

# From Africa to the Andes: Conquest and American Identity

*Edgar Montiel*

After life itself, freedom is man's most precious and esteemed possession; and consequently it is the most worthy causes; and when there is doubt about someone's freedom, one owes it to oneself to answer in favor and to judge in favor of freedom. This precept is equally true for Blacks as for Indians.

Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Tratados*, 1552

## **Blacks in America**

Our America has not fully realized the extent of the African continent's influence on the cultural and ethnic genesis of Latin America.<sup>1</sup> This aspect of its history remains foreign to it and almost consciously denied: a denial that is the legacy of a racial complex created by the European mentality during the course of the Conquest. One of the characteristics of American humanism, however, lies within the valorization of the multi-ethnic origins of Latin American culture; this is why one cannot ignore the breadth of the African contribution to the American identity and the circumstances that determined this contribution.

Long before Christopher Columbus, as early as the end of the first millennium, Arab traders had already designated certain areas of Black Africa – such as Senegal, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria – as hunting grounds for humans (for that is exactly what they were) destined to work as slaves in Mediterranean cities.<sup>2</sup> In the mid-fifteenth century, Portugal began a systematic exploration of the coastal region of the African continent. The tenacity of the Portuguese king Henry the Navigator, who wanted to understand the secrets of the seas, bore fruit, and new generations of Lusitanian sailors soon set out for African shores and discovered new routes

to the Spice Islands in the Indies. These were routes of conquest and trade, which soon made Africa a provider of slaves.

After 1493, with the discovery of America – the so-called “West Indies” – the capture of Blacks in Africa became a massive day to day reality. The success of the enterprise in fact depended on the acquisition of a body of workers capable of submitting to heavy, “un-Catholic” labor, made necessary by the conquest of so vast a territory. Let us not forget that the principles of mechanization were still at their beginning and that mechanization was a simple dream of utopians. The power of human labor was thus the indispensable lever for the functioning of the mechanics of the Conquest.

Victims of plunder and the overexploitation of their work force, the autochthonous population of the Caribbean and the Antilles was quickly wiped out. From 1501 on, a systematic organization was rapidly developed for the transport of slaves destined for America. King Ferdinand of Spain recognized the necessity of dispatching black slaves to work in the mines (and accomplish the massive task of washing gold) and to set up the operation of plantations. The colonizers, in fact, argued that “a black can do the work of four natives, for their only pleasure is work.” Twenty thousand slaves would thus set sail for Cuba in 1512, transported via Spain and Portugal; a later decree required the direct transport of slaves from Africa. In 1525, with the exception of a few groups of men who had taken refuge in the mountains and forests, the population of the Caribbean had been decimated; the massive importation of slaves thus became a necessity.

In 1514, on the island of Hispaniola, slaves outnumbered Europeans. Throughout the century, thousands of Spanish, Portuguese, English, French, and Dutch conquerors would add their slaves to the original number. But one can only count in millions the slaves who slowly arrived on American soil. On February 12, 1528, the legal commerce of slaves destined for the Caribbean colonies was officially recognized; the king granted the German bankers and traders Henry Ehinger and Jerome Sayles the first license – the so-called *asiento* – authorizing the massive introduction of slaves into their American possessions. The tax to be paid on the sale of each slave was just above two ducats. It was thanks to the influx of slaves that Spain could strike roots in the kingdom of Mexico

(whose conquest had begun in 1519) and undertake the conquest of the Incan Empire in 1532.

How many Blacks were torn from their continent to satisfy the needs of the colonial mission? This is a delicate issue on which the former slave-trading powers prefer to remain silent – as if the magnitude of this fact could do any more than expose a buried wound in their consciences, which a huge memory lapse now tries to assuage with a “cure of oblivion.”<sup>3</sup> It is surprising to note that the people responsible for many public and private celebrations organized in 1992 around the theme of the fifth centenary of the “Encounter” of the two worlds have carefully avoided broaching the issues of the slave trade, the genocide of American populations, their contamination, the invasion of lands, and the cost in human lives of the exploitation of gold and silver.

The existence of public registers makes it possible to calculate the number of African captives deported to America. Studies have shown figures fluctuating between eight and fifteen million. The international scientific committee called together by UNESCO for the creation of the book *Africa en América Latina*,<sup>4</sup> came to the following conclusions on the basis of carefully documented data: “Taking the dates 1518 to 1873 as extremes, the trade of African slaves stretches over three hundred fifty-five years, during which the process of coercive transport of humans took place, the largest history has ever known. It is estimated that throughout this period no less than nine and one half million Black Africans arrived in America to work in the six fundamental productive sectors: sugar, coffee, tobacco, cotton, rice, and mining.”

