

**Contributions in Women's Studies**

The Chains of Protection: The Judicial Response to Women's Labor  
Legislation  
*Judith A. Baer*

Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Collection  
*Kathleen O'Connor Blumhagen and Walter D. Johnson, editors*

# Latin American Women

---

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

---

edited by Asunción Lavrin

Contributions in Women's Studies, Number 3

©1978



Greenwood Press  
Westport, Connecticut • London, England

305.4  
X 348

**Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data**

Main entry under title:

Latin American women.

(Contributions in women's studies; no. 3)  
Includes index.

1. Women—Latin America—History—Addresses, essays, lectures. 2. Women—Latin America—Social conditions—Addresses, essays, lectures.

I. Lavrin, Asunción. II. Series.

HQ1460.S.L37 301.41'2'098 77-94758  
ISBN 0-313-20309-1

Copyright © 1978 by Asunción Lavrin

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, by any process or technique, without the express written consent of the publisher.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 77-94758  
ISBN: 0-313-20309-1  
ISSN: 0147-104X

First published in 1978

Greenwood Press, Inc.  
51 Riverside Avenue, Westport, Connecticut 06880

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4

---

## Contents

---

<i>Tables</i>	vii
<i>Figures</i>	ix
<i>Illustrations</i>	xi
<i>Foreword</i>	xiii
<i>Introduction</i>	3
1. In Search of the Colonial Woman in Mexico: The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries <i>Asunción Lavrin</i>	23
2. Female and Family in the Economy and Society of Colonial Brazil <i>A. J. R. Russell-Wood</i>	60
3. Indian Women and White Society: The Case of Sixteenth-Century Peru <i>Elinor C. Burkett</i>	101
4. Women in a Noble Family: The Mexican Counts of Regla, 1750-1830 <i>Edith Couturier</i>	129

(Caracas, 1826). See also Evelyn Cherpak's article (chap. 8) in this volume. Tulio Halperin-Donghi also speaks of the role of women as entrepreneurs in regions of the Viceroyalty of Rio de la Plata: "Perhaps because of the Indian heritage, perpetuated owing to the participation of women in economically important activities, in agriculture and above all in domestic crafts, the life of the Interior had a more marked feminine character"; *Politics, Economics and Society in Argentina in the Revolutionary Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 57.

46. *Mercurio Peruano*, no. 5 (16 January 1791), p. 59; no. 8 (27 January 1791), p. 59.

47. Guillermo Hernández de Alba, *Aspectos de la cultura en Colombia* (Bogotá: Biblioteca Popular de la Cultura Colombiana, 1974), p. 245.

48. Lockhart, *Spanish Peru*, p. 153.

49. Vicente Gregorio Quesada, *Escenas de la vida colonial en el siglo XVIII: Crónica de la Villa Imperial de Potosí* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Huarpes, 1945), p. 202. Quesada narrates the tale of a noble lady of Potosí who was considered to be "of perfect virtue," of wealth, discretion, and beauty. She is contrasted with a lady of lesser station, whose description is the antithesis of those qualities of the noble woman. Such contrasts frequently appeared in the journals' discussion of women.

50. Lucila Rodas de Villagrán, *Desarrollo histórico de la educación de la mujer y su situación actual* (Guatemala: Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, 1965), pp. 5, 17.

51. Bouten, *Mary Wollstonecraft*, p. 54. For the English journals, see Peter J. Miller, "Eighteenth-Century Periodicals for Women," *History of Education Quarterly* 9 (Fall 1971): 279-85. Two other examples of feminist journals were Madame Le Prince Beaumont's *Nouveau Magasin Français* and the *Bibliothèque des Femmes*. See Evelin Sullerot, *Histoire de la presse féminine des origines à 1848* (Paris: A. Colin, 1966); Jane Herrick, "Periodicals for Women in Mexico During the Nineteenth Century," *The Americas* 14 (October 1957): 135-44. June Hahner's essay, chap. 10 in this volume, deals with the Brazilian feminist press of the nineteenth century. In Spanish America no feminist periodicals emerged until after the Wars of Independence. In Mexico there was the *Semanario de las Señoritas Mexicanas* (Mexico City, 1836), and in Bogotá there was *El Rocío* (1872).

## 8

Evelyn Cherpak

## The participation of women in the independence movement in Gran Colombia, 1780-1830

The struggle for independence in the area known as Gran Colombia during the years 1780 to 1822 has long received the attention of scholars.<sup>1</sup> Historians have studied the origins, the leaders, and the aftermath of the Wars for Independence. Yet, little notice has been paid to the women who participated in them. This neglect of half of the population is no longer acceptable. Women were not passive bystanders in this conflict. They participated in it and were affected by it, as individuals, as mothers, and as wives. Therefore, it is necessary to reassess the nature of their contribution and the effects of the wars on their role and status in society. This approach will lead to a fuller understanding of the revolutionary era.

The proper role for the Ibero-American woman of the colonial era was that of wife and mother. Girls were directed toward marriage from childhood for a variety of reasons. The Catholic Church, a traditional and conservative institution of great influence, encouraged matrimony and the continuance of family life. There were few other acceptable economic opportunities by which women could sustain and support themselves independently. Although the upper-class widows often carried on their husbands' businesses and had more legal freedom than single or married women, the incidence of remarriage among them was high, for many still felt in need of a male protector. Men themselves recognized the importance of a legal wife in Latin America, so they, too, responded to social pressure to marry. Although women married early and were encouraged to produce large families, they did make contributions to certain areas of life both in and outside the home. Women engaged in trade and com-

merce; held large amounts of money and property; collected debts; controlled the female religious orders; sponsored, organized, and financed *colegios* for girls; sustained charitable activities; contributed to the religious literature of the day; managed and organized their homes; supervised the servants; gave the rudiments of education to their progeny; and moved to exert control over their husbands.<sup>2</sup> The Latin American woman, although homebound much of the time, was not a docile, passive type invested with little responsibility, for she took on much and exerted herself on behalf of her family and society in general.

