

# “Half My Body Free, the Other Half Enslaved”: The Politics of the Slaves of Guayaquil at the End of the Colonial Era

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“I’m a slave, sir”, said Reyna Maria Luisa.

“Not anymore”, Bolívar said. “Love has made you free”.

In the morning he bought her from the owner of the hacienda for one hundred pesos taken from his impoverished treasury and granted her unconditional freedom. Before he left he could not resist the temptation of presenting her with a public dilemma. He was in the back patio of the house with a group of officers who sat any way they could on the backs of pack animals ... He asked Reyna Maria Luisa with good humor:

“Are you staying or coming with us?”

She answered with an enchanting smile:

“I’m staying, sir”.

Unanimous laughter greeted her reply ... General Jose Antonio Paez, whose faunlike expression harmonized with his shirt patched in many colors, burst into expansive laughter.

“Now you see, General”, he said. “This is what we get for acting like liberators”.

Gabriel García Márquez  
*The General in His Labyrinth*

## Introduction

In March of 1823 Angela Batallas, a slave, demanded to see Simón Bolívar, *el Libertador*. She had not chosen the best of moments from his perspective. He was camped in Guayaquil’s military barracks, trying to organize a campaign to expel the remaining Royalists from Peru. “A large number of troops is not being sent because it is impossible”, he agonized. “I have no ships, no provisions, and no troops here. We have already spent a hundred thousand pesos and we are just beginning the enterprise. In order to send the next 3,000 God knows what we shall have to do” (1951, 359). Angela Batallas, however, insisted that he make time for her and would not be dissuaded. She was a young woman, and the legal property of a leading merchant in the city. Her dark hair curled around her face in the steamy heat of the rainy season; her skirts were spattered with the mud of the road, for slaves did not come riding but on foot. Whatever the guards may have thought, she had not come there either to engage in any kind of sexual

relations with the Liberator, or to accuse him of being the father of her child. No, she had come there to make a plea and a statement. She wanted her freedom. She believed that justice and the politics of the Liberator were on her side and she demanded that he hear her out (AHG document 698, 1823).

We live in an era in which students and scholars are growing ever more adept at uncovering “hidden transcripts” in history.<sup>1</sup> No longer are the ideas of the silenced peoples of the past deemed totally inaccessible. The literature on slavery in the Americas has been especially rich in this regard. By making creative use of the evidence available, we try to hear what the slaves could not say out loud. We study culture—religious practices, crafts, traditional jokes, stories—to gain insights into their mental worlds and belief systems. We consider the meaning of their actions, in that people may be said to “vote with their feet” or make statements with their deeds: they could have children, run away, rebel, or choose not to do any of these.<sup>2</sup>

Is there, however, no legible transcript, no direct evidence concerning their political views? Is there no way of hearing what the slaves were thinking when the colonial world was shaken by the discursive and military storms of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries? May we only guess at how much information they had, how they interpreted what they heard, what they said to each other? Specifically, were they aware of the revolutionary arguments of their era? If so, did they care about them, linking their own cause with world-wide currents, or did they see those currents as being useful tools in gaining their own immediate ends? The Anglophone world offers one advantage denied to those who study Latin America: the existence of slave narratives. In the English-speaking world former slaves made use of the larger culture’s tradition of writing autobiographical stories whenever they could. Albeit in edited versions, we can read their own words on the subject of religion, the slave trade and slavery, the French Revolution, the Revolution in Saint-Domingue, or the liberal ethos. In the Latin American world literacy was less widespread and the practice of publishing personal narratives was uncommon, so former slaves did not leave equivalent testimony.<sup>3</sup>

The paucity of Spanish sources has not prevented historians from theorizing about the political consciousness of the enslaved. Years ago, Genovese (1979) argued that the news of the revolutions in France and then Saint-Domingue became a turning point in slaves’ consciousnesses, transforming their localized complaints and isolationist rebellions into demands for sweeping political change. Although his examples pre-dating the Haitian Revolution ranged from Canada to Colombia, in his concluding section on the political statements of the nineteenth-century world, he wrote, not surprisingly, only of the U.S., where he could quote such works as those of Frederick Douglass. Other historians have indeed disputed Genovese’s idea as regards Spanish America and the Caribbean. Although the number of rebellions per annum certainly increased in the 1790s, this phenomenon may have been due more to internal shifts in the colonies than to increasing knowledge about—or acceptance of—revolutionary ideas on the part of the slaves. David Geggus recently summarized these sentiments: “The Revolution promoted resistance probably less through the propagation of libertarian ideas than by affecting, or appearing to affect, the distribution of power”

(1997, 6–7, 11). That is, obvious divisions among the planters and the displacement of armies may have done more to spread rebellion than any new radicalism. Geggus would even go further and agree with those who argue that conservatism among slaves became more pronounced: as more of them in the nineteenth century were American-born than ever before, they must have accepted to a greater degree the existing political structure. This is evidenced in Spanish America, says Geggus, by the fact that rebellions in several cases were spurred by a rumor among the slaves that the king had already authorized emancipation—so the enslaved can hardly be said to have wanted to undermine the king (131, 148).

