

Ben Lladós

AMST 135: Peoples and Cultures of The Americas

Professor Chavez

2/25/24

Historical Analysis

Ni De Aquí, Ni De Allá

There's a saying that goes like this: "Ni de aquí, ni de allá," meaning "Not from here, nor there." Its essence encapsulates the complex identity struggle faced by many immigrants. However, in the context of the colonial period in the Americas, this sentiment transcends personal experience to symbolize broader socio-economic disparities and resistance movements that shaped the region's history. Over time, we keep seeing this pattern of resistance turning into revolution. This starts from that very quote, "Ni de aquí, ni de allá." These transnational trade networks, racial capitalism, and labor exploitation shaped the economic system and structure of socioeconomic status in the Americas. Despite the years and years of evolution in our ethics as humans, there is still a consistent pattern in which wealth is concentrated among a privileged few while the majority are forced to work. In the Americas throughout the 20th century, work was often under exploitative conditions and divided along racial and class lines, specifically European settlers and elites disempowering indigenous and African communities. The 19th century saw industrialization, forming a working class that catalyzed inequality. By the 20th century, resistance movements were started because of the economic system and socioeconomic structures that colonialism had built. This analysis will focus on the enduring legacies of colonialism, capitalism, and resistance in the Americas.

The first step towards the disruption of the Americas was colonial exploitation and racial capitalism throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. The colonial period is known for establishing extractive enterprises – for example, plantation agriculture and mining – underpinned by racial capitalism. In Jonathan Brown's *Latin America: A Social History of the Colonial Period*, we see many of the American labor systems. One of the primary faults in the labor systems was disease, causing a shortage of European workers. Silver exports were the leading American export Spain with the revenue to be the most powerful European dynasty. To address their labor shortage, they introduced a massive labor draft system known as Mita to provide them with enough labor in the mines. "The *mita* obliged every native villager within a certain distance of Potosi to work in the silver mines once every seven years. Approximately 14,000 workers annually were to make themselves available under the Andean labor draft." (Brown, pg. 182). This Spanish mining was just one example of the reliance on coerced indigenous labor, perpetuating systems of bondage and exploitation. The plantation agriculture industry similarly relied on the enslaved labor imported from Africa, causing a dependency on these groups. The concentration of wealth among the European settlers was one of the defining features of the colonial economy. It was common for Europeans to obtain land through violent dispossession, making the inequality even worse. Bringing it back to Spain and Peru, one example is the first European city built on the Pacific coast. Before Spain inhabited the land, it was a powerful native city, thriving on the community they had built from the ground up. Soon, they would see it all burn down with the arrival of the Spanish. Francisco Pizarro and Diego de Almagro "drew up a partnership to outfit an expedition, which they financed with their previous business profits as well as by attractive new capital investments...he assembled other seasoned fighters and finally set sailed for Peru with 180 men and 30 horses." (Brown, pg. 95). The Spanish fighters weren't even the first thing

on natives' minds. "Measles and smallpox arrived in Peru before Pizarro did, spread by infected Native Americans who had had contact with Europeans in the Caribbean. Emperor Wayna Qhapag (Huayna Capac in Spanish) won the civil war, but the kingdom is still etched with dissension." (Brown, pg. 95). Diseases are a massive topic when discussing the dispossession of indigenous communities' territories. This economic exploitation was not only driven by profit but also served to reinforce the colonial power structures. The transactional trade networks built during the colonial period laid the groundwork for enduring patterns of socioeconomic inequality and exploitation that would shape the region to be where it is today.

The 19th century witnessed a significant transformation in the economic landscape of the Americas, backed by the rise of industrialization and the emergence of the working class. As Europe kept expanding throughout the Americas, new labor exploitation and class division emerged. One example of this that we all learn about in our American schooling is the effects of the Louisiana Purchase. While the Louisiana Purchase was great for the United States, the motives behind it are dark, similar to the rest of American history. In his book *THE LATINO CRUCIBLE Its Origins in Nineteenth-Century Wars, Revolutions, and Empire*, Ramón A. Gutiérrez examines the ramifications of land acquisition and slavery in shaping American society. He writes: "Americans began moving into Texas where land was abundantly cheap and slavery could be maintained" (Gutiérrez, pg. 93). Foreign investment also played a pivotal role in shaping economic inequalities during the 19th century." As Gutiérrez mentioned, foreign investment played a considerable role; one example is the Louisiana Purchase. Gutiérrez explores the war of 1836 between Spain and the United States for Texas. At the time, the United States was under the impression that they bought Texas as part of the Louisiana Purchase, something Spain denied. During this time, Mexico declared independence from Spain, leaving