The exodus of nine and one half million Africans in America (the majority of them children and young people between the ages of eight and twenty) actually implies that nearly fifty million human beings were sacrificed in Africa. It is estimated indeed that only one captive in five arrived safe and sound in America. The others, victims of the murderous chains of slavery, were either killed in the hunts organized by the traders or during the forced transfers from the interior to the ports of departure; died from hunger and the ill treatment inflicted in the concentration camps on the coasts; or perished during the crossing of the Atlantic. The latter were very numerous, judging by the testimony of Father Sandoval, slave chaplain in the port of Cartagena de Indias, in

Columbia, during the 1620s.<sup>5</sup> This brutal depopulation has branded African history and remains the primary cause of an underdevelopment from which the continent has yet to recover today. Conscious of the ethical and economic gravity of this fact, Pope John-Paul II, during his trip to the island of Gorea, where slaves had departed from, could do no less than beg Africa's pardon for the fratricide committed by Christian Europe.

When the chroniclers of the Indies spoke of the extermination of a population, victims of epidemics or invasion, they were not speaking in metaphors: one person in ten survived. During the course of the first century of the Conquest, a period of demographic breakdown, the indigenous population shared the same fate as the Blacks. According to demographic studies carried out by The University of California at Berkeley, it is estimated that the autochthonous population of Mexico declined from twenty-five million two hundred thousand inhabitants in 1519 to one million seventy thousand in 1605. And in Peru from six million in 1532 to one million ninety thousand in 1628.<sup>6</sup> This depopulation was not simply the result of war, but of forced labor in mines and *haciendas*, of hunger, and of epidemics.

The extensive use of a black slave work force was intended, in fact, to compensate for this destruction of the indigenous population. The result, which became a determining factor in the social, racial and cultural configuration of our continent since then, was the presence of more than ten million Africans in North and South America, which helped shape the profile of the continent. In certain capitals of the viceroyalty, such as Lima, the black population outnumbered the indigenous and Spanish populations. And the repopulation of territories which are today known as Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Haiti, Puerto Rico, and Brazil, among others, was carried out by the African collectivity. Hence it is not simply a question of Africa's "influence" on America; the African and his culture constitute a significant component of the American national identity. The presence of the black population in the "genetic composition" of the American – to use the term of the Mexican anthropologist Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán – is undeniable. American humanism invites a celebration of this patrimony of an identity of pluralistic origin. Even less than in the rest of the world, humanism can hardly be selective here.

Blacks were subjected to all types of forced labor: used as “auxiliary conquerors,” they were also exploited as domestic servants, in the mines, rural properties, plantations, fisheries and manufacturing centers, not to mention the sexual exploitation of which black women were made victims. Even if African slaves and the indigenous people were equally exploited within the colonial order, the latter saw them as the defenders of Spanish interests, based on their initial participation as auxiliaries of the Conquest. But the ferocity of their shared oppression, and their day to day relationships in work and pleasure, caused the Indians and the Blacks to find themselves side to side at the end of the eighteenth century in the struggles for freedom, and they filled the ranks of the Liberation army. Let us not forget that the uprising of 1780, the most important of this century in America, headed by the Inca cacique José Gabriel Condorcanqui – known as Tupac Amaru II – included in its ranks Indians, Blacks (such as Oblitas, who was his lieutenant), *zambos* (such as Micaela Bastidas, his wife), *mestizos* (such as Marcela Castro) and patriotic *criollos* (such as Miguel Montiel). In his edict of 1780, the cacique pronounced the freedom of black slaves (twelve years before the founding of the French Republic which freed “people of color” in Haiti). We should not forget that the first American republic was the Black Republic of Haiti, recognized by the French Convention of 1792, and later defeated by Napoleon.

### **Blacks in the Colonization of Peru**

Different forces contributed to the conquest of Peru: male and female Indians from Nicaragua, Black “criollos” (born in the Iberian peninsula or the Caribbean) and Blacks recently arrived from Africa (*bozales*), who were superior in number to the Spanish. Servers and auxiliaries forced to do all tasks, the Blacks took part in almost all exploratory, conquering and peacemaking missions.