Without listening to the protagonists themselves, scholars can clearly make the evidence fit their own political perspective. Thus it is that scholars of Latin America have recently articulated the need to intensify our search for statements of the enslaved. In a summary of “Recent Trends”, Stuart Schwartz concludes, “Historians must ultimately listen to the people who experienced slavery”, while he acknowledges that, “recovering slave voices will not be an easy task or one any less free from the intellectual and political currents that have always infused the study of ... slavery” (1992, 21). Studying hidden transcripts—while a worthy and absolutely necessary endeavor—may not alone suffice. Sidney Mintz (1995), for example, cautions us against interpreting every cultural act on the part of an enslaved person as a statement. He invokes the classic distinction between a “wink and a blink”. The concepts of “resistance” and “political views” will be rendered meaningless if all actions are analyzed as “political” or “resistant” and we never hear a real voice speaking. On the other hand, studies of cultural practices and those of actual articulated statements may render each other particularly meaningful when considered together.

There is, after all, an occasional opportunity for eavesdropping on recorded conversations. The testimony presented in court has long been used by Latin Americanists to provide insights into the views of the indigenous and the shifting power relations between Natives and elites. To some extent it has been used to help write the history of the enslaved as well, but far more could be done in this direction. The Hispanic legal tradition has left to posterity a copious stream of sworn statements emanating from rich and poor, slave and free alike. Slaves in fact had a host of legal rights which placed them in a position different than that of the slaves in the Anglophone world (Klein 1986, 189–96). Some scholars would argue that words uttered in court are of limited use, filtered as they are through the legal apparatus of the master class. After slave rebellions, for example, the defendants on trial were more motivated to hide their views than to express them.<sup>4</sup> The late colonial and independence era may, however, prove to be somewhat exceptional in this regard. Wherever the armies of liberation passed, court cases involving discontented, vocal slaves mushroomed, and the enslaved often spoke with a confidence rare at other times, for many of them were convinced that either the Royalist or the Patriot army would protect them in exchange for their allegiance. From the moment of Bolívar’s first arrival in the province of Guayas until the end of the 1820s, for example, over 5 percent of surviving legal complaints of any kind in that province concern slaves’ demands for their freedom, and such demands constitute an even larger percent of the

cases settled out of court.<sup>5</sup> The slaves had long been litigious. From at least the mid-seventeenth century they had complained about their masters—demanding that certain behaviors cease, that their purchase price be lowered, or that their owner be exchanged for another—and occasionally they had insisted on their right to freedom, especially as the reformist eighteenth century drew to a close (Chandler 1982; Levalle 1994; Villegas 1992). Now in this new era they used this legalistic tradition in more radical ways, wielding it as effectively as their peers to the north wielded the slave narrative: besides suing more often in general, they demanded outright freedom more frequently, and they imbued their cases with the language of the Enlightenment.<sup>6</sup>

What Angela Batallas and her cohort had to say is interesting for its own sake, but their thoughts are also significant on at least two other levels. First, they challenge the revisionist view of the independence era, which has it that the transfer of political power from Spanish authorities to creoles essentially had little impact on the common people. Without advocating the older view that the peoples of the New World for the first time experienced self-determination—for most of them did not—it is possible to assert after reading their words that the extensive political discussion and general awareness of grandiose political changes indeed affected many non-elites, if not tangibly then mentally. Most especially in the case of the slaves, the parallels between a nation suffering under “tyranny” and their own existence in bondage were too obvious not to draw.<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, demonstrating that the slaves at the end of the colonial era indeed had their own political views supports the recent argument that the slaves themselves ultimately played a critical role in their own emancipation in Spanish America.<sup>8</sup> Certainly it is true that emancipation occurred soonest where structural changes had rendered slave labor less critical, but slavery remained profitable and slaveowners nowhere manumitted slaves *en masse* without being pressured, even when they were no longer as dependent as they had been on the labor supply. Had the slaves been at all complacent in their condition, it is probable that fewer republican-minded elites would have associated themselves with the cause of abolition. The pressure the slaves exerted is seen in the ever-increasing frequency of flight, rebellion, self-purchase, and legal complaints against their masters. The fact that they began to exert such pressures in the late colonial era, and yet in a number of places—including Angela’s Ecuador—did not win full emancipation until the 1850s, does not discount the argument. In the U.S., a “Revolution in Black Life” is said to have occurred in the era of independence, spelling great changes to come, and yet a legal backlash followed in the early-nineteenth century, and slavery did not meet its downfall for five more decades (Berlin 1974; 1976). The significant element for the future of the U.S. was not so much that blacks responded immediately to the chaos engendered by the wars in their pursuit of freedom—for such actions could be stopped later—but rather that they were exposed to world currents and formed their own political views. Their new ideas could never be taken from them, even when new laws were passed forbidding them to gather together or learn to read. Angela Batallas and others like her give us reason to believe that such changes in *mentalite* occurred in Bolívar’s America as well.