Given the participation of women in various spheres of life, it is not altogether surprising to find them active in and supportive of the struggle for independence in Gran Colombia. Women contributed to the independence movement in numerous ways. First, and perhaps most dramatic, was their personal participation in combat, accessory actions, and espionage. Second, women lent their support in their traditional helping roles as hostesses of political *tertulias* and as nurses. Third, they made significant economic contribution by donating moneys and supplies to the insurgents. Finally, personal sacrifices—such as loss of loved ones, confiscation of properties and personal wealth, and poverty and exile—were endured by many.

In the decades before 1810 various socially prominent women throughout the Viceroyalty of New Granada held and attended *tertulias* where ideas of independence and revolution were discussed. Manuela Sanz de Santamaría de González Manrique of Bogotá periodically held meetings of her literary circle, El Buen Gusto, where *políticos* like Camilo Torres met to discuss radical ideas.<sup>3</sup> In 1808 in Caracas, Josefa Palacios and her husband, José Félix Rivas, sponsored a gathering at their home at which they hoped to convert supporters of the Spanish system to the side of independence. In Quito, another colonial hotbed of discontent, Manuela Cañizares held a *tertulia* where the 10 August 1809 movement for independence was hatched. Deeply implicated in the plot, Manuela's name was put on a wanted list and a reward offered for her capture. In order to escape arrest, she entered a convent in Quito, where she remained until her death in 1813.<sup>4</sup>

While a select group of well-educated white women were exposed to ideas of revolution at social gatherings, others became directly involved in the preindependence *tumultos* that occurred in the area prior to 1810. The Comunero revolts of 1781 in Socorro, Antioquia, Neiva, and Maracaibo saw women in leadership, participatory, and supportive roles.<sup>5</sup> The Coro slave revolt of 1795, which had republican government in Venezuela as one of its goals, numbered women among its participants,<sup>6</sup> as did the Gual-España episode of 1797. In the latter affair, Joaquina, the wife of José María España, the prime suspect, hid her husband from the authorities, encouraged a revolt of their slaves, and along with Isabel Gómez, a *parda* midwife, distributed revolutionary literature throughout Caracas. These two women were imprisoned and then exiled, while

the female relatives of the other men involved in the scheme were deported to Spain.

The revolts that occurred in Gran Colombia prior to 1810 served as a prelude to the Wars for Independence that were fought in the area until 1822. Just as women were active in the preindependence conflicts, so were they present during the revolutionary wars. Feminine participation in the events of the day was an individual matter, dictated solely by choice. Although the patriots of Gran Colombia were well aware of the activities of women in the preindependence period, nothing was done directly by them to enlist their aid in the war effort. Nevertheless, participation was broadly based; lower-class females and those of mixed blood were as active and effective as women of the upper classes.

The women who became involved did so for a number of reasons. The ties of kinship, no doubt, influenced some to declare themselves for independence. Those who belonged to families with male members deeply involved tended to commit themselves more readily than their less politicized sisters. The economic and financial aspects of the Bourbon Reforms—namely, increased taxes and imposts, which directly affected the prosperity of many households in Gran Colombia of which women were a part—served as motivating factors. Patriotic feeling was not alien to women and could have stimulated some of them to action. Certain individuals may have had specific personal reasons for wanting to work for independence. Some may have hoped to profit from the properties and goods that their male relatives might obtain at some later date as a reward for service. Added wealth and the perquisites of political power might filter down and be enjoyed by them, too, albeit indirectly. Others may have found in the politically turbulent times a perfect channel for expressing their personal rebellion against society, which, at the moment, took a political form.

While some individuals may have hoped to benefit personally in the aftermath of independence, most did not expect their sex to profit collectively from whatever freedom might bring. The involvement of women was tangential to any improvement in their own legal, political, and economic position, and they neither championed, hoped for, nor expected any improvement in their status. Most women still did not aspire to any role other than the traditional one of wife and mother. Developments in the sphere of women's rights, then, would await a later date.

Whatever their reasons for involvement in the independence movement, the presence of women was apparent during the years 1810 to 1822. Although women were not expected to fight and conscription was unheard of in Gran Colombia, some individual women joined the independence armies. Females who traveled with the troops did so intermittently, most of the time in disguise. Records attest to the fact that women fought at the battle of Boyacá in 1819, the turning point of the war in New Granada. Evangelista Tamayo, a native of

Tunja, fought there under Simón Bolívar and continued to serve until she died at San Luis de Coro in 1821, with the rank of captain.<sup>8</sup> Teresa Corneja and Manuela Tinoco, both from San Carlos, Venezuela, and Rosa Canelones of Arauca dressed up as men and took part in the battles of Gameza, Pantano de Vargas, and Boyacá.<sup>9</sup> Women were also present at the battle of Pichincha, which liberated the Audiencia of Quito in 1822.<sup>10</sup>

While some women joined the troops to fight far afield, others remained home to defend their cities. Juana Ramírez was one who helped to organize a battery of women called Las Mujeres that fought in the defense of Maturín, Venezuela.<sup>11</sup> Women also figured in the defense of the Venezuelan cities of Barinas, Valencia, and Ospino.<sup>12</sup> A foreign traveler to Venezuela reported that the women of the island of Margarita were especially brave and capable in battle. When General Pablo Morillo first attempted to invade the island, he found that "these gallant amazons constantly worked the guns in the battalion under General Gómez; and the havoc which they made among the enemy, sufficiently proved the skill and dexterity they had acquired in the management of their artillery."<sup>13</sup> The participation of women was instrumental in forcing Morillo's retreat.

