putting pressure on slaveholders.[7]

San Martín's decrees were not without negative repercussions. A stipulation of his first decree dictated that freed children of slaves were to be cared for, educated, and trained by their masters until they came of age; twenty for females, twenty-four for males. While the hope was to ensure protection and create a sense of promise for children, it placed them under the control of their slave owners who were concurrently facing the inevitable decline of slave labor.[8] Thus, blacks were open to worse exploitation than they had ever before experienced. These unforeseen side effects of San Martín's legislation did more to perpetuate the slave labor system than actually contributing to its demise. Nevertheless, his decrees were successful in that they became a basis for future antislavery legislation.

In 1823, San Martín was succeeded by Simón Bolívar. Bolívar, famous as South America's great liberator and abolitionist, gave blacks reason to expect the complete expulsion from slavery and entrance into freedom. Ironically, such hopes were dashed as Bolívar did little to help the slaves during his legislation. In fact, the only decrees issued under Bolívar's administration in reference to slavery regulated forms of punishment and permitted slaves to change their owners. Thus, it seems clear that Bolívar's primary aspiration was independence, which required the support of the Creoles (Spaniards born in South America). If abolition had been forced in its implementation, it would have met strong opposition among the Creole population who were dominant slaveholders.

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[7] Blanchard, *Slavery and Abolition in Early Republican Peru* (Wilmington, 1992), pp. 6-7
[8] Blanchard, *Slavery and Abolition in Early Republican Peru* (Wilmington, 1992), pp. 7-8

During these years of instability, the military attempted to enlist as many individuals as possible. The option was offered to slaves as well in exchange for their freedom if they served a period of six years. Many slaves jumped at the chance. The loss of slaves to enlistment left many slaveholders in an unstable financial position, causing protest. Perhaps it was because of such agitation that Bolívar and other Peruvian leaders opted not to propose additional antislavery laws. Without the legislation and force needed to quell the practice, slavery was allowed to continue long after Peru declared its independence.[9]

As a result, slavery would survive in Peru until 1855, more than thirty years after Peru's independence. Its demise was impeded by the dominant elite who viewed it as a necessary establishment to the success of the nation. Slaves were often thought of as the most efficient labor available, a motivating factor during the times of financial hardship that plagued Peru's first decades as an independent nation (Blanchard, 19). There was a general belief that black slaves were integral to the nation's well-being. But, in the decades following independence, the average price of slaves increased until the time of abolition.[10] This increase was due to the growing demand for workers, the declining number of slaves, and the ever-mounting shortage of indigenous labor. While the rising price seemed to contradict the idea that slaves were the cheapest form of available labor, slaveholders could not afford to lose the laborers they already had and, thus, the institution was again driven to survive. To further strengthen the proslavery argument, slaveholders charged that abolition would have serious economic repercussions,

[9] Blanchard, *Slavery and Abolition in Early Republican Peru* (Wilmington, 1992), pp. 9-15
[10] See Appendix A

particularly in agriculture as well as in the wealth and status of the slaveholders themselves.[11]

The controversy over abolition continued as did Peru's problems in governing its own country. In the twenty-four years between Peru's independence in 1821 and abolition in 1855, twenty-three leaders assumed control of the Peruvian dictatorship. Such irregularity in the administration brought differing views on how to deal with Peru's black slaves. In 1844, Ramón Castilla assumed the presidency after a time of rebellion and civil war, and the political situation was, for the moment, stabilized. The institution of slavery returned as a central topic of debate and legislation was actually passed in favor of the slave trade: it would be reopened to neighboring American states for a period of six years. The reintroduction of the slave trade can be attributed to political corruption: slaveholders continued to hold significant strength and influence, "Blustering dictators strove desperately to stabilize their regimes by enlisting the financial aid of wealthy interests, and this contingency made the slaveholders nearly omnipotent" (Rout, 218). It must be noted, however, that Peru's government was not altogether in favor of slavery. In fact, the government was fixed with the same problems that faced the Spanish Crown just decades before—slavery was needed as a backbone of the economy, but it was still considered to be an unchristian institution:

> "Since independence, Peru had joined in the opposition to the slave trade, the country condemned the enslavement of one by another as unchristian, and by law no one could be born a slave in Peru. However, agriculture was in ruins because of a shortage of workers, and it required restoration. They preferred immigrants, but efforts to attract them had been unsuccessful because of Peru's political turmoil, lack of financial support, and limited colonization schemes. Thus, the government had to turn to a solution that was repugnant and of debatable effectiveness, but easy and immediate" (Blanchard, 54).