Having captured the Inca Atahualpa in Cajamarca in 1533, Francisco Pizarro sent a team of four scouts to Cuzco, with orders to describe to him the magnificence of the Empire’s capital. One was black, two were Andalusian sailors, the other a Basque clerk. The symbolic entry of an African into Cuzco in the first hours of the Conquest did not however take place: the Black stopped along the way, in Jauja, and returned at the head of an indigenous caravan

laden with precious metals. In his very well-documented study of the formation of Hispano-Peruvian society between 1532 and 1560, James Lockhart points out: "During the period before the capture of the Incas, the Blacks were still few in number, for the money needed to buy them was lacking; but after the distribution of Cajamarca's booty, waves of blacks entered the country. They were found on the coast, in the mountains, in Chile, and on all the subsequent expeditions carried out in the surrounding territories."

How many Blacks really came to Peru? It is difficult to answer precisely, given the diversity of the routes of access. Many, indeed, were brought via the Isthmus of Panama, while others became part of the first generation of slaves born in the Caribbean and the Antilles; still others came ashore directly at Callao. (Thirty or so years later, the entry of slaves through Rio de la Plata would be legalized; these slaves were allocated to work in the mines throughout Peru.)

There are however notarial documents concerning the organization of expeditions undertaken to explore new territories: the preparation of logistic materials consisted of purchasing food, arms, horses and Blacks. The Africans were not only captured as domestic servants and artisans, they were also used for military combat. A band of Blacks was capable of devastating an entire valley, which made them targets of the aggression of indigenous forces, who preferred to kill Africans rather than the indigenous Nicaraguan auxiliaries.

Because they distinguished themselves in military actions, the rebel conquistador Francisco Hernández organized a company of three or four hundred black slaves to fight at his side in 1554, in what was the country's first civil war. He promised to reward them with freedom, but things took a turn for the worse and the promise remained nothing more than that. During this period, the number of Blacks was already significant, even considerable if one compares it to other exogenous groups. It is possible to learn the ethnic origin of the Blacks who arrived in Peru. The notarial protocols for the period 1548–1560 show the legal transaction of the purchase and sales of 256 slaves (see table) during the course of these years. The majority (162) came from Cape Verde, Upper Guinea and Senegal; 22 from the Congo, Mozambique and Angola, and 49 were "criollos," slaves born in Spain, Portugal or the West Indies.<sup>7</sup>

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**Black Population between 1548–1560**

<b>Cape Verde</b>		
Jelof (Wolof)		45
Biafara (Biafada, Biafar)		40
Bran (Bram)		23
Berbesi (Serer)		18
Mandinga ("Malinke," Gambia)		15
Banol ("Banyun")		8
Cazanga (Kassanga)		4
Fula		1
Zape (Sierra Leona)		8
		162
<b>Others, Western Africa</b>		
Terra Nova		20
Sao Tomé		3
		23
<b>South Africa</b>		
Manicongo (Congo)		13
Mozambique		5
Enchico (Anzico)		2
Anbo (Ambo)		1
Angola (Ndongo)		1
		22
<b>Others</b>		
Spain, Portugal, East and West Indies ( <i>criollos</i> )		49
<b>TOTAL</b>		256

SOURCE: Notarial protocols of the National Archives of Peru, James Lockhart, in *El mundo hispanoperuano 1532–1560*. (approximate figures)

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These ratios were maintained during the first decades of the Conquest, but they underwent a substantial change at the beginning of the seventeenth century, with the legalization of the slave trade in the subequatorial colonies. From that time on, the Africans arrived via Rio de la Plata to replace the decimated

indigenous population in the mines, in the *haciendas* with their extensive agriculture, and in manufacturing. This new African migration originated in Angola, Mozambique, and especially Zambia, from which derived the popular appellation *zambos* given to their children. This name was carried over a century later to the children born of the union of any Black person and an Indian.

The commerce of the first generation of black slaves born in Peru already appeared in the public registers corresponding to the years 1556 and 1557. They document the sale of nineteen *criollo* slaves; the young girls destined for domestic servitude; and the young men for work as artisans, such as builders.

The forced labor of the Blacks and Indians was essential to the establishment of the colonial order. The difference between the work performed by each group was insignificant, simply a matter of form. Whether they were slaves, like the former, or statute-laborers in the different types of "personal services," like the latter, all were equally victims of the overexploitation of their work force. The "personal service of the Indians" was certainly paid, but in such a derisory way that one could not decently speak of salary. Interpretations differ in this regard. It is true that there was a difference in legal status: Blacks were invisible in the eyes of the law (they did not exist as persons with rights), whereas Indians were considered subjects of the Crown. The fact is that the statutes which called for the king's supposed protection were "acknowledged but not applied." Thus in spite of certain legal subtleties, Indians and Blacks found themselves in similar situations and were subjected to the same extreme degree of exploitation.