Simón Bolívar speedily acknowledged the contributions, deeds, and achievements of female combatants. In a proclamation to the army that liberated Trujillo province, Venezuela, he praised not only the male soldiers, but also the women who fought there. Moreover, he cited their example to inspire men. According to Bolívar:

... even the fair sex, the delights of humankind, our amazons have fought against the tyrants of San Carlos with a valor divine, although without success. The monsters and tigers of Spain have shown the full extent of the cowardice of their nation. They have used their infamous arms against the innocent feminine breasts of our beauties; they have shed their blood. They have killed many of them and they loaded them with chains, because they conceived the sublime plan of liberating their beloved country!<sup>14</sup>

In addition, Bolívar expressed gratitude to the women who defended the city of Socorro, New Granada. When the Liberator visited the area in 1820, he composed a tribute to the women and had it entered into the *cabildo* books. In their response the women assured him of their continued support.<sup>15</sup>

However, not all women who wanted to fight on the side of the insurgents were able to do so. The principal society women of the province of Barinas, Venezuela, who had embraced the republican cause from the beginning, wrote a letter to the governor dated 18 October 1811, in which they offered their services as soldiers. Apparently a garrison stationed in the capital had left to repel a royalist attack, and the ladies wanted to defend their area. In the letter that the women composed they discounted feminine weakness as a factor

meriting special consideration, and they showed their zeal for battle. They wrote: "We are not unaware that you, attentive to the weakness of our sex, perhaps have tried to excuse us from military hardships; but you know very well that love of country animates crueler beings than us and there are no obstacles so insurmountable that cannot conquer it."<sup>16</sup> Nicolás Pumar, secretary of the Provincial Government, answered the petition and thanked the ladies for their generous offer of support, but he refused to use them in the defense of the province. However, the editors of the *Gaceta de Caracas* were so impressed by this sanguine display of patriotism that they reprinted the letter in their 5 November 1811 edition.<sup>17</sup>

While some women engaged in combat, others lent services of a different, but equally valuable, kind to the military struggle for independence in Gran Colombia. Since women were less suspect, many were used in espionage work as spies, couriers, and informers. Perhaps the most notorious female spy of the period was Policarpa Salavarrieta of New Granada. Pola, as she was called, used her talents as a seamstress to gain access to the homes of royalist women in Bogotá where she uncovered valuable information and delivered it to the insurgents. Her success in espionage spurred the Spanish authorities' interest in her capture.<sup>18</sup> In 1817 she was arrested by the royalists as one of the principal republican agents and sentenced to death. On 14 November 1817 she was shot in Bogotá's main square.<sup>19</sup> Her death occasioned great public notice and consternation, and over the years she became somewhat of a national heroine, a symbol of patriotism and resistance.<sup>20</sup>

Policarpa Salavarrieta was only one of many New Granadan women who were arrested, tried, and then executed for aiding and abetting guerrillas during the 1816-19 resistance movement. General Pablo Morillo, whose forces occupied the territory during these years, gave his military commanders orders to proceed swiftly against all traitors, regardless of sex. Shortly thereafter, the executions began.<sup>21</sup>

Other women who were suspected of working for the insurgents faced prison terms or were forced into exile. The usual procedure was temporary incarceration in a Bogotá jail and then removal to a distant town. In a circular directed to the judges and priests of the towns where exiled women lived, General Antonio Casano, the military governor of Bogotá, gave explicit instructions on how to deal with the offenders. The women were forbidden to attend social functions, ordered to wear simple clothing, and made to receive religious instruction, since it was assumed that only the godless supported independence.<sup>22</sup>

Those who were not exiled were often forced to perform works of charity. Certain women were ordered to quarter royalist soldiers in their homes and to cook and sew for them. Some women were even made to clean streets. In order to facilitate these so-called charitable acts the Society of Beneficence was created by Governor Casano. Although this society was modeled on one that

existed in Spain during the wars with the French, vast differences separated the two. While the women of Spain gave of their services freely, the women of Bogotá were forced to contribute.<sup>23</sup>

According to Elvia Gutiérrez Isaza, a Colombian historian, 44 women were executed during the resistance, 119 were arrested and then exiled, and 15 were sentenced to hard labor. It is practically impossible to unearth accurate statistics regarding the number of women persecuted, but these figures serve as a rough, albeit conservative, estimate.<sup>24</sup>

Women also made useful contributions to the independence effort in their role as noncombatants; they guided the patriot armies along their way, carried water to soldiers in battle, and helped to bury the dead.<sup>25</sup> Women played an important role as nurses in field hospitals where the services that they rendered were vital. Trinidad Morán noted: "The military hospital in Caracas was the meeting place for the most beautiful and pleasant ladies in the world: . . . Each one of us believed to have in these ladies a mother or a sister interested in our health and I am not mistaken in saying that many escaped and owe their salvation to such merciful offices."<sup>26</sup>

Although many women lent their services to the troops while maintaining their permanent residences, others left home and hearth to follow the soldiers throughout their campaigns. These so-called *juanas* or *cholas* (camp followers) were usually women of the people, half-castes, who went along as wives, mistresses, or companions of the common soldiers. Since it was difficult for an army to provide all the services that it needed in those days, the tasks performed by these women were invaluable. Their help was essential, and without it the armies could not have functioned effectively. The camp followers traveled tens of thousands of kilometers on foot, prepared food, nursed the sick, and even bore arms when need be.<sup>27</sup> No doubt, their presence boosted the morale of the troops and discouraged desertions.

Despite their good deeds, the camp followers were not welcomed by the leaders of either the independence or the Spanish armies. Apparently they feared that women might slow up their movements, drain rations, and, in general, prove a nuisance. Both Generals Pablo Morillo and Francisco Santander issued orders in 1817 and 1819, respectively, that forbade women from traveling with the troops.<sup>28</sup> These orders, however, did not hold, for women continued to march with their menfolk, tend to their needs, and, in this way, maintain a semblance of family life in a period of change and disorder. The presence of camp followers was a time-honored custom that could not be abolished by military proscriptions.