[11] Blanchard, *Slavery and Abolition in Early Republican Peru* (Wilmington, 1992), pp. 19-31

So, the slave trade was revamped, but its time was short. In 1847, the trade came to a halt when New Granada (modern day Colombia), Peru's main slave trade partner, issued a law prohibiting the export of slaves from its shores. This, of course, was a huge blow to the slaveholders as slaves could no longer be imported at a rate that met the demand. While slaveholders continued to use their influence to combat abolition, the lifeline that ensured the progression of slavery was cut short, and abolition was an inevitable.[12]

Through the years of slavery, Peru's black population, both slaves and freed men alike, were subject to widespread exploitation and racism. Slaves were often whipped, beaten, harshly treated in their daily existence, and traded between owners. On plantations, they were subject to malnutrition, inadequate housing, and both sexual and physical abuse. Medical care was also a reoccurring problem, as many blacks suffered illnesses throughout much of their lives, which helps to explain their high mortality rates. Free blacks were often the victims of unprovoked arrest, many times wrongfully accused as runaway slaves. They were also victims of public prejudice and abuse in their everyday life.

In response to exploitation, the majority of slaves took advantage of every opportunity to secure the most for themselves and their families, and pursued activities to weaken the institution itself. Such steps would eventually prove to be effective in helping to destroy the oppressive system,

> "By reducing the number of those still in bondage and by confronting their owners through various means, they aroused anxieties among whites, stimulated abolitionist feelings, revealed many of the disadvantages of slavery, and slowly but surely convinced more and more Peruvians that it was an unjustified and inhumane anachronism that had no place in their country" (Blanchard, 97).

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[12] Blanchard, *Slavery and Abolition in Early Republican Peru* (Wilmington, 1992), pp. 37-59

Similarly, the maintenance of African customs allowed slaves to keep a sense of heritage, a way of forming identity as a victimized minority. Other forms of countering the majority position included crime, even violence manifested in guerilla, bandit, and highwaymen attacks, and, eventually, open rebellion. Open rebellions were relatively small and few in number, and did not begin to frequently occur until the late 1830s, but did reflect the collective black frustration. The most notable rebellion occurred in Trujillo in 1851; involving one hundred slaves armed with swords, lances, and other light artillery, who marched on Trujillo demanding their own freedom. The slaves enjoyed relative success—authorities began writing documents of freedom—but soon fled to the nearby countryside when soldiers opened fire in the Plaza de Armas (the town square.) Despite the fact that the rebellion was quelled quickly, it served as an inspiration for other rebellions to follow throughout the country.[13]

Other factors that led to abolition include the introduction of western capitalism, the Peruvian liberal voice, and foreign involvement. The spread of industrial capitalism helped to spur modernization in Peru, creating changes in both the job market and the focus of Peru's economy. With new opportunities and means of better establishing Peru as an independent, attractive nation, old institutions including slavery began to lose their sense of purpose in the minds of many of Peru's leaders. Consequentially, the need for black workers also diminished, thus having negative implications on the class struggle of blacks. Similarly, Peru's liberals were small but significant players in the destruction of slavery. It should be noted, however, that of the liberal faction there was never an abolitionist group in Peru, just as there was never a prominent abolitionist voice. There were liberals who promoted abolition and antislavery throughout the country, but they

[13] Blanchard, *Slavery and Abolition in Early Republican Peru* (Wilmington, 1992), pp. 65-119

lacked national cohesion. Nonetheless, the liberal voice could be voiced and respected in a way that the voices of black slaves often could not.[14] In addition to these internal forces, pressure from foreign nations helped to influence the deconstruction of slavery. Notable nations include Brazil and New Granada, but the most influence came from Great Britain, "[Great Britain's] crusade to eradicate the international slave trade and, eventually, to abolish slavery in all its guises included Peru within its purview" (Blanchard, 171). Clearly, while foreign nations could weaken Peruvian slavery through their influence abroad—particularly in regards to stifling the slave trade to Peru (international slave trade was formally dead by the early 1850s), foreign nations ultimately lacked the power to compel Peru to implement abolition immediately.[15]