Owning slaves was considered a sign of wealth. Who owned them? Most administrators, "*encomenderos*," rich artisans, and, of course, high-ranking captains were masters of many slaves. But they were not alone: lawyers, clerks, priests, merchants, artisans of different trades, small landowners, nuns, petty officials, etc., all had slaves.

Slaves almost always worked directly for their owners, but they were sometimes rented out as well; this was especially the case with Blacks who had a talent for a particular type of work. The artisan slaves were the most highly regarded; they were appreciated for their abilities in the trades of mason, smith, carpenter,



baker, foreman, etc. They were in very high demand for the execution of certain delicate tasks. Many baroque constructions of great beauty still bear witness to the labor of Blacks alongside Indians. The artisan slaves were the first to buy their freedom, set up their own shops, and even, in certain cases, to purchase their own slaves.

Unspecialized Blacks were set up in the galleries of the mines, especially in gold mines. Aside from the domestic work in towns, small agriculture constituted a principle area of slave activity. Projects requiring large labor forces, such as the construction of houses, churches, and public buildings, likewise required considerable African manpower.

Even when it was possible, Blacks did not attempt to run away during this period, because they had no sure place to seek refuge. In Peru, the first black revolt took place in 1545: nearly two hundred renegade slaves organized a sort of embryonic kingdom north of Lima, in a swampy area of the cane fields of Huarura. Other similar attempts took place during the course of the colonial period at the beginning of the Republic; these enclaves were known as *palenques* (free territories).

Blacks were an integral part of the Peruvian social landscape, both urban and rural. It was not at all surprising to see a nun walking the streets of Lima followed by a small black girl carrying her basket, a girl who, back at the convent, performed domestic tasks. Or to see a well-known clerk walking in front of an elegant black woman, officially registered as "servant woman," but whom everyone knew to be his concubine. Military men and the administrators of the viceroyalty had the habit of walking about or going to mass accompanied by their black slaves: some held umbrellas while others fanned their masters. As for the Dominicans, Augustines, and Jesuits, they used a great number of slaves on their *haciendas*, which were known for their prosperity and their harsh working conditions.

But black manpower was used for even harsher tasks. Work in the mines was particularly feared for its security, for he who entered "the mouth of hell" had no certainty of coming out alive.

Forced labor and the capture of men posed no problems of conscience to the public opinion of the times. The polemics launched by humanists such as Father Las Casas or José de Acosta had

already been forgotten. In the seventeenth century slavery had become common practice, regulated by a Black Code<sup>8</sup> which the French and Spanish monarchies established for their respective colonies. Thus one could very well strike his breast during the ceremonies of Lent, while being fanned by a slave.

### Slavery Statistics

What was the extent of slavery in the colony? How many slaves arrived and reproduced in Peru? It is estimated that during the first decades of settlement, the Blacks and the Spaniards on the coast were equal in number. But by the time the first census was taken in 1570, the number of Blacks exceeded the number of Spaniards.<sup>9</sup> The rooting of black culture in Peru was already an established fact.

With the exception of Lima, towns did not keep notarized records, which makes research into the slave trade difficult. It is nonetheless registered that most of the *encomenderos* and artisans had between five and twenty slaves, while the petty officials and merchants had two or three each. The census ordered in 1614 by the viceroy Monteclaros gives precise figures: more than ten thousand Blacks were counted in the Lima census (the majority of whom were slaves), which was five times more than the number of Indians living in the capital.<sup>10</sup> At that time Lima had nearly twenty-six thousand inhabitants.

From this time on one can see the strong imprint that black culture will leave on Lima. The population of African origin –black *criollos*, *bozales*, mulattos and *pardos libres* in fact represented more than half of the population.

This presence was not restricted to Lima, for the Blacks were in high demand as much for agricultural work as for the mines; and a case was reported, in 1590, where a royal mandate was issued ordering the purchase of a hundred blacks in order to replace the *mitayos* Indians (subjected to “obligatory service”) for the repair and conservation of a bridge spanning the Apurímac river. This was a gigantic task, and could not be undertaken by the *encomendados* Indians of the area – who were subjects of the local landowners.