This article will explore what we can and cannot know about the political

beliefs of the enslaved people who lived in a city that played a significant role in the independence wars. Courtroom testimony is the key. The statements that the slaves made even in that setting are, however, limited, and pose a methodological problem. They must be placed in as fully delineated a context as possible if they are to resonate. To that end, I begin with a brief discussion of the connections between Simón Bolívar, his shifting position on slavery, and the success of his campaign, and I provide an overview of the slave labor system in Guayaquil and the province of Guayas. Then follows a reconstructed narrative of the life experiences of Angela Batallas in the midst of the revolutionary fervor, an understanding of which I would argue allows her surviving language more power in our modern ears. Finally, we will hear from a sample of Angela's peers who also lodged their own legal complaints and thus had their words recorded for posterity.

### Bolívar, Slavery, and Independence

Simón Bolívar had first become involved in the cause of independence in his native Venezuela. He had not always been a radical. His family owned sugar-producing plantations and slaves. As a child, he was frightened by the Revolution in Saint-Domingue that exploded in 1791, and the ensuing slave revolt of 1795 in Venezuela's Coro province, which had as its ultimate goal the creation of a republic similar to Haiti. In 1797, the same year the 14-year-old Simón joined the militia as a cadet, a white *independentista* couple near Caracas encouraged their own slaves to light the fires of rebellion, and then, with the help of a *parda* midwife named Isabel Gómez, distributed revolutionary tracts throughout the city (Cherpak 1978). The army arrested them. By 1810, however, with Napoleon's much resented brother on the throne of Spain, the elites of cities and towns up and down the continent were ready to declare independence from European rule—though not the end of slavery—and this time Bolívar was on the patriots' side. He had been changed by his experiences traveling in Europe, the trauma caused by the death of his wife only months after their marriage, and his conversations with such men as Alexander von Humboldt and Francisco Miranda.

The fluctuating fortunes of the patriot cause over the next few years are well-known and need not be summarized here.<sup>9</sup> In 1815, a beleaguered Bolívar fled to Jamaica. In his famous "Jamaica letter" he indirectly acknowledged why the creole Patriots were having so much trouble attracting followers, why so many commoners and slaves were in fact fighting on the side of the king:

We [the creole Patriots] are ... neither Indian nor European, but a species midway between the legitimate proprietors of this country and the Spanish usurpers. In short, though Americans by birth, we derive our rights from Europe, and we have to assert these rights against the rights of the natives, and at the same time we must defend ourselves against the [Spanish] invaders. This places us in a most extraordinary and involved situation ... (1951, 110)

In December of that year, Bolívar traveled to Haiti, and met with Petión, the President of the newly independent black republic that had once been the slave

colony of Saint-Domingue.<sup>10</sup> Petición offered him supplies in exchange for the promise that he win freedom for the slaves of Venezuela. After Bolívar returned to the continent, he did eventually free his own slaves. He promised freedom to those slaves who joined the Republican armies, and he encouraged the patriots to pass emancipatory laws wherever they were in power. It is considered to be no accident that the Patriots' cause began to fare better. In the years that followed, Bolívar's armies struggled through today's Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador, ousting the Spanish as they made their way southward. Meanwhile, San Martín's Army of the Andes forged its way northward from Argentina, so that, in a great pincer-like motion, they forced the last of the Loyalists to lodge in Peru.

In July of 1822, the two patriot generals met for the first time in the city of Guayaquil. It was a momentous event. There were important matters of state to discuss—the final campaign against the Spanish in Peru, the formation of a federation of liberated nations, the question of a possible need for a figurehead monarch, and, not least of all from a local perspective, the fate of Guayaquil (Bolívar 1951, 312–55). Would the city become part of Peru or Gran Colombia (today's Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador)? The province of Guayas had declared itself independent in 1820, and the Spanish soldiers, unable to get reinforcements, had put up only token resistance. For two years the tiny republic had existed on its own, providing key assistance in the liberation of Quito, and most *guayaquilēños* wanted to remain as they were. If they had to join a larger nation, many people preferred Peru, for Lima and Callao were geographically close, and many had been there or had ties there. Bolívar, however, knew that the southern half of Gran Colombia needed the prosperous port as an outlet to the sea and for its customs revenues; he insisted that Guayas join the state of Ecuador in the nation of Gran Colombia (Cubbitt 1978).