What ultimately brought about manumission was a new crisis that redressed slavery into the political forefront. The crisis that brought about the destruction of slavery was a new civil war that began in 1854. During the previous year, Peruvian President José Rufino Echenique's control of his administration was under public scrutiny for the supposed corruption of his government. In January 1854, a rebellion arose in Arequipa in response to the corruption. This revolt was soon joined by former president Ramón Castilla, who condemned Echenique's government as tyrannical and corrupt. Castilla would be nicknamed "The Liberator" as the rebellion became more popular as a movement against the government. To widen his support, Castilla abolished the Indian head tax and gained the support of the remaining indigenous tribes. In response, Echenique issued a decree stating that any slave who enlisted in his army would receive his freedom. To his dismay, few slaves responded as such decrees were

[14] Blanchard, *Slavery and Abolition in Early Republican Peru* (Wilmington, 1992), pp.127-168
[15] Blanchard, *Slavery and Abolition in Early Republican Peru* (Wilmington, 1992), pp.171-186

notorious as ploys to lure blacks into service that rewarded them with empty promises. Castilla quickly realized his advantage and issued another decree to the slaves on December 3, 1854, stating that all slaves of Peru were now free citizens. The decree gave the immediate impression that Castilla, not Echenique, had freed the slaves, and soon between two and three thousand slaves had joined his military forces. This increase provided the military advantage Castilla needed to overthrow Echenique. Castilla's victory came at La Palma, outside of Lima, on January 5, 1855, and Castilla resumed the presidency as Echenique was forced into exile. While Castilla's appeal to the slaves had been more opportunistic than humanitarian, his title as "The Liberator" had acquired a revamped significance. Ironically, such a title contradicted his previous term as president in which he had reopened the slave trade to spark the crippled economy.

As president, implementing the abolition decree into law met harsh resistance, "Many critics saw disaster in the making, predicting that abolition would drive the price of essentials out of the reach of the poor, thus fostering epidemics, increasing the death rate, limiting population growth, and provoking political unrest" (Blanchard, 199). Additionally, to the dissatisfaction of many slaveholders, slaves began to flee estates in large numbers. In response to their demands, Castilla issued a decree that compensated slaveholders for their losses over the next decade.[16] In fact, Castilla's government promised to pay the slaveholders more than 7.5 million pesos. This compensation sheds light on the power Castilla's group held at the time. Financial compensation, though, was not enough to satisfy the slaveholders who were now burdened with a lack of laborers. Indeed, slaveholders had to find a replacement for the slave, and the role was significantly filled by an inundation of Chinese immigrants (known as coolies). Before

[16] Blanchard, *Slavery and Abolition in Early Republican Peru* (Wilmington, 1992), pp. 189-207

1850, Chinese immigrants were relatively few in number, but in the decade following abolition, between 1855 and 1865, thousands of Chinese migrated to Peru's shores. By 1875, there were 80,000 Chinese in Peru, and the Afro-Peruvian laborer had been significantly replaced.[17] Because the coolies now controlled the majority of jobs previously afforded to blacks, blacks were left in a country that no longer seemed to need them. Though abolition had been reached, Afro-Peruvians found that it had only brought a new struggle for freedom and presence.

The years that followed abolition were plagued with criticism: opponents charged that the removal of slavery was an economic and social disaster for the nation and that it only hindered future growth. Particularly, critics pointed towards agriculture as the sector that suffered the most. Interestingly, agriculture had never been a dynamic sector of Peru's overall economy and whether or not the economy was truly set back is open to debate. The position of the newly freed slaves, on the other hand, was clear. Blacks were left in an extremely perilous position riddled with prejudice and discrimination at the hands of the domineering white ruling class. They were forced to accept whatever jobs were available to them, as they were now in competition with indigenous workers, the mass influx of coolies, and even European immigrants. To add to the problem, the population of Afro-Peruvians had been diminishing as the slave trade was increasingly limited over the past decades. Coupled with high mortality rates and low reproductivity, blacks became increasingly conscious of their minority status.