The economic support that women gave to the independence armies in gifts of money, food, and matériel was vitally important to the insurgents' success. Throughout the span of the wars women figured as generous contributors, and as early as 1811 they began to donate both cash and goods. The *Gaceta de Caracas* reprinted lists of the names of contributors that same year and peri-

odically thereafter. Although some of the donations made by women were as small as one-half *peso*, others like Juana López, a widow from Calabozo, gave as much as 100 *pesos*.<sup>29</sup> The vast majority of women who contributed money and wartime supplies did so on an individual basis and without any outside pressure. However, María Antonia Bolívar, whose sympathies lay with the royalists, was forced by her brother to hand over 300 slaves from her estate at San Mateo to the republican army.<sup>30</sup> There is no indication that women formed societies dedicated to supporting independence, materially or otherwise, like the Daughters of Liberty of the American Revolution. When women banded together, they did so informally, intermittently, and briefly, usually to meet an immediate crisis. For example, in 1820 the women of Socorro offered to house and clothe, at their own expense, a hundred men who were scheduled to receive military training, and in that same year almost all the women of Tunja joined together to sew three thousand jackets urgently needed by the army.<sup>31</sup>

The economic contributions that women made to the war effort were indispensable in sustaining the insurgents, yet some also made contributions of a personal nature that were, perhaps, even more of a sacrifice. One of the most celebrated females of this stripe was a widow, Simona Duque, of Antioquia province. Despite the fact that she was poverty-stricken, she encouraged her five sons to join the independence army. She even presented them herself to General José María Córdova when he came through her area. Córdova reportedly was reluctant to induct all five, but Simona insisted. Impressed by her patriotic spirit, he wrote to Vice-President Santander, urging him to give her a pension. Santander assigned her the sum of sixteen *pesos* a month and ordered her story published in a Bogotá newspaper.<sup>32</sup>

Besides being active participants in the independence conflict, the women of Gran Colombia were also its victims and martyrs. The immediate effects of the revolution on the women caught up in it were traumatic. The women who took part in the struggle and those who remained aloof from it alike faced rape, capture, and death as insurgent and royalist armies swept across their lands. The Black Legend of Spanish cruelty had a measure of truth to it, given some of the atrocities committed by the royalists. For example, in San Mateo, Venezuela, in March 1814, Pedro Armas reported to a priest that the royalists had killed his eighty-year-old mother and three of his children, raped his daughter, and kidnapped his wife.<sup>33</sup>

Many of the women who were lucky enough to escape with their lives faced an uncertain future. During the War to the Death in 1813-14 in Venezuela, the Spanish armies used women and children to carry baggage and foodstuffs.<sup>34</sup> In some instances women were forced into prostitution and made to follow the troops. Others had their properties destroyed, as royalist soldiers usually burned and pillaged the areas that they marched through. Moreover, they stole women's jewels and even their very clothing.<sup>35</sup> Occasionally royalist generals

forced women to emigrate to other areas in lieu of killing them. In October 1814, José Tomás Boves, a *llanero* in the employ of the Spanish army, ordered numerous women to leave Cumaná province; and more than eight thousand people perished en route to their destination.<sup>36</sup>

The conclusion of the Wars to the Death in 1814 did not better the situation of Venezuelan women, for as long as the Spaniards held Venezuelan territory, women were persecuted. In 1816 four women in the province of La Paz were punished for their disloyalty to the king: Vicenta Eguina was fined 6,000 *pesos* and exiled in perpetuity from the area; Ramona Sinosan y Palisa was sent to a convent; and Simona Manzaneda and Ursula Goiziuta were admonished in public.<sup>37</sup> When the royalists occupied Maracaibo in 1823, they arrested Ana María Campos and then whipped her as she was ridden nude through the city streets.<sup>38</sup>

The conditions brought about by continuous war in Venezuela impelled women to take action to save themselves and their families. Some entered convents where they hoped to sequester themselves from the upheavals that surrounded them, but many others chose to emigrate. In some cases the migrations were of short duration, as women fled to neighboring towns to escape the enemy, only to return home when the danger had passed. In other instances women left their countries altogether and made their homes in foreign lands until the fighting was over. In either case, numerous women were compelled to emigrate from Venezuela for reasons of political affiliation and personal safety. The most extensive migration of Venezuelan women took place in July 1814, when twenty thousand individuals of both sexes left Caracas to march east to safety. Many of the women drowned, starved, or died of exhaustion on their way.<sup>39</sup> The casualties of the Caracas emigration of 1814 were matched only by those of the 1815 Cartagena evacuation.<sup>40</sup>

Despite the latter two unfortunate migrations, many other women made it safely to foreign shores. Those who left, either by choice or by force, took their children with them, while their husbands remained behind. As the emigrés expected to return home shortly, most of them chose to live out their exile in the nearby Caribbean islands. The lot of the displaced female was not a happy or prosperous one. Several island governors, namely those of Trinidad and Curaçao, were overtly hostile to the republican sympathizers. The governor of Trinidad refused to accept the emigrants from Caracas in 1814,<sup>41</sup> on grounds that the scanty resources of the island could not sustain them. Poverty and misery seemed to be the fate of the wealthy women from Caracas and Cumaná who lived in exile in Saint Thomas. Many of them, now heads of households, took menial jobs to support themselves and their families during these years. Several members of the Sojo y Herrera family, accustomed to the aristocratic life of Caracas, were forced to play the harp and guitar at local dances in order to earn a living. Others, like Melchora Palacios, shipped back small amounts of goods to Caracas and received payment in cacao.<sup>42</sup> In spite of the hardships

and poverty experienced by women in exile, the added responsibilities that they assumed during these years helped to prepare them for the task of rebuilding plantations and *haciendas* in the postwar era.