During the course of the eighteenth century, which marks both the apogee of the colonial project and the beginning of its decline, seven million African slaves were brought to America.<sup>11</sup> The work-

ings of the viceroyalty were thus well oiled, and this massive arrival of manpower profited agriculture, farming, the mining industry, manufacturing, and artisanry. In the particular case of Peru, the African labor force was concentrated on the coast, especially in Lima, and in the adjacent provinces to the south and north.

The Frenchman A.F. Frézier, passing through Lima in 1713, notes in his travel diary that “the number of white families living in Lima is eight or nine thousand at the most; the rest of the population is made up of mestizo mulattos, blacks and a few Indians, which amounts, more or less, to twenty-five to twenty-eight thousand souls, including clergymen and the men and women of religious orders, who occupy at least one quarter of the city.”<sup>12</sup>

Let us examine Frézier’s statement in detail: nine thousand individuals (and not families) are considered white; the rest – eighteen thousand individuals – is composed of “mestizo mulattos” (otherwise known as mulattos, *zambos*, *pardos libres* and quarteroons, probably for the most part free), and “a few Indians” (around four thousand, for “personal service” prevented free circulation from one zone to another). In short, of the twenty-eight thousand souls living in Lima at that time, fifteen thousand were Black or of black origin. One can see that the African presence constitutes, from that time on, a significant component of Lima’s identity and, by extension, of the entire country, for the new generations of Blacks were for the most part born in Peru. They were *criollos*. This appellation, which dates from that time, later became extended to an inhabitant of Lima saturated with “mulatto” (*amulatado*) culture.

The colonial census of 1793 puts the numbers of slaves at 40,337 slaves, 29,763 among them living in the Intendancy of Lima (capital and surrounding areas), representing 73.7 percent of the total number of Peruvian slaves. Nearly 45,000 *pardos libres* were also counted, 17,964 of them living in the Intendancy of Lima.<sup>13</sup> According to the same census, the total population of Peru was 1,180,669 individuals, of which 85,000 were of black origin, 135,000 considered Spanish and the rest, the majority, composed of Indians and mestizos.

Gregorio de Cangas notes in his *Descripción de la ciudad de Lima* that in 1770 “the number of inhabitants rises to one hundred thou-

sand [baptized] people of the faith" (not including adolescents, children and infants). This number seems high, for the Intendancy of Lima totaled 154,944 inhabitants, and included medium sized towns such as Jauja, Tarma, Pisco, Ica, Huacho and still others. It is thus more probable, as Alberto Flores Galindo notes,<sup>14</sup> that in 1821, the year of national independence, Lima numbered about 60,000 inhabitants.

During the period between 1800 and 1820, Lima, following the *historical trend*, still included a high density of Blacks, *zambos*, mulattos and *pardos libres*. According to Alejandro Reyes, slaves represented between 18 and 22 percent of Lima's population. This percentage rose to 70 percent in towns such as Cañete and rural areas, where most of them worked on large sugarcane plantations.<sup>15</sup>

In his study of the sugar plantations, Pablo Macera speaks of the existence, in 1821, of 41,228 slaves.<sup>16</sup> If we remember that the population of Lima this same year was 60,000 inhabitants, and 18 to 20 percent were slaves, then there would have been nearly 14,000 of them in this city.

Was the fight for Independence an antislavery struggle? How many slaves, if any, were freed?

The liberal elements, who considered slavery as a affront to the human condition, certainly encouraged antislavery claims. But the great pressure exercised by the groups of large property owners represented in Congress prevented any radical advances in this area. In 1821 a decree ordered the liberation of all slaves born after July 28, 1821, the day of Peruvian Independence. But it was determined that the emancipated slaves would not be totally free until the end of their twenty-fifth year. Until then they remained in their masters' service. In 1855, Marshal Ramón Castilla decreed the definitive freedom of the Blacks.

According to the information published by the official Peruvian newspaper, *El Peruano* – on December 23, 1826, slaves represented 4 percent of the total population of the country, estimated at roughly one million inhabitants. Slavery could hardly have been considered a marginal phenomenon.

Between 1800 and 1840 the Blacks were organized into "castes," which had their own mechanisms of trade-guilds, mutual soci-

eties and confraternities. One can count “castes” from Angola, Banguela, Carabalí, Congo, Chala, Guinea, Mangubí, Mina, Mondongo, Mozambique, and Terranovo.