[17] Rout, *The African Experience in Spanish America* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 217-221

The African Influence on Peruvian Culture

From the beginning of the international slave trade, black slaves were forced into balancing their African heritage with the influence of the New World's culture and customs. As immigrants, they were challenged with the daunting task of preserving their own culture in a land that was not theirs. This challenge was one African slaves had to face throughout the expanse of the Americas. The breadth of their forced immigration is both a challenging and complex issue, especially considering that the introduction of African slavery in the Americas resulted in the largest forced human migration in history.[18] The sheer volume of slaves that were unwillingly forced into new lands, the longevity of the institution, and the incredibly vast amount of lands that required their labor is vast. African slaves were forced into servitude across two entire continents consisting of thousands of existing cultures. It is important to consider how and in what ways these millions of people were able to hold on to their own heritage and culture as both minorities in a new land and as a an oppressed people. Moreover, it is important to consider how they reversely influenced the cultures they entered, and how they themselves changed and evolved in response to their new worlds. As such, it is vital to examine the influences of Afro-Peruvians in the context of their historical background and present status.

A common misconception about slavery and the struggle for African-American equality is that the North American black experience holds more importance than that of Latin and South America. Perhaps this mindset results from the amount of information written about the black experience in the United States, particularly from the effects of the Modern Civil Rights movement. While the black struggle in the United States should

[18] Bowser, *The African Slave in Colonial Peru 1524-1650* (Stanford, 1974), pp. 1-26

not be undermined by any means, the weight of information on the subject unintentionally dismisses the importance of the repercussions of slavery in other American countries. In fact, the majority of African peoples taken from their lands between the mid-fifteenth and late nineteenth centuries were brought to Spanish and Portuguese colonies of Central and South America.[19] In Peru, while the African presence has diminished greatly since the end of the international slave trade, the influence of the black population on Peru's culture is as important to examine today as it was four hundred years ago.

Prior to exploration of the New World, Africans had always been viewed as an uncivilized and inferior people in the minds of the Spanish. As such, the adoption and removal of Africans as servants and slaves had existed for quite some time (note: African slaves were considered a Spanish luxury, a means of servitude rather than an agency of manual labor as the institution of slavery commonly implies today.) Nevertheless, the inferiority of the African was a commonly held perception in the European mindset well before colonization. With the beginning of the full implementation of the slave trade in the mid to late sixteenth century (which concurrently made Peru one of Spain's most powerful colonies), black slaves found themselves in a position of perpetuating inferiority for several reasons. For one, they were predominantly used as unskilled laborers wherever work was needed. As such, they were unable to develop any consistent skill or craft and were therefore completely subservient to their owners. Secondly, their inferiority was not limited to the Spanish mindset as it was evident in that of the native population as well. For example, in response to the Inca Manco revolt of 1535-1536, Spanish leaders relied heavily on blacks to help suppress the rebellion. By creating

[19] Rout, *The African Experience in Spanish America* (Cambridge, 1976), preface

violence, the Spanish indirectly created a rift between blacks and indigenous tribes, thereby preventing any sense of common alliance in their shared minority status. Furthermore, blacks were alienated because of their foreignness. As forced immigrants of the Spanish, the only ties blacks had to the land were through their Spanish masters. Thus, the influence of African culture on that of Peru was dominated by melding of Spanish and African customs.

Spanish conquerors made numerous attempts at influencing and destroying the slaves' African heritage to better control them. One of the strongest influences the Spanish had on African slaves was an introduction to Christianity. For example, *cofradías* (religious brotherhoods) were established by Spanish religious orders as a means of stimulating Christian beliefs among blacks as well as a means to organize celebrations for particular saints, a tradition that still exists today. Although such celebrations embraced wide audiences by incorporating other ethnic groups, they were dominated by traditional African music, rhythm, and dance. Instruments were almost exclusively played by blacks, and the dances themselves were modeled after African dances. Interestingly, one such dance, the *zamacueca*, is a precursor of the modern *marinera* dance which is still popular along the central and northern coast and is one of the main features of Trujillo's annual festivals.[20] The *marinera* dance is iconic because of its Spanish influence which includes traditional music and clothing. So, the *marinera* is a classic example of the juxtaposition of Spanish and African culture that is simultaneously unique to Peru's culture today. Similarly, the union of European and African culture is also the foundation to *criollo* music. Popular along the coast of Peru, *criollo* music was widely performed in the 1960s and 1970s by popular artists such as the

[20] Blanchard, *Slavery and Abolition in Early Republican Peru* (Wilmington, 1992), 1-19

Nicomedes Santa Cruz Gamarra and Lucha Reyes in an attempt to revive Afro-Peruvian traditions.[21]