Throughout the war years women in both royalist and insurgent camps were victims of property confiscations. Whether the sequestration of landed property or personal wealth was undertaken by the republicans or the royalists, its purpose was the same—to attract recruits from the lower classes by promising them booty and to supply the armies with the moneys that they constantly needed.<sup>43</sup> The royalists were the first to initiate a policy of confiscation with the formation of the Junta de Secuestros in 1812. Individuals who were in any way involved in the revolution against the king lost their property, women being no exception. The cacao *hacienda* of Jerónima de Tovar y Ponte in the Cuyagua Valley of Venezuela, along with the properties and wealth of María del Carmen Peláez, Sebastiana Rodríguez del Toro, the Countess of Tovar, Francisca Antonia Sandoval, and María de los Angeles Zandaeta of Venezuela, were seized by the royalists in this early period. Although many of the estates were rented out and worked for the benefit of the government, a great number of those not seized were destroyed and ruined. Thus agriculture, which had been the mainstay of the Venezuelan economy for centuries, suffered a drastic decline.<sup>44</sup>

While the royalists hoped to profit by the use of republican wealth during the time period in which they controlled Venezuela, the insurgents attempted to do likewise when they came into power. In order to support the independence movement, the republican government first imposed taxes and fines upon the enemy, based on their possessions and the degree of enmity shown to the insurgents. María del Carmen Machillanda, a rich proprietress from Ocumare, Venezuela, was accused of agitating on the king's behalf in the Valley of Tuy and was fined 10,000 *pesos*, payable in six months.<sup>45</sup> Since the instances of fines imposed on female enemies of the revolution were so few, it is apparent that the patriots were rather inefficient in carrying out their own premises of taxation. Their efforts in this regard were more a matter of policy than of action, for the government still remained bankrupt.

It seems that the attitude of the insurgents toward royalist women was marked more by mercy than by vindictiveness. Hispanic gallantry was evident in Bolívar's decrees of the confiscation of wealth. According to a proclamation of 18 October 1817, women were allowed to keep both inherited wealth and that of their dowry, despite the fact that their husbands' properties might be subject to seizure.<sup>46</sup> According to a law of confiscation enacted on 16 June 1819, the wealth of women and children who remained in free territory was not to be taken, while those females who had shown themselves hostile to the government and had emigrated were free to return within a year's time to claim their properties. If they did not return, whatever they possessed could be confiscated. Hence, even women who were violently opposed to independence and

had actively worked against it received lenient treatment.<sup>47</sup> Laws pertaining to the confiscation of property remained in force until 1830, but at the Constitutional Convention in Valencia in August of that year, a strong current of public opinion arose against the continuation of the laws of seizure, and they were abrogated.<sup>48</sup>

Poverty and widowhood, twin consequences of the Wars for Independence, were conditions experienced by a great many women in Gran Colombia during the years of fighting there. Many widows and wives of men in army service were destitute and relied on government charity to survive. Both patriot and royalist officials supplied indigent women with daily rations of meat and bread;<sup>49</sup> however, these women did not depend solely on the goodwill of the government, for they themselves set out to recoup what was stolen or taken from them during the wars. The nature of most of their petitions, put forth between the years 1816 and 1825, involved questions of property, chattel or landed, or matters of family. In many cases women addressed petitions to the government requesting that their sons be returned from the army to support them<sup>50</sup> or that they be indemnified for slaves who had left their households to join the troops.<sup>51</sup> Some solicited the government for the payment of rent on homes occupied by soldiers,<sup>52</sup> while others demanded reimbursement for the damage that these occupants had done to their property.<sup>53</sup> The protection of their property and its upkeep proved to be a continuing interest of women not only in war, but also in peacetime.

It is impossible to estimate the number of women who were widowed during the Wars for Independence, but it certainly must have been great, given the continual stream of petitions for pensions that the government received between the years 1811 and 1821. In the late eighteenth century, the Spanish government had established pension funds (*montepíos*) for both civil servants and military personnel. The patriot governments followed suit by establishing similar pension funds with the express purpose of providing for the descendants of government servants and soldiers.

In 1815 the Congress of the United Provinces of Cundinamarca began to formulate policy regarding widows and orphans of deceased soldiers. On 3 March 1815, the congress decreed that widows of veteran soldiers, sergeants, or corporals were to receive one *real* daily; if they had children, they were entitled to receive one and one-half *reales* per day. In order to obtain these payments the widow had to produce the death certificate of her husband.<sup>54</sup> Both the Congress of Angostura in 1819 and the Congress of Cúcuta in 1821 passed resolutions on the rights of widows. The Congress of Angostura decided that widows were entitled to one-half of their husbands' assets, while his other heirs had the right to the remainder.<sup>55</sup> The Congress of Cúcuta allowed widows and orphans to tap the military pension fund, provided that the individual on whom they laid claim had qualified for the fund. Those widows and orphans whose husbands or fathers did not belong to the pension system would be provided for by the government once the war was over and national rents in-

creased.<sup>56</sup> Since financial insolvency and debt plagued the insurgent governments both during and after the revolutionary period, the pension schemes that were formulated by the various congresses were never fully realized. Again, the government was simply too bankrupt to carry out its provisions regarding widows and dependent children.<sup>57</sup>

Despite the facts that the women of Gran Colombia were involved in the pre-1810 conspiracies and revolts and that they participated in the Wars for Independence, their role and status in society remained much unchanged in the aftermath. The failure of women to move to expand their privileges or to raise any challenges to their traditional roles arose from their own lack of consciousness, which led them to accept their status, the negative attitudes of men toward female role change and, thus, reciprocal role change, and the politically conservative atmosphere of the postindependence period.

One activity that still remained beyond the scope of women in peacetime was politics. In postwar Gran Colombia, women theoretically had political rights before the law, but were insulated from direct political action, denied participation in the formal institutions of power, and excluded from decision making. According to the provisions of the Angostura Constitution of 1819, the Cúcuta Constitution of 1821, and the Colombian Constitution of 1830, some women most certainly met the requirements for citizenship and suffrage since, according to the letter of the law, sex was not a deterrent.<sup>58</sup> Few women, however, were educated or had any notion of their own political rights or any idea of what the political implications of independence might mean for them as a group. Society regarded women primarily as wives and mothers; for this they were rewarded, as they still are today in many areas of Latin America, as well as the rest of the world. The notion of accepting women as equal to men in the political arena would have been just as alien and absurd a notion to women as to men in those days.