In his analysis of Peruvian minorities, Luis Millones reveals that the 1870 census shows a small minority of Blacks (1.95 percent of the population) and a large majority of Indians (57.60 percent) and a good number of whites and mestizos (38.55 percent). In the census of 1940, the percentage of the population considered black is no more than 0.4 percent; the percentage of whites and mestizos increases to 52.89 percent and people considered indigenous drops to 45.86 percent.<sup>17</sup>

*Crossbreeding* has thus become a massive ethnodemographic reality. But the process of fusion of Whites and Indians also included the mixing of the Black population during the course of five hundred years of history. The importance of the Black presence in Peru is not measured by the small 0.47 percent which appears in the 1940 census (the black population has not been measured as such since then), but by the radical, economic and historical saturation of the Blacks into the culture, customs, food, vocabulary, and music – in other words, the entire heritage<sup>18</sup> which today makes up the formation of Peruvian men and women. One cannot understand the ontological profile of the Peruvian otherwise.

### **Blacks in Peru today**

*Crossbreeding* was thus a fundamental process which held Whites, Blacks and Indians in a single embrace. We can agree with Alfonso Reyes that the “hard-working womb of America” progressively mixed this heterogenous substance, and that today we have a unique American humanity, a “little human race,” to use Bolívar’s expression. During the most recent census it would have been unthinkable for the inquisitive researchers to ask each person what part of him was Black, Indian or Chinese!

The importance of the African component in the formation of the Peruvian identity cannot be measured by the visible existence of islands of black populations – towns like Chincha and Cañete, or sections of Lima such as La Victoria, Rimac, Barrios Altos or Callao – or by the country’s well-known black personalities. The question is much larger: the black component is deeply rooted in Peru’s historical process.

Nonetheless, when one speaks of Blacks in Peru, it is to speak of a certain poet or singer, a soccer player, a cook, or to evoke a series of commonplaces: the charm of supposedly “negroid” rhythms, the taste of black cooking, or black talent for jokes and wit. It is true that remarkable black personalities can be emblematic of their race: a luxuriant poet in words and metaphors such as Enrique Verástegui; a witty narrator with frenzied prose such as Gregorio Martínez; a composer of inventive and sarcastic lines such as Nicomedes Santa Cruz; singers full of grace and rich sensibilities such as Susana Baca and Eva Ayllón; and we could continue to list others in different disciplines. But this is not enough to reveal the breadth of the black presence in Peru. As we have seen in our historical panorama, the labyrinthian process of crossbreeding encompassed the black population little by little – sometimes in waves, as happened in the seventeenth century with the widespread union of Indians and Blacks as a way to avoid paying tribute on their descendants; as a result, today Blacks are part of the Peruvians’ genetic heritage. Black sensuality is present today in the Peruvian collective psychology, as are Indian nostalgia and pantheism. We are not a sum but a synthesis, an ensemble of elements which has defined its own outline: such is the real genealogy of the Peruvian and Latin American identity – to varying degrees, of course.<sup>19</sup>

One must begin with the history of Peru, and its economic history in particular, in order to evaluate the influence of Blacks, who came to work as slaves in the mines, the *haciendas*, the refineries and factories. The exploitation of their labor placed them in a position similar to that of the Indians. Such was the social reality of the colony; and because they shared this exploitation, this oppressed condition, the Blacks, like the Indians, are the social basis of the nation. The problem is that we have not always *consciously* assumed this objective reality.

The Blacks themselves have had and still have a fragmented vision of their participation in the national process. They have had a *ghetto* vision, a guarded vision which demanded signs other than blackness itself. It is certain that thought and action should be focused first and foremost on the black population, who exist for the most part in conditions of extreme poverty (based on income and profession) with little social mobility. But the rest of the

Peruvians should not forget that the black population is a co-founder of the national process. To analyze the problem in terms of ethnicity and race, and not in terms of crossbreeding and nationality, creates an artificial problem, for crossbreeding was the central dynamic behavior of the ethnic groups of Peru. This is demonstrated in the census.

Some speak superficially of a Latin American "search for identity." What we have are ancient, strong, and well-rooted identifying elements. The problem is that we are not *conscious* of this identity, which corresponds to a level of interiorization much deeper than identity seen simply as an objective expression of the races, the culture and the history of a country. In the absence of a national *consciousness*, the defense of the elements of identity is problematic. This explains why the Blacks are not more integrated into the idea of the nation, or the representation of the country. They appear as marginal elements, exogamous, intrusive, whereas History shows us that from 1532 on it has been quite the contrary.