The Spanish influence of Christianity can be seen more as a means of civilizing rather than suppressing the slaves. It should be noted, however, that the slaves managed to retain certain aspects of their old religions, including some superstitions and deities. Ideally, the Spanish were colonizing the New World in an effort to enrich their *own* empire: to expand and augment its power. Simultaneously, they were expanding the reach of Christianity. Expansion, though, came at the expense of others. To remain in power, the Spanish had to impose their own ideas of civilization as a means of suppressing others into their control. By introducing Christianity and depriving blacks of any sense of freedom, the Spanish were attempting to thwart the cultural heritage of the African. In response, because black Peruvians were a collectively suppressed foreign group, the Spanish could not impede the formation of a common black identity. Such identity was primarily made through music, dance, and, most notably, religious ceremony and celebration as previously described. The formation of a cohesive identity was later used as one of the many stimuli to slave resistance around the time of Peruvian independence.

Though the population of blacks declined after abolition, the influence of blacks on Peruvian culture continued. This influence is evidenced in how certain African customs were often adopted by the dominating white ruling class. One of the most visible adoptions of black culture was a Lima religious cult associated with the image of

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[21] Santa Cruz, Nicomedes. "Peru's African Rhythms." *The Peru Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Ed. Orin Starn et al. (Durham, 1995), p. 290

Nuestro Señor de los Milagros (Our Lord of Miracles.)[22] In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, because blacks were not allowed to enter Peruvian churches, they often formed their own places of worship. One such chapel in Lima contained a depiction of the crucifixion which, in 1655, survived a disastrous earthquake that brought the other churches (including the Cathedral) of Lima to the ground. Black slaves immediately proclaimed the painting's survival as miraculous and word quickly spread to members of Lima's ruling class. The clergy quickly agreed that what had happened was indeed a miracle and the image of Nuestro Señor de los Milagros was adopted. Today, the cult associated with Nuestro Señor de los Milagros has become one of the largest and most popular in Peru, although it is now celebrated almost exclusively by whites.[23]

In the twentieth century, Afro-Peruvians continued to influence music and dance in both new and revitalized ways. Prominent among them was Nicomedes Santa Cruz who is known for the modern rediscovery of Afro-Peruvian culture. In the 1950s, Santa Cruz, a poet, musician, and choreographer, began to publish and perform his work based on the long-standing traditions of black Peruvians. His work often reflects the ways Spanish and African culture have combined into a unique part of Peru's culture.[24] Most famous for his poetry, works such as *The Décima in Peru* and *Oiga Usté Señor Dotor* (*Listen, Mister* Doctor) blend traditional Spanish form and pattern with African rhythm and themes.[25] Sadly, there are few individuals in addition to Santa Cruz who have culturally stood as a voice for Afro-Peruvians. Without such a voice, it is difficult to

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[22] Blanchard, *Slavery and Abolition in Early Republican Peru* (Wilmington, 1992), pp. 221-222
[23] Dobyns and Doughty, *Peru: A Cultural History* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 111-112
[24] Santa Cruz, Nicomedes. "Peru's African Rhythms." *The Peru Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Ed. Orin Starn et al. (Durham, 1995), p. 290-291; and Rout, *The African Experience in Spanish America* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 225-226
[25] See Appendix B

combat the limitations that face them today. While it is possible to examine their influence on the surrounding culture, without leaders and without voice it is difficult to hope that as a group they are making progress as a significant sector of Peru's population.

The Afro-Peruvian Experience in the Twentieth Century

Researching the black experience in Peru in the modern era is limited. While blacks are estimated to constitute roughly only about one percent of the current population, a verifiable demographic census including racial classifications has not been recorded since 1950.[26] This exclusion, however, does not mean that blacks do not constitute a presence in Peruvian society; in truth, the lack of such distinction works both for and against Afro-Peruvian culture. The lack of such demographic analysis creates a sense that the color distinctions plaguing racial profiling in the United States is more restrained and less an issue of contention in Peru. Moreover, it makes it seem that blacks are an integrated part of Peruvian culture, equal yet diverse members of its population. Thus, if completely true, Peru's culture would be able to function in ways that the United States has failed. On the other hand, the lack of racial classification in the census reduces the black population into insignificance. Such a lack of documented presence robs the idea of black cultural heritage, just as it does for other Peruvian immigrants including Chinese, European, and indigenous tribes, among others. Without official documentation of their existence, their presence is reduced to a fleeting consciousness among fellow Peruvians. Furthermore, it reduces their momentous history as a thing of the past. Presently, it creates a sense that racism is not as serious a problem as it may actually be. By depriving Afro-Peruvians of their own distinction, they are left in a truly precarious position that is both difficult to examine and combat.