### Slavery in the Province of Guayas

A person approaching the area from the Pacific Coast might have been mystified at first as to why Bolívar thought the place so valuable. Near the shore the province of Guayas was dry and sandy. Indians dove for pearls and *caracolillo* shells to make a purple dye, but there was little vegetation. Not far inland, however, the land turned lush and green around a network of creeks and rivers, rising gently at first and then peaking in the Andes. Plantains, rice and other food crops grew well in the littoral, and the larger plantations traditionally had been worked by African slaves.<sup>11</sup> Over the course of the last generation, however, landowners had turned increasingly to hired help. Migrant workers had been coming down from the highlands, fleeing the depression in the weaving industry caused by the influx of British products under the Bourbon reforms. And planters had learned that cacao, which was growing in importance as a cash crop, did not require year-round attention. It was often more cost-effective to hire temporary laborers as they were needed than to buy slaves. They could sell superfluous slaves to passing traders, or send them to Guayaquil to work for wages as domestic servants, artisans' assistants, or laborers in huge bread-baking establishments and other incipient industries.<sup>12</sup>

Slaves constituted approximately 8 percent of the population of the city, which was home to roughly 20,000 souls. The proportion was higher, however, in the center of town, along the bank of the Río Guayas where the wealthy lived. After the war, in 1832, in the Parish of the Matriz, more than 300 of the 3,000 people would still be slaves. On the most fashionable blocks of all, 24 percent of the residents were enslaved, but towards the outskirts of the city in the same parish, only 4 percent were held in bondage.<sup>13</sup> Life experiences varied considerably for the slaves in the differing sections of the port. In the most elegant section of town, in the household of the wealthy Elizalde family, for example, one out of every four people was enslaved, and in this sense they could not have felt isolated. Yet they were in some senses a people apart within their own neighborhood—darker than the majority, of a clearly different status. White neighbors knew to whom they belonged, for example, but did not necessarily know their names. On the other hand, further inland from the wealthy riverwalk lived a greater number of people of color, of both Indian and African descent, and most of these were not enslaved. Thus the slaves who did live amongst them were not necessarily marked as such in their daily workaday lives, and their neighbors probably knew their names. The church census demonstrates that in the blocks peopled by shoemakers (many of whom were free blacks), tinsmiths and other artisans, there lived very few slaves. Yet for those who did live there, life was filled with daily trials, for in general, a slave in this neighborhood was the only servant of his or her owner and thus carried an enormous workload. Damiana Mesa, for example, had to “carry water, wash clothes, cook, etc. ... as she is the only slave that the said León has ...” (AHG document 776, 1824). Or in another case: “It is notorious that for four years [the master] has had no other cook or washerwoman, and what is worse, no other bed partner” (AHG document 6237, 1826). Such slaves were certainly aware that they themselves comprised by far the largest share of their masters’ worldly wealth. One man who died in 1823, for example, left 600 pesos worth of property, of which 550 came from the value of his slave and her two children (AHG document 608, 1823).

Besides working almost ceaselessly and without being able to keep most of their wages, enslaved women also had to endure unwanted sexual relationships and then live with the repercussions. Their vulnerability to sexual overtures on the part of a series of masters and probably other men in their households is demonstrated not only by the high incidence of sexually transmitted disease among them, but also, and more tellingly, by the high incidence of the discovery of such illnesses by their masters. Numerous suits concerning the return of “damaged” slaves who had been billed by their sellers as “healthy” were lodged after the new masters learned that the women they had purchased suffered from a venereal disease.<sup>14</sup>

The slaves of Guayas felt the impact of the political events of the 1820s. In some ways, of course, their lives went on very much as usual in terms of their labors and daily activities. But in other ways their lives were profoundly altered. First, they suffered the same wartime privations and shortages that caused their owners to complain so vociferously. From 1820 it was clear that in this part of the world at least, the patriot cause was in the lead. The passing battalions of

freedmen from Colombia and Venezuela told their stories. Men who enrolled in the Republican army in exchange for freedom had reason to believe they would be on the winning side. Some men joined the army only to desert later; the women in their lives might help them hide. A sudden rise in the number of runaways indicates that some took advantage of the atmosphere of chaos caused by the militarization to flee (AHG 1546, 1823).