Public opinion is not conscious of crossbreeding. We do not yet realize that after an initial phase marked by violent conflict we have formed a human race, a way of being, an ontological category. The Inca Garcilaso was aware of the ineluctable crossbreeding of the Peruvian.<sup>20</sup> Today the problem is not limited to Blacks; it concerns the conditions under which the life of the country is led. The growing "peripherization" of Peru, the implantation of exogamous cultural and economic systems, and the uniformization of society considerably reduce the space for the expression of autochthonous cultures, and much less for black culture.<sup>21</sup> Television – mirroring a false identity – does not reflect a national image, and consequently expressions of Peruvian culture remain marginal. Blacks appear on the small screen only as embodiments of exoticism and otherness: an advertisement for coffee will show a mulatto woman swinging her hips; another will use the same image to sell "hedonistic" condiments ("Blacks have the gift of defying gravity with their hips," writes one poet jokingly.)

Public opinion toward Blacks mixes fascination with rejection; on the one hand, people admire their "physical talents," their "sense of rhythm," seeing them as supermen for their success in sports and the arts; on the other hand, people reject difference, a sense of otherness. Peruvian education has not served as the cement that might

bind together men and women who, despite different ethnic backgrounds, share many affinities stemming from a common historical process. Children are not taught to respect and to understand the expressions of others; there is no educational policy aimed at developing national understanding. There can be neither nation nor national consciousness without an education that acts as its *cement*, a constructive principle; the groundwork is being laid for racism, both latent and explicit. This does not affect the cultural manifestations of Blacks alone, but those of the Andean world as well.

The consequences of this deficiency in education's function of constructing a nation are serious and manifold. But this is only part of a larger problem: the absence of a political class endowed with any sort of national project. The black intellectual José Campos Dávila imagines this relationship in the following terms: "no one knows their aspirations and convictions as humans and as Peruvians. This is why presence and invisibility have been two constant characteristics of our experience in Peru."<sup>22</sup>

Indeed the black world remains largely disregarded. Not long ago the majority of studies in this field had an ethnographic character, or stemmed from an exotic fascination with black folklore. During the past few years, however, valuable studies have been published, such as *Rebeliones de esclavos en el Perú* by Wilfredo Kapsoli;<sup>23</sup> or the *Diccionario afro-peruano* by Fernando Romero.<sup>24</sup> In 1986 a "Seminario sobre poblaciones inmigrantes" gave rise to a very well-documented collective work.<sup>25</sup> For his part, Emilio Harth-Terré has continued to research Blacks during the colonial period. Two specialized research centers have been created: the Institute of Afro-Peruvian Studies and the Francisco Congo Study Center. There is thus a growing interest in black questions, which will allow for a better understanding and consolidation of the elements of identity. We must stress that these efforts are being made by private persons and centers, not by the State. This is yet another proof of the lack of relations between Blacks and institutions.

The absence of Blacks is all the more evident in positions of responsibility in public offices or the higher levels of private and official institutions. Although Peru today has a head of State of Asian origin, it has no black Secretary of State, under secretary of state, ambassador, vice-admiral, general or bishop. Blacks have not entered into the hierarchies of public and private power, nor is



there a political forum for them along the lines, however mediocre, of the National Indigenous Institute created for the Indians. Blacks, as a social group with specific characteristics and needs, do not exist as far as the Peruvian State is concerned.

The liberation of the Peruvian individual, which consists in his overcoming prejudices, breaking mental bonds, going beyond ethnic complexes, and being able to celebrate an identifying patrimony, has yet to be achieved. The same is true of the national project. This slow process of liberation is common to other American countries.

Translated from the French by Sophie Hawkes

## Notes

1. This essay is part of a study of Blacks in South America, which will soon be published by the National Council of Culture and Arts in Mexico.

2. *Histoire générale de l'Afrique*, vol. IV, "L'Afrique du XIIe au XVIe siècle." Editor of this volume, D.T. Niama, UNESCO, 1984.

3. The relationship between Europe and America, for reasons of historical density, cannot help but be fraught with ambiguity. The otherness of America is at the origin of the birth of European humanism in the sixteenth century, for it was also the first victim of the crime of *lèse-humanité*, denounced by father Las Casas in his *Breve Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias* published in 1544. For the "traps of otherness" and the "strategies for recovery (encubrimiento)" set into play by Europe, see our study, "America-Europe: In the Mirror of Otherness," *Diogenes* 159, 1992.