Since World War II, racism has been a serious topic among notable Peruvian scholars. One such intellectual, Luis E. Valcárcel, remarked that "the Negro is at the bottom of Peruvian society both economically and socially . . . even when he has earned

[26] Rout, *The African Experience in Spanish America* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 222; See Appendix C

much money, he is unable to improve his status. The tradition of being a slave is heavy upon him" (Rout, 223). According to Valcárcel, the same fundamental problems that were present more than a century ago continue to victimize black Peruvians in the modern era. Interestingly, his commentary parallels race philosophy in the United States. Why such commentary helped to spur a movement for civil rights in the United States and not in Peru is complex. For one, the black population in the United States was proportionally much larger than that of Peru. As such, incidents involving prejudice and segregation received greater attention and, hence, a greater and more influential response could be formed to combat them. Secondly, one of the greatest contributions to the US Civil Rights Movement was the continual emergence of significant and critical black thinkers such as Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, etc. In Peru, one of the most significant liabilities to black equality is that the Afro-Peruvian has had few, if any, prominent figures who could defend him. Peruvian history itself reveals few noteworthy characters of African descent. Historically, Peru's blacks are more popularly known for individuals such as León Escobar who, in 1835, led a gang of rebels into Lima demanding a heavy ransom in exchange for his peaceful departure. For the next four hours, while officials attempted to collect the requested amount, Escobar assumed the president's offices and issued uproarious commands to gathering crowds.[27] Without prominent critical thinkers to create an awareness of racial problems for blacks, black Peruvians are historically demeaned by characters such as Escobar, thus making it difficult for black Peruvians to find a foundation for political progress.

[27] Rout, *The African Experience in Spanish America* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 224-225

The presence of racism is a serious problem facing the Afro-Peruvian today. It is a reoccurring problem in many facets of society including advertising and the media. Newspaper want ads request individuals with a "good appearance," signifying blacks need not apply. Televised comedies routinely ridicule blacks as uncivilized and unintelligent. Similarly, racism is reflected in how whites are routinely portrayed in dominant positions over blacks. The cover of the 2004 Lima phone book depicts a white doctor, a white nurse, a white chef, a white man on the phone, two whites doing home repairs, and a black bellhop carrying luggage.[28] Advertisements in bus stations portray white passengers comfortably boarding a bus while a black employee loads their luggage in the background. A children's coloring book depicts a black child attempting to scrub off the color of his skin after he is made fun of at school for being poor. Clearly, examples of racism in Peru today are numerous.

Racism, though, does have a documented presence in the works of many of Peru's novelists and writers which does work to create an awareness of its existence. For example, the works of Mario Vargas Llosa are known to investigate the cultural differences and similarities between blacks, mulattoes (persons of mixed African and Caucasian descent), and *zambos* (persons of African-Indian origin) in their positions throughout society. Moreover, it brings to light the subtle differences in how mulattoes, unlike blacks, are able to elevate their own status by "whitening" their own self-image.[29] Such a process is possible by the exclusion of one's African heritage. This idea of changing one's self-image, of "whitening" one's self to combat one's own "blackness", is not a modern concept. It was present during the years after abolition in which some

[28] Bridges, "Racism Watch: Long after slavery, inequities remain in Peru." *The Miami Herald.* August, 01, 2004: <http://www.trinicenter.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=761>.
[29] Rout, *The African Experience in Spanish America* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 223-224

blacks dispelled their own cultural heritage in an attempt to integrate themselves into Peruvian society as equals. In fact, the fundamental idea dates as far back as Pizarro's first conquest of the area. In 1528, after discovering the city of Túmbez in northern Peru, Pizarro sent a black slave with a scouting party to observe the place, "[He] was seized by the incredulous natives and vigorously scrubbed in an effort to remove what was presumed to be the dye on his skin" (Bowser, 4). Similarly, in 1556, a black slave woman was captured by a tribe of Indians whom tied her to a tree and rigorously tried to rub off her dark color. After determining this was impossible, the Indians skinned her alive and stuffed her skin with straw.[30] While such incidents may have largely resulted from fear and simple ignorance, the fact remains that these persons were victimized for their blackness, and their oppressors either attempted to purify or whiten them, or they killed them for their difference. In these early years, while "blackness" was seen as physically evil, "whiteness" was seen as physically correct or proper. Thus, the foundation of the advantage of being white was invested around the same time that blacks were forced into slavery. Blacks were demeaned not only as an inferior people as slaves, but also for the simplistic difference of the dark pigmentation of their skin.