In the current political climate, a popular language of “liberty” and “independence” reigned. Thus there arose among enthusiastic white patriots a certain degree of discomfort with slavery. Did people fighting “tyranny” have the right to tyrannize others?<sup>15</sup> Here the elites could not even create a simple dichotomy between white and black as their North American counterparts had done, for in their world people came in a more varied range of colors and shades and free and slave were not always visually distinguishable. Only two months before Angela Batallas spoke her mind, the Public Defender who had represented slaves in their legal cases under the colonial regime was pleased to remind the court that it was the defeated *Spaniards* who had introduced slavery into the New World. He spoke of the “unhappy people in the class [of slaves] whose liberty was snatched away so barbarously by the Spanish” (AHG document 1546, 1822). Throughout South America, creole enthusiasts for liberty and independence were susceptible to this kind of argument; they remained concerned about maintaining order and protecting private property, but at the same time they defined themselves as the creators of a new and more just world.<sup>16</sup>

In the heady days of republican triumph, the young radicals who governed the independent Republic of Guayas from 1820 to 1822 passed two new laws that directly impacted the slaves: the latter were not themselves freed, but it was made impossible for future guayaquilēños be enslaved (Tobar Donoso 1959). Further importation of slaves into Republican territory was prohibited—current prices were frozen to prevent speculation—and, as of July 1821, all children born to slaves henceforth were to be freed on their eighteenth birthdays. Later the laws of the union of Gran Colombia stipulated the same basic changes. Furthermore, a Colombian law dating from 1821 decreed the foundation of a gradual manumission fund, collected through a small tax on inheritances (González 1984). The flurry of sales that occurred in this period indicates that many owners “feared that the Decree of Liberty was shortly to be announced” (AHG document 1546, 1822). However, the fact that there were still buyers to be found indicates that many whites believed such an event was highly unlikely. Many slaves did not waste time waiting to find out: instead they set about working in their off hours and depositing weekly sums in the Manumission Fund. In record numbers they argued with or sued their owners to lower their prices for self-purchase (Townsend 1993). If liberty was within their grasp, they would reach for it.

### The Political Philosophy of Angela Batallas

Angela Batallas, as we know, left us no memoirs. Even in the packet of notarized documents that comprise the legal battle concerning her freedom, she

speaks infrequently. We have snippets of her thoughts. Were they to be placed alone on a blank white page, her comments would tell us almost nothing about her. But if we place them against a more textured backdrop, drawing into the tapestry every thread of information about her experience that we have at our disposal, her comments become significant indeed. In the pages that follow I attempt to place Angela's transcribed utterances within a contextual narrative in order to render them more meaningful to modern readers. Sarah Maza recently commented (1996) on historians' increasing use of "storytelling" to illuminate broad cultural phenomena and conflicts. She asserts that the technique stems from historians' relatively new familiarity with anthropology, literary criticism and the connections drawn by feminists between private domains and public discourse. Certainly my goal is to analyze the pithy "texts" left by Angela in the context not only of her personal experience, but also of the disjuncture between that experience and the political conversations of her day.<sup>17</sup>

Angela Batallas appears in the historical record for the first time only when her life intersected with that of a leading *independentista*. She was very young when Ildefonso Coronel noticed her and decided to buy her from her old master. It was November of 1821; the city was living in a storm of excitement. New emancipatory laws had been passed by the tiny Republic; armies were on the move up and down the continent. Ildefonso at 27-years-old was a wealthy young man actively involved in the patriot cause that had been hatched in the salons of fine houses like his own. Although he had been born in Cuenca, he had lived in this city with his widowed mother since the age of 16 and he was considered a *vecino* now. As a merchant trader, he hoped that his city's new freedom would allow him to negotiate profitably with British businessmen: he would soon forge a solid relationship with Gibbs, Crawley & Co. In the meantime, he gave generously of his time and financial resources for the Cause.<sup>18</sup>

Ildefonso paid 350 pesos for Angela, slightly higher than the average price of 325 pesos for a young woman. What her former owner thought we do not know: perhaps he was one of the scores who were eager to sell at this time, fearing a general emancipation edict. Ildefonso did not rape Angela. In fact, he was kind to her; he seemed to want her to trust him. Over the course of the next two months, he did not make sexual overtures. When he saw her, he talked to her. They may have talked about the dramatic current events that everyone was discussing and that impacted both of them so directly. On the day he approached her to initiate a sexual relationship, he did not threaten her with violence; nor did he promise the traditional pretty clothes or the carrot currently most popular—a lowered self-purchase price. Ildefonso promised Angela her liberty. In the glory of the new Republic that he and his brothers were forming, his "love" for her would set her free.