Even if we consider the more educated persons who participated in the wars—not only in Gran Colombia, but in other areas as well—there existed little possibility of real change. Even if they were conscious of the new political rights that men were accruing, what could a handful of women do to influence the politicians? These women were just too few and had too little bargaining power.

The important male leaders involved in decision making in the new nations did not favor female participation in the body politic. In a letter of 10 August 1826 to his favorite sister, María Antonia, Simón Bolívar sternly warned against the dangers of partisanship. He urged her to devote her energies to the care of her home and family (the proper business of women) and to leave politics to men. No doubt, he expressed the sentiments of countless other males when he wrote:

I warn you not to mix in political business nor adhere to or oppose any party. Let opinion and things go along although you believe them contrary to your way of think-

ing. A woman ought to be neutral in public business. Her family and her domestic duties are her first obligations. A sister of mine ought to observe a perfect indifference in a country which is in a state of dangerous crisis and in which I am viewed as the point at which opinions meet.<sup>59</sup>

Hence, the involvement of women in politics was abhorrent and totally unacceptable to Bolívar, as well as to leaders elsewhere. Women were not denied new responsibilities in extraordinary times like the independence period, but they were to return to their proper spheres once the crisis had passed.

In addition, the conservative political mood after independence was inimical to any real change, political or otherwise, for women. A strong desire for a stable social order was apparent, and any changes in the nature of the family and women as the pillar of the family were not even considered, much less encouraged. Women were at the heart of family life and were the last segment of society to be seen as candidates for radical role change.

Just as women gained little in the political area, so they gained little in the sphere of legal rights as well. They still retained the rights that they possessed in the colonial period: namely, to hold, buy, and sell property; to inherit and bequeath wealth; to petition the government; to sue and be sued; and to initiate legal action in a variety of circumstances. However, civil codes formulated by men in the postindependence era tended to curtail, not expand, the rights of women in many areas of South America.

One area in which women seemingly made progress, though not by dint of their own efforts, was education. Opportunities for women to gain a limited education were encouraged in the aftermath of independence. By an act of the Congress of Cúcuta, effective 6 August 1821, the government assumed full responsibility for the education of women. Since the national government did not have funds to erect schools at its own expense due to wartime outlays, plans were made to establish *colegios* for girls in convents.<sup>60</sup> Despite government support, the goals of education were still the same preparation for marriage and motherhood. The curriculum stressed domestic skills and social graces; in no way were girls prepared to be active social participants. Furthermore, the education offered to women was of an elementary character and was valued as a passport to a better marriage or merely as a charming and attractive asset. Thus, education proved to be one aspect of modernization that was more apparent than real. It barely survived during the first decades after independence, and it was not until the latter part of the nineteenth century that any real progress was made and then only in those countries where the *ambiente* was right.

In sum, the participation of women in the Wars of Independence did not lead to any major changes in their role or position in society. Traditional attitudes toward women's place (that of a subordinate) were held by both men and women; women had little notion of their rights, political or otherwise; and indices of modernization with regard to women—fashion, consumption of

luxury items, and education—proved to be more symbolic than real. It was only through education, and much later in the nineteenth century, that women became aware of their plight and feminism was born. In the meantime, women followed the paths that were open to them: marriage, motherhood, the nunnery, beneficence, or other nurturing roles that were acceptable to society at large.

## Notes

1. The political entity known as Gran Colombia was created by Simón Bolívar at the 1819 Congress of Angostura. This union of present-day Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador lasted a mere eleven years. Regional distinctions and civilian and military rivalries for political office, along with the death of Bolívar, its president, led to the dissolution of the short-lived state in 1830.

2. For the varied activities of women in the colonial period, see Petition of Francisca María Urbina al Intendente, 19 October 1786, briefed in *Boletín del Archivo General de la Nación* 39 (October-December 1951): 47 (hereafter cited as *BAGN*); Livia Stella Melo Lancheros, *Valores femeninos de Colombia* (Bogotá, 1966), pp. 1123-24; Bernard Moses, *Spanish Colonial Literature in South America* (London: Hispanic Society of America, 1922), pp. 382-83; Gustavo Adolfo Otero, *La vida social en el coloniaje*, 2d ed. (La Paz: Editorial Juventud, 1958), pp. 66-67, 215; Francois Depons, *Travels in South America During the Years 1801, 1802, 1803, and 1804 . . .*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, 1807), 1: 130-32. See essays by Lavrin (chap. 1), Russell-Wood (chap. 2), and Couturier (chap. 4) in this volume.

3. José María Vergara y Vergara, *Historia de la literatura en Nueva Granada desde la conquista hasta la independencia (1538-1820)*, 2 vols. (Bogotá: Editorial ABC, 1958), 2: 102, 104, 106, 112.

4. José Dolores Monsalve, *Mujeres de independencia* (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional 1926), pp. 23, 43-44.

5. Monsalve, *Mujeres*, pp. 12-13; Vicente Dávila, *Investigaciones históricas*, 2 vols. (Caracas: Imprenta Bolívar, 1923), 1: 330; Roberto Marfa Tisnés J., *Movimientos pre-independientes grancolombianos* (Bogotá: Editorial e Imprenta Salesiana, 1962), pp. 61-68; Carlos E. Muñoz Orúa, *Los comuneros de Venezuela: Una rebelión popular de pre-independencia* (Mérida: Universidad de Los Andes, 1971), p. 187.

6. Luis Arturo Domínguez, "Sublevación de negros y zambos en la sierra de Coro en 1795 . . .," *Boletín de la Academia Nacional de Historia* 41 (April-June 1958): 143-44 (hereafter cited as *BANH*).