It is also interesting to consider that while some critics such as Vargas Llosa shed light on the existence of racism in Peru, others advocate its absence, particularly in reference to the United States. For instance, in response to the race riots in Oxford, Mississippi, in 1962, Hector Velarde, a distinguished Peruvian critic, condemned racial discrimination in the United States in an article in a Peruvian newspaper. He questioned

[30] Rout, *The African Experience in Spanish America* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 117-121

why North Americans had not learned from countries such as Peru the virtue of racial tolerance.[31] In response, Julian Pitt-Rivers notes:

> "Those who find no racial discrimination in Latin America take the United States as their model. They point out, correctly, that there is no color bar and that race riots do not occur. On the other hand, those who do find racial discrimination in Latin America are concerned with the fact that there exist high degrees of social differentiation that are habitually associated with physical traits and frequently expressed in the idiom of 'race'. . . Because there is no color bar but rather a color scale that contributes only partially to the definition of status, they are pushed to an implied definition of race" (Pitts-Rivers, 551).

While it is true that much of the modern history of Latin America has not been marked by race riots or other such explicit forms of the combating of racial issues, Latin America is also not marked by the white and black distinction that characterizes much of the United States' problems with race. Because there are not distinct color lines, the distinction of colored groups is trivialized. Hence, the color bar to the US bears a visible distinction, whereas in Latin America the bar has become blended across a less visible scale. It is here that the advantages of being white become an attainable quality. Persons of mixed African descent, such as mulattoes or zambos, can maneuver themselves on the color scale in a way blacks cannot. By adjusting or "whitening" their own qualities, such persons become cultural chameleons. Their transformation affects how they are perceived and, thus, are not as often confronted by issues of race. Consequentially, the power of "whiteness" is only strengthened, thereby diminishing the idea of "blackness". Moreover, the individual disposal of black heritage demoralizes the collective black identity. Without such identity, it is difficult for blacks to combat the presence of race facing them in their everyday lives. Because the United States had a clear black identity in the mid-twentieth century, blacks had something real from which they could stand and

[31] Pitt-Rivers, Julian. "Race, Color, and Class in Central America and the Andes." *Essays on Mexico, Central and South America*. Ed. Jorge I. Domínguez. (New York, 1994), pp. 56-71

fight. In Latin America, though blacks have suffered through similar repercussions of slavery as their counterparts in the United States; they differ in that their identity is ambiguous. Because whiteness has become a malleable state, a door open to cultural chameleons, the black identity is dismissed into an insignificant demographic.

Historically in Peru, the creation of division between blacks and indigenous tribes, blacks and coolies, blacks and European immigrants, etc. continually contributed to the maintenance of power the whites held over their inferiors, "The power of whiteness depended not only on white hegemony over separate racialized groups, but also on manipulating racial outsiders to fight against one another, to compete with each other for white approval, and to seek the rewards and privileges of whiteness for themselves at the expense of other racialized populations" (Lipitz, 63). Moreover, to uphold their position as the elite, whites oppressed racial groups through conquering, slavery, and numerous forms of dehumanization. They considered them to be uncivilized, unintelligent, incapable, and, therefore, beneath them. Certainly they never thought of it any other way: their technology and weapons were more advanced, they recognized their own forms of industry as more sophisticated, etc. As such, the question of their inferiority and ignorance in the New World was *never* an issue. With unflinching control, whites were able to create a sense of "us and them". In other words, the fruits of their position of power created the sense of *white* privilege and *colored* disadvantage. Such a mindset is evidenced in the minds of slaves in the wake of abolition. Black slaves had forever been disadvantaged and oppressed. When they were finally granted the opportunity to become freed men, freedom meant nothing more than their emancipation from slavery. The struggle for freedom from oppression, discrimination, and prejudice

merely followed the struggle for abolition. Freedom merited no sense of equality, no sense of position or status within society, and virtually no elevation from their previous lives as slaves. "White" meant opportunity; "black" signified limitation. If one could become white, attain that power and that *real* sense of freedom, then one's life could significantly change for the better, regardless of the loss of blackness.