In those early months of 1822, Angela was apparently happy. At least she complained to no one. Her circumstances were not unenviable. The world around her was unshackling itself, and so was she. A wealthy and powerful man said he loved her. He set her up in a little house by the bridge over the largest estuary that cut into the city from the river and he came to visit her there. (He himself lived with his mother in a great house on the *malecón*, the riverwalk.) She later claimed that he treated her as an equal. When she presented herself to

the court, she knew how to sign her name beautifully, ending in a distinctive flourish that looked like a treble clef. Although this did not necessarily indicate that she knew how to read, simply signing was more than many free deponents knew how to do. Probably Ildefonso had taught her, or if he had not, then she had come to him with an unusual degree of sophistication. In either case, it seems likely that they were enjoying together the great days of 1821 and 1822 when the elites of Guayaquil governed their world themselves for the first time, when slavery met the beginning of its end, when Simón Bolívar purposefully wended his way toward their suddenly important city and then arrived with pomp and met with San Martín.

There were problems embedded in the situation, however. Angela became pregnant almost immediately. At first this did not seem to distress Ildefonso—perhaps he did not even know—but eventually it upset him. It became clear to him that the choices he was making were more complicated than he had thought. He tried to persuade Angela to go to his family's lands in Cuenca to give birth, to keep the child a secret. She refused to go, and may have threatened to make the issue more public and not less so if he attempted to force her, for he did not press the matter. There in the city, with the help of a *parda* midwife, Angela gave birth to a daughter, María del Carmen. Ildefonso gave the midwife a note to take to the priest for baptism, indicating that the child was his, and not mentioning the slave status of the mother, so that the child was implicitly free. He did not continue to visit often, but he sent a servant every week with an allowance for the baby's maintenance.

Either late in the pregnancy or right after the child's birth, Ildefonso chose to distance himself by beginning a relationship with another woman. Melchora Sánchez was not a slave, but although free she was not likely to press him for marriage or even support: she was married. She knew about Angela and María del Carmen and was angry that Ildefonso continued to visit them. At the same time, Ildefonso's mother complained bitterly about his scandalous relationship with a slave. She may well have been concerned that it would be difficult to arrange a good marriage for him while he was actively engaged in such an affair. The young man conceived of a plan that would satisfy both his mother and Melchora: he moved Angela to the house of his current lover so the latter could supervise her movements, and he told his mother that he had sold the slave. Then he went to Lima on business.

While Ildefonso was absent, Melchora taunted Angela that she really was to be sold. Angela struck her. She later recounted the event to her lawyer, apparently without any embarrassment and perhaps even with pride, patiently explaining why it was that Melchora was particularly angry with her. More importantly, it was after this turn of events that Angela decided to sue for her freedom. She paid the money for the necessary official paper (*papel sellado*) and the cost of a scribe—she could have earned such a quantity doing laundry or other chores—and she dictated her complaint. She signed it herself and presented it at the Casa de Gobierno.

The next day she appeared again as she had been told to do, this time with her evidence. She had the baptismal certificate, and a list of five women who could serve as witnesses—including the midwife, the servant who had brought

the weekly allowance, and the respectable free woman who had served as the child's godmother. Angela must have been beloved by her friends—or else they loathed Ildefonso—for they risked his wrath to testify for her. The servant actually worked in his mother's household, and yet she spoke bluntly as well. Perhaps her age gave her confidence—she was nearly 50—and certainly she had been charmed by the “la muchachita” as she preferred to call the baby. Ildefonso denied everything but Angela clearly had other supporters as well, for she then found a lawyer to present her case. Finally the judge (who was also the Governor, John Illingworth) ruled that as a slave she was entitled to representation by the Public Defender. She was to have need of his services, for Ildefonso went to great lengths in the case he presented to account for the misinterpretation that he claimed all the witnesses were maliciously promoting. He argued that the child was not his, but rather that of a free black man who had befriended Angela. Or perhaps it had been sired by the lawyer, as a slave woman obviously could not have paid him in cash and probably paid with sex, and in that case she must have been his lover for a long time previously.

It is small wonder that Ildefonso wished to discredit the lawyer, for with that very lawyer, Angela had presented the most eloquent version of her case. In their statement, the two tied the rhetoric of independence and liberal democracy to Angela's personal situation, arguing that one could not free the colony without freeing all the people. First they approached the case from a woman's perspective, arguing that a patriot like Coronel who had declared himself free of colonial shackles could not become physically one with a person who was unfree. He had become one with her; therefore, she, too, must be free:

The union of two people of opposite sex renders them one, for from this act regularly results issue: *et erum duo in carne una*. And is it possible to believe, using good judgment, that Ildefonso Coronel, when he proposed such a union to me, wanted half of his body to be free, the other half enslaved, subject to servitude, sale and other hatefulness, which some disgraced people cling to as relics of the feudal system that has enveloped us for nearly three centuries?<sup>19</sup>