Mexico to decide what would happen to Texas. Americans “began moving into Texas where land was abundantly cheap, and slavery could be maintained.” (Gutiérrez, pg. 93). This working class started to emerge throughout the South, laying a foundation for the socioeconomic structures that would define the era. Foreign investment also played a pivotal role in shaping economic inequalities during the 19th century. European and North American capital flowed into Latin American economies, fueling industrialization and worsening social disparities at the time. The neocolonial policies were even worse at times than what came before them. Land ownership stayed concentrated to a small percentage of wealthy elites, passing down the old traditions of the colonial era. Moreover, exploiting natural resources – for example, minerals and agricultural products – enriched foreign investors at the expense of local communities. This exploitation of resources and wealth inequality is filled with anger among the working class, laying the groundwork for social movements against economic exploitation. This shows that the 19th century was pivotal for the financial history of the Americas, characterized by the consolidation of capitalist structures and the emergence of class-based struggles for social justice.

By the 20th century, the legacy of colonialism and capitalism was the fire behind the fight for social justice and economic equality. As multinational corporations gained power, foreign investors could influence the local economies without physically being there. Labor exploitation persisted, and a small percentage of wealthy elites once again controlled local economies. In their book *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution: Social Upheaval and the Challenge of Rule since the Late Nineteenth Century*, Gil Joseph and Jürgen Buchenau highlight the social upheaval in Mexico driven by economic grievances and calls for systemic change. Their analysis highlights the core demands of the student protesters, including “the release of all political prisoners, implementation of a democratic structure of governance at the national university,

dismissal of a police chief known for his brutality, and dissolution of the paramilitary riot police known as granaderos” (Joseph & Buchenau, pg. 164). One of my favorite protests is the student movement of 1968. I find it fascinating because of how students my age were able to make a significant impact on the world. “Their demands were primarily of a political nature: release of all political prisoners, implementation of a democratic structure of governance at the national university, dismissal of a police chief known for his brutality, and dissolution of the paramilitary riot police known as granaderos.” (Joseph & Buchenau, pg. 164). Joseph and Buchenau mentioned that these riots occurred because these students were seeking a redistribution of wealth and resources. What particularly stands out about the Student Movement of 1968 is the method in which they protested. “The students took advantage of the spotlight cast on their city by the 1968 Summer Olympics, the first such event to be held in the developing world.” (Joseph & Buchenau, pg. 164). Taking advantage of this massive stepping stone for the developing world to be able to come out and strike for true equality is something that I envy. Catalyzing this social and political change was just one small stroke of the bigger picture of the 20th century: implementing reforms to address long-standing grievances and inequalities.

This leads us back to where we are today, the landing pad of the economic trajectory of the Americas from colonialism to today. In the world we live in, racial capitalism, concentrated wealth, and foreign investment are all slowly fading away, but we can still see hints of it from the past. The little boy inside of me never saw the racial inequality that my culture stems from. When looking back on the resilience and values that my parents instilled in me, I see where they come from: the generations of mistreated Hispanics from all across the Americas. As a first-generation Argentine-American, this phrase has always had a grip on me. I never felt like I belonged at school in the US; I was called racial slurs and told to go back to where I came from.

Well, in Argentina, the story isn't much different: every year, I go for a month, and while it's home to my parents, it's not home to me. I am the gringo when I go, no matter how good my Spanish is or how good I can make asado. So does "Ni de aquí, ni de allá" really apply to me? I argue no, there is no social separation in the Latinx community; we all stand with each other, and I am proud to say that it has been a system built and passed down by generations.

Works Cited

Brown JC. *Latin America : A Social History of the Colonial Period*. Thomson Wadsworth; 2005.
https://uosc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01USC_INST/hs9vaa/alma991016269629703731

Joseph GM, Buchenau J. *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution Social Upheaval and the Challenge of Rule since the Late Nineteenth Century*. Duke University Press; 2013.
doi:10.1515/9780822377382
https://uosc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01USC_INST/hs9vaa/alma991042974398803731

Ramon A. Gutierrez TA/ RAG. *The New Latino Studies Reader*. University of California Press; 2016.
https://uosc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01USC_INST/273cgt/cdi_perlego_books_552662