Clearly, a pattern arises between the black experience during the years of slavery and the black experience of today. Because racism and the supremacy of whiteness exist, the indelible mark of slavery is still present in Peru. This year, 2005, marks the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery. Interestingly, abolition in 1855 came as a result of an opportunistic politician, leaving the freedom of blacks as an uncelebrated landmark in history. Indeed, 150 years later, it seems not much has changed considering that Peru's government has no plans for commemorative activities on December 4th, the anniversary. Until there is a unified progressive effort to combat their uncelebrated status, black Peruvians will continue to live under the suppression of racial division that continues to mark Peru.

APPENDIX A: Average Price of Slaves in Peru

Average Price of Slaves (in pesos)

City	1820s	1830s	1840s	1850s
Lima	197	229	211	296
Arequipa	309	255	182	202
Trujillo	-	-	260	291
Estates	281	-	249	246
Average	262	242	225	259

SOURCE: Blanchard, Peter. *Slavery and Abolition in Early Republican Peru.* Wilmington: SR, 1992, p.28.

APPENDIX B: Peru's African Rhythms

The Décima in Peru
Nicomedes Santa Cruz

Rhythms of slavery
against bitterness and pain.
To the beat of the chains
black rhythms of Peru.

My grandmother came from Africa
adorned in shells,
Spaniards brought her
in a caravel ship.
They marked her with fire,
the branding iron was her cross;
and in South America,
between blows of pain
they gave blacks drums,
rhythms of slavery.

For a single coin
they sold her in Lima
and in the La Molina Hacienda
she served the Spanish.
She and other blacks from Angola
earned so much from their work:
mosquitoes to suck their blood
hard ground to sleep upon
and nothing to console
against bitterness and pain.

On the sugar plantation
the sad *socabón* was born,
and at the rum press
black people sang the *zaña*.[32]
The machete and scythe
cut at brown hands;
and Indians with flutes
and blacks with tibrels
sang unhappy fortunes
to the beat of the chains.

The old died,
but in the cane fields
the sound of the *zamacueca* could be heard
and the *panalivio*, far in the distance.
And one hears the courting songs
my mother sang in her youth:
from Cañete to Timbuktu,
from Chancay to Mozambique,
clear notes carry
black rhythms of Peru.

SOURCE: Santa Cruz, Nicomedes. "Peru's African Rhythms." *The Peru Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Ed. Orin Starn et al. (Durham, 1995), p. 290-291

[32] The *socabón*, *zamacueca*, *panalivio*, and *zaña* are different kinds of African-Peruvian songs that grew out of slave culture.

APPENDIX B: Peru's African Rhythms

Oiga Usté Señor Dotor (*Listen, Mister Doctor*)
Nicomedes Santa Cruz

The black man who is your chauffeur
- Who is my sister's husband –
Has invited you for tomorrow
To my wife's birthday [party]
I will try to entertain you
Giving you the best
And since you do me the favor
Of mingling with my race,
Before you step into my house
Listen, Mister Doctor

If you come as a tourist,
Sing, dance, have fun
But never call me "boy" [Negree]
Because I have a Christian name
...
Oh if your wife doesn't come
Don't you bring your mistress
My wife has her pride and
Gets easily offended
...
I want you to become convinced
That the well-brought up Blacks,
Even though they don't turn red,
Know shame.

SOURCE: Rout, Jr., Leslie B. *The African Experience in Spanish America: 1502 to the Present Day* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 225-226

APPENDIX C: Black Populations in Spanish America for the Last Full Census

Black Populations in Spanish America for the Last Full Census (1950)

Region	*Colored Population*	*Colored as Percentage of Total Population*
Colombia	2,917,000	26
Venezuela	1,620,000	32
Ecuador	330,000	10
Peru	110,000	01
Bolivia	12,000	-
Paraguay	10,000	01
Uruguay	60,000	03
Argentina	15,000	-
Chile	3,000	-
Brazil	17,529,000	33

SOURCE: From Angel Rosenblatt, *La población indígena y el mestizaje en América*, I (Buenos Aires: Nova, 1954), Table I and pp. 145-146; and Herbert S. Klein, "Patterns of Settlement of the Afro-American Population in the New World," in *Key Issues in the Afro-American Experience* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 115. Adapted. Revised by Pescatello, Ann M. "The Afro-American in Historical Perspective." *Old Roots in New Lands: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on Black Experiences in the Americas*. Ed. Ann M. Pescatello. (Westport: Greenwood, 1977), Table II: pp. 20-21.

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