The united bodies of the one couple in some ways symbolized the body politic: for the whole to be free, all its parts would have to be liberated. In case they had not yet made their point, Angela and the attorney went on to say very specifically that a government promoting itself as republican, and demanding popular loyalty on those grounds, was going to have to side with Liberty in order to retain its internal logic and widespread support. In European thinking there had, of course, been tension between the principle of slavery and the principle of republicanism since the first appearance of the latter. The lawyer, the judge, and probably Ildefonso, were familiar with attempts at reconciliation between the two ideas going back as far as Aristotle and Plato. But the Enlightenment era that had culminated in the independence movement had underscored the holes in the traditional logic. In Angela's voice she and her lawyer said that they were sure this new government would not accept her enslavement:

I do not believe that this tribunal will justify it, nor that meritorious members of a Republic that, full of philanthropic and liberal sentiments, has given all necessary proofs of liberalism, employing their arms and heroically risking

their lives to liberate us from the Spanish Yoke, would want to promise to keep me in servitude, even against the promise that Coronel made to me the first time he united himself with me.<sup>20</sup>

The language of the presentation is clearly saturated with the expression of the lawyer, Rufino Mora. Whether Angela Batallas could read or not we probably will never know, but she certainly could not quote Latin. It might be tempting to conclude that a well-educated abolitionist and patriot simply used Angela's pathetic story to make his own points in a public forum. A closer examination of the case, however, indicates that such a conclusion would not be the fairest or most accurate. The evidence suggests that Angela herself was actively involved in the construction of the discourse.

At the heart of the argument presented there are two ideas: first, that the joining of the bodies is socially significant, and second, that the patriots are not defending their honor consistently. Both of these ideas were Angela's. They may have occurred independently to her lawyer—may in fact have been in common parlance among both free and enslaved. The relevant fact here is that she did not owe the ideas to him. She expressed them on her own in her dictated complaint and also verbally in court in a transcribed deposition *before* Ildefonso denied the charges and she had to hire the lawyer. (Ildefonso's charge that she had probably been sexually involved with the lawyer for many months was ignored by the court and still seems dismissible now.) Before the lawyer took over the presentation of the case, Angela talked about the importance of the union of bodies quite simply and without any Latin. She emphasized the resulting children who were literally the embodiment of both parents. She said of Ildefonso: "He is trying to torment a slave woman with whom he has united his blood" ("El trata de afligir a una esclava con quien a ligado su sangre"). Instead of simply referring to her pregnancy, the midwife quoted her as speaking of "the child of his that she carried in her belly" ("el hijo suyo que llevaba en el vientre").

The idea of the patriots losing their honor through inconsistency perhaps loomed even larger for Angela than did the concept of the union of bodies. The focus of her argument that she should be free lay in the fact that Ildefonso, a good patriot, had "promised" her liberty. She repeated several times that she had only responded to his advances in the first place because he had given her his word. Once, in giving her oral testimony, she lost control of herself, forgot her station, and spoke sarcastically: "Coronel tried to send me to Cuenca to give birth, for the ridiculous reason of not losing his honor—which he values so highly". ("Coronel trató de mandarme para Cuenca para que allá fuese a parir, por el ridiculo reparo de no perder su honor—del que hace tanto aprecio".)

Angela touched on a sore point here. Honor, of course, had always been a subject of concern to those descended of the Spanish hidalgos, but it had taken on new resonance in the independence era. The patriots' language was full of references to it. For they were risking their property and their very lives for their honor: they were asserting their freedom, fighting on the side of justice, and defending a savagely abused land. They were self-declared heroes. And heroes do not break promises; nor are they hypocrites. Angela implied that if the creole

elite wanted to govern as heroes in a free land, there was only one course open to them.

There is other less direct evidence that Angela had a hand in forming the argument of Rufino Mora's legal brief. First, she obviously had a strong personality and was unlikely to let herself be pushed aside by a man whom she had herself hired or at least voluntarily agreed to work with. Secondly, in the following deposition, the one prepared by the assigned Public Defender over whom she would have had no control, the arguments are very dry in tone as well as being substantively different. Rather than following the political lines of argument she had set in her earlier oral testimony, the new lawyer concentrated on a legal technicality: the baptismal certificate proved both that Coronel had treated Angela as if she were free and that he had recognized the child as his own. Finally, Rufino Mora wrote erratically, sometimes using flowery rhetoric and foreign languages and sometimes speaking as anyone on the street might, even attaching unnecessary afterthoughts and repetitions. There are times when one suspects he might have been directly quoting a conversation with her. Right before launching into one of the dramatic speeches cited earlier, he wrote the following convoluted—almost “chatty”—sentence: “The baptismal certificate is convincing that he considered me free, and that is why he did not mention the character of my servitude, which Coronel certainly had not forgotten about, rather he had already promised me my freedom” (“La partida bautismal ... convence de que me consideraba libre, y por eso no espresó la calidad de mi servidumbre, de que no se habia olvidado Coronel, sino me hubiese prometido antes la libertad”).