7. For the best accounts of the Gual-España plot and the role of women in it, see Hector García Chuecos, ed., *Documentos relativos a la revolución de Gual y España* (Caracas: Pan American Institute of Geography and History, 1949), pp. 251-52, 267; Carmen Clemente Travieso, *Mujeres de la independencia: Seis biografías de mujeres venezolanas* (Mexico: Talleres Gráficos de Mexico, 1964), pp. 21, 32, 38, 42-44; Carlos Fulgencio López, *Juan Picornell y la conspiración de Gual y España: Narración documentada de la pre-revolución de independencia venezolana* (Caracas: Ediciones Nueva Cádiz, 1955), p. 296.

8. Ramón C. Correa, *Diccionario de boyacenses ilustres* (Tunja: Imprenta Departamental, 1955), p. 323.

9. Corona fúnebre, homenaje a la memoria de los héroes y mártires de la independencia de la Gran Colombia en los centenarios de su emancipación (Bogotá: Imprenta de Medina e Hijo, 1910), pp. 53-58, 94.
10. Roberto María Tisnés J., *Los mártires de la patria, 1810-1819* (Bogotá, 1966), pp. 69, 93.
11. *Heroínas venezolanas* (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1961), pp. 16, 35.
12. Monsalve, *Mujeres*, pp. 55, 58; José Félix Blanco, *Bosquejo histórico de la revolución de Venezuela* (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1960), p. 206.
13. *Recollections of a Service of Three Years During the War-of-Extermination in the Republics of Venezuela and Colombia by an Officer of the Colombian Navy*, 2 vols. (London: Hunt and Clarke, 1828), 1: 31.
14. "... hasta el bello sexo, las delicias del género humano, nuestras amazonas han combatido contra los tiranos de San Carlos, con un valor divino, aunque sin suceso. Los monstruos y tigres de España han colmado la medida de la cobardía de su nación, han dirigido las infames armas contra los cándidos y femeninos pechos de nuestras bellas; han derramado su sangre; han hecho expirar a muchas de ellas, y las han cargado de cadenas, porque concibieron el sublime designio de libertar a su adorada patria!" *Las fuerzas armadas de Venezuela en el siglo XIX: Textos para su estudio*, 12 vols. (Caracas, 1963-), 1: 242.
15. Horacio Rodríguez Plata, *La antigua provincia del Socorro y la independencia* (Bogotá: Publicaciones Editoriales, 1963), p. 532.
16. "No ignoramos que V.E., atendida la debilidad de nuestro sexo, acaso ha procurado eximirnos de las fatigas militares; pero sabe muy bien V.E. que el amor á la patria vivifica a entes más desnaturalizados y no hay obstáculos por insuperables que no venza." Virgilio Tosta, *Sucedió en Barinas: Episodios de historia menuda* (Caracas: Editorial Sucre, 1964), pp. 134-35.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
18. Oswaldo Díaz Díaz, *Historia extensa de Colombia*, vol. 6, *La reconquista española* (Caracas: Ediciones Lerner, 1964), pp. 400, 251; Pedro M. Ibáñez, *Crónicas de Bogotá*, 3 vols. (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1913), 3: 371.
19. José Hilario López, *Memorias*, 2 vols. (Bogotá: Editorial ABC, 1942), 1: 140-42. Another martyr of national renown was Antonia Santos, whose story is narrated by Horacio Rodríguez Plata, *Antonia Santos Plata* (Bogotá: Editorial Kelly, 1969).
20. Newspapers carried accounts of Pola's death, and fellow patriots, in their private correspondence, assessed the impact of her execution on the populace. A spate of poems, plays, and even novels rapidly appeared, telling her story and contributing to her fame as a Colombian martyr. *Correo del Orinoco*, 1 January 1820, p. 4; Oswaldo Díaz Díaz, *Los Almeydas: Episodios de la resistencia patriota contra el ejército pacificador de Tierra Firme* (Bogotá: Editorial ABC, 1962), p. 289; Díaz Díaz, *La reconquista*, p. 379.
21. Tisnés J., *Los mártires*, p. 27.
22. José Manuel Restrepo, *Historia de la revolución de la república de Colombia en la América meridional*, 4 vols. (Paris: Besanzon, 1858), 1: 431.
23. Ibáñez, *Crónicas*, 3: 223.
24. *Historia heroica de las mujeres próceres de Colombia* (Medellín: Imprenta Municipal, 1972), pp. 79-80, 111-12, 122-24, 155-61, 202-14, 221-30.
25. Correa, *Diccionario*, p. 357; Tisnés J., *Los mártires*, p. 24; Melo Lancheros, *Valores femeninos*, p. 1142.