4. *Africa en América Latina*, Coordinated by Manuel Moreno Fraginale, Mexico, UNESCO, Siglo XXI, 1977. This collective work gathers together the contributions of European, African and North and South American researchers.

5. The Jesuit Alonso de Sandoval, slave chaplain in Columbia, wrote a *Tractatus de instauranda aethiopum salute*, a tract on slavery, published in Seville in 1627 and reprinted by Enriqueta Vila Vilar in 1987, Madrid: Alianza Editorial. See also "Lazos culturales entre América Latina, el Caribe y Africa" by Luz María Martínez Montiel, in *Africa en América*, Mexico: Unam-Ceestem, 1982.

6. Nicolás Sánchez-Albornoz, "Las migraciones anteriores al siglo XIX," *Europa, Asia y Africa en América Latina y el Caribe*, Coordinated by Birgitta Leander, Mexico, UNESCO, Siglo XXI, 1989.

7. James Lockhart, *El mundo hispanoperuano 1532-1560*, Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1982, pp. 218-253.

8. On this subject one may consult the remarkable works of Louis Sala-Molins, *Le Code Noir, Le Martyre de Canaan*, Paris: P.U.F., 1987, and *l'Afrique aux Amériques. Le Code Noir espagnol*, Paris: P.U.F., 1992.

9. Guillermo Céspedes del Castillo, "La sociedad colonial americana en los siglos XVI y XVII," in *Historia social y económica de España y América*, edited by Jaime Vicens Vives, vol. III, Barcelona: Teide 1957, p. 402.

10. Emilio Harth-Terré, *El artesano negro en la arquitectura virreinal limeña*, Lima: Editorial Universitaria 1971, p. 6; *Presencia del negro en el virreinato del Perú*, Lima: Editorial Universitaria, 1971, p. 48.
11. Alejandro Reyes Flores, "Esclavitud en Lima 1800–1840," in *Primer seminario sobre poblaciones inmigrantes*, Lima: Concytee 1988, p. 44.
12. Frézier, "Lima 1713," in *Viajeros*, Lima: édition anthologique, 1959, p. 13. (Excerpt from the *Relation de voyage de la Mer du Sud aux côtes du Chili et du Pérou, fait pendant les années 1712, 1713 & 1714, dédié à Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans, Régent du Royaume, par M. Frézier, ingénieur ordinaire du Roy.*)
13. Lorenzo Huertas, "Esclavitud y economía regional: Huamanga 1577–1855," in *Primer seminario sobre poblaciones inmigrantes*, Lima: Concytee, 1988, p. 19.
14. Alberto Flores Galindo, "El militarismo y la dominación británica," in *Nueva historia general del Perú*, Lima: Mosca Azul 1982, p. 107.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
16. Pablo Macera, *Les plantaciones azucareras en el Perú, 1821–1875*, Lima: Biblioteca Andina, 1975, p. 25.
17. Luis Millones Santagadea, *Minorías étnicas en el Perú*, Lima, 1973.
18. On the historical formation of the socio-cultural patrimony, see the detailed study, "La part de l'Afrique et ses répercussions," by Kiflé Selassie Beseat, UNESCO, Cape Verdean Colloquium, May 1992.
19. Latin American philosophers can no longer speak of "identity" as an abstract cultural category, separate from the *real* ethnologic, demographic and historical processes of the region. The same is true for the idea of "humanism."
20. Edgar Montiel, *Inca Garcilaso. Identidad de la Historia*. Coordinated by Cuadernos Americanos, Mexico: UNAM, 1990.
21. *Idem*, "Geopolítica de las consciencias. Cultura latinoamericana y relaciones internacionales," in *Revista de la Acedemia Diplomática del Perú*, Lima, 1990, pp. 152–166.
22. José Campos Dávila, "Formación de la identidad negra. Aproximación psicológica," a series of three articles published on October 21, 28 and November 4, 1990 in *Varietades*, a cultural supplement to the daily newspaper *La Crónica*.
23. See as well the book by Germán Peralta Rivera, *Los mecanismos del comercio negro*, Lima: Kunter Editores, 1990.
24. Fernando Romero, *Diccionario afro-peruano*, Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1990.
25. A two-volume work including, among others, works by Lorenzo Huertas, Victoria Espinoza, Alejandro Reyes and Simeón Orellana.