26. "El hospital militar de Caracas era el punto de reunión de las más bellas y afables señoras del mundo: . . . Cada uno de nosotros creía tener en estas señoras una madre o una hermana vivamente interesada en nuestra salud y no me equivoco en decir que muchos escaparon y deben su salvación a tan piadosos oficios"; Vicente Lecuna, "Documentos: La guerra a muerte," *BANH* 18 (January-March 1935): 176.
27. Carlos Arturo Díaz, "Las mujeres en la independencia," *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* 55 (July-September 1968): 370 (hereafter cited as *BHA*).
28. Pablo Morillo y Morillo, *Mémoires du Général Morillo . . .* (Paris: Chez P. Dufart, Libraire, 1826), p. 268; Enrique Otero D'Costa, "Libro de órdenes militares del General Santander en la campaña de 1819," *BHA* 28 (November 1942): 1129.
29. *Gaceta de Caracas*, 22 November 1811, p. 4; 21 May 1811, p. 4.
30. Pinzón Uzcátegui, "La hermana de Bolívar donó a la patria 300 esclavos," *Boletín Histórico: Academia de Historia de Cartagena de Indias* 6 (February 1930): 68.
31. Rodríguez Plata, *La antigua provincia*, p. 726; Diego María Gómez Tamayo, *Anotaciones históricas* (Medellín: Academia Antioqueña de Historia, 1969), p. 116.
32. Manuel Ezequiel Corrales, ed., *Documentos para la historia de la provincia de Cartagena de Indias*, 2 vols. (Bogotá: Imprenta de M. Rivas, 1883), 2: 389-90.
33. Lecuna, "Documentos: La guerra a muerte," p. 169.
34. Vicente Lecuna, "La guerra a muerte, San Mateo, Bocachia, y Valencia," *BANH* 28 (April-June 1945): 198.
35. Juan Manuel de Cajigal, *Memorias del Mariscal de campo sobre la Revolución de Venezuela* (Caracas: Junta Superior de Archivos, Ministerio de Justicia, 1960), pp. 128, 133.
36. Francisco Javier Yanes, *Historia de la provincia de Cumaná en la transformación política de Venezuela, desde el día 27 de abril de 1810 hasta el presente año de 1821* (Caracas: Ediciones del Ministerio de Educación Nacional y Dirección de Cultura y Bellas Artes, 1949), p. 148.
37. *Gaceta de Caracas*, 14 May 1817, p. 1022.
38. Yanes, *Historia*, p. 167.
39. Narciso Coll y Prat, *Memoriales sobre la independencia de Venezuela* (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1960), p. 297.
40. Monsalve, *Mujeres*, pp. 123-26.
41. *150 años de vida republicana (1811-1961)*, 2 vols. (Caracas: Ediciones de la Presidencia de la República, 1963), 2: 80.
42. Vicente Lecuna, *Crónica razonada de las guerras de Bolívar*, 3 vols. (New York: Colonial Press, 1950), 1: 432.
43. *150 años*, 2: 82.
44. Blas Bruni Celli, *Los secuestros en la guerra de independencia* (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1965), pp. 23-29, 34.
45. Vicente Lecuna, "La guerra a muerte," *BANH* 27 (July-September 1944): 282.
46. Bruni Celli, *Los secuestros*, pp. 89-90.
47. Roberto Cortázar and Luis Augusto Cuervo, eds., *Congreso de Angostura: Libro de Actas* (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1921), p. 93.
48. Bruni Celli, *Los secuestros*, pp. 89-90.
49. Communiqué to Chief of the General Staff, 27 October 1818, *BAGN* 17 (July-August 1934): 103.
50. Petition of Juana Tomasa Martínez, Maracay, Venezuela, 27 March 1816, *BAGN* 45 (April-June 1958): 568.

51. Petition of Rosa Ramona Pérez, Caracas, Venezuela, 22 December 1825, *BAGN* 4 (December 1925): 49.
52. Petition of Simona Nadal, San Carlos, Venezuela, 29 December 1816, *BAGN* 45 (July-September 1958): 778.
53. Judicial Petition of Cipriana Pezón, Maracay, Venezuela, 7 August 1819, *BAGN* 45 (July-September 1958): 778.
54. Eduardo Posada, comp., *Congreso de las provincias unidas* (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1924), p. 104.
55. Cortázar and Cuervo, *Congreso de Angostura*, p. 292.
56. Roberto Cortázar and Luis Augusto Cuervo, eds., *Congreso de Cúcuta: Libro de Actas* (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1923), pp. 756-57.
57. Given the data available, it is difficult to construct a group profile of those widows who were eligible for pensions or those who actually received government moneys. Records attest to the fact that the government was barraged with petitions and solicitations from widows seeking compensation, but statistics regarding those remunerated have not been found. Archival records of the Ministry of Defense relating to pension schemes (which might or might not exist) could possibly contain information of this kind.
58. Cortázar and Cuervo, *Congreso de Angostura*, pp. 129-30; Great Britain, Foreign Office, *British and Foreign State Papers*, vol. 9, 1821-1822, "Constitution of the Republic of Colombia," Rosario de Cúcuta, 30 August 1826, pp. 699-701; Great Britain, Foreign Office, *British and Foreign State Papers*, vol. 17, 1829-1830, "Constitution of the Republic of Colombia," 29 April 1830, pp. 1199-1201.
59. "Te aconsejo que no te mezcles en los negocios políticos, ni te adhieras ni opongas a ningún partido. Deja marchar la opinión y las cosas aunque las creas contrarias a tu modo de pensar. Una mujer debe ser neutral en los negocios públicos. Su familia y sus deberes domésticos son sus primeras obligaciones. Una hermana mía debe observar una perfecta indiferencia en un país que está en estado de crisis peligrosa, y donde se me vé como punto de reunión de las opiniones"; Vicente Lecuna, *Cartas del Libertador corregidas conforme a los originales*, 11 vols. (Caracas: Litografía y Tipografía del Comercio, 1929-48), 6: 53.
60. Cortázar and Cuervo, *Congreso de Cúcuta*, p. 374.

## 9

Cynthia Jeffress Little

## Education, philanthropy, and feminism: components of Argentine womanhood, 1860-1926

Histories of Argentina have, for the most part, narrated and interpreted the history of that country's men and the institutions that they created. Except for casual passing remarks most texts overlook the role of women in the nation's development. Women may not have been viceroys, generals, or presidents, but they did contribute in other ways to Argentina's growth. They organized a complex social welfare system in Buenos Aires, educated thousands of students in the public school system, and provided a cheap source of labor. During the period 1860 to 1926, rapid urbanization, high foreign immigration, and thoroughgoing economic changes combined to alter many aspects of Argentine life.<sup>1</sup> Even the role of women, long considered a constant, began to change due to these pressures. This essay will explore the ways in which education, philanthropy, and feminism allowed some groups of Argentine women to break away from the Spanish tradition of sheltered womanhood and to emerge as participants, albeit second-class, in the nation's growth.

During the latter part of the eighteenth century the ideas of the European Enlightenment filtered into Latin America, where they formed the philosophical undergirdings for the soon-to-emerge new republics.<sup>2</sup> In Buenos Aires the liberalizing effects of the Bourbon reforms stimulated economic growth, added to the city's political importance, and afforded the elite increased contact with new ideas.<sup>3</sup> The intellectual's exposure to a philosophical outlook favorable to improving the status of women in society did not seem to foster any action specifically directed toward women's issues.

During the early national period only the liberal reformer Bernardino