It was certainly Angela herself who chose to visit Bolívar. Anyone could have thought of it; she did it. Two months after meeting with San Martín, the Liberator had left to tour the highlands, traveling to Cuenca and Quito and Ibarra. He was away as most of the case unfolded, during which time Angela was lodged with a temporary master who volunteered to buy her from Coronel in a lease-like arrangement while the case was being settled. Not long after Bolívar returned to the south and to Guayaquil to prepare troops for the Peruvian campaign, Angela went to see him. No one recorded their conversation, but shortly afterwards Bolívar ordered his assistant to write to the court of Guayaquil. He did not try to protect her master's name. “The slave woman Angela Batallas has presented herself to His Excellency the Liberator, complaining of her former master Ildefonso Coronel. His Excellency orders to me recommend to you justice for this unhappy slave.” The note was effective: the Public Defender who received it submitted it that same day to the judge where it became part of the permanent record. Even though Ildefonso responded that there was no new proof of wrongdoing on his part, the Public Defender was able to say for the first time that it did not matter if some of the witnesses were discredited slaves speaking without their owners' permission, or even if Angela was immoral and the child was actually another man's. The point was that Ildefonso's note to the priest for the baptismal certificate proved he had promised freedom to the woman: the “integrity” of the new government demanded that Coronel be forced to pay the temporary master for her freedom and release her.

The usually dry-toned Public Defender even went so far as to say that Coronel was “a miserable man without principles”, something he had never come close to doing before Bolívar had spoken. It was certainly true that although sexual relations between masters and female slaves were universally acknowledged as a fact of life, such relations were not universally condoned, even by men of the master class. And in the independence era, with the language of freedom in the air, some men went so far as to condemn their peers. After impregnating two different slaves, Tomás Mosquera, who in 1826 would become the new governor of the Department of Guayas, received a letter from his cousin-in-law: “How much I feel when I see you, for the sake of a fancy, lose your honor and enslave your own blood. Tell me, aren’t there plenty of free women in the countries of the world?” (Lofstrom 1996, 79).

It is possible to interpret Angela’s visit to Bolívar not as a political statement, or even a savvy effort to intervene in a judicial process stacked against her, but simply as the traditional act of a supplicant appearing before her lord. For generations, the powerless had dreamed of bypassing their overseers to speak to the master or bypassing their masters to speak to the king. There is something different in this instance, however. Bolívar was hardly a king. He was not ultimately all-powerful in Angela’s world: he was the head of one army, still fighting another, not necessarily victorious, and certainly moving on, probably never to return. She knew he could not simply free her. It is likely that she saw him as a great, even noble, elegant and articulate spokesman for ideas she believed in, one who would be able to convince others where she had failed. Other slaves who had never seen the Liberator or demanded personal favors from him used his name in making public statements. Said Petra Iler to the court the next year: “I put the money into the Bank of Manumission ... according to custom, and under the assurances made by his Excellency the Liberator. I have contributed almost half my worth, and now I have nothing, for I hear that the Bank is out of money” (AHG document 6145, 1824). The evidence suggests that Angela Batallas did not visit the Liberator only to beg a favor, but also to ask that he publicly side with her on an issue of sweeping importance.

### **The Political Ideas of Other Slaves**

Although Angela’s story and her perspectives were in some ways unique, they were in other ways typical. Other slaves also drew a logical connection between the end of the colonial relationship with Spain and the end of their own position as slaves in relation to a master. Others were also verbally critical of the patriots when the latter behaved inconsistently; they were wary of liberal rhetoric in the mouths of the planters, but did not therefore choose to ignore the new ideas. Vidala Plazarte was an example of a woman who was deeply suspicious of the “honorable” patriots, but who nevertheless kept herself informed of their interests and plans and thus was better able to defend her own interests. She had been manumitted, together with her five daughters, in the last will and testament of her mistress (AHG document 457, 1823). A few days after Angela went to speak to Bolívar, Vidala wrote to him. (Perhaps word of Angela’s exploit had traveled fast.) She complained that the executor of the will, Maria Urbina, was

withholding from them the money that her mistress had stipulated be used to buy a small house for her family to guarantee their independence. Vidala was at this point requesting a traditional boon: she wanted Bolívar to order Urbina to give her the money. Although he said that he was on her side, His Excellency kindly but firmly referred her to the local court. In those court records we can hear her language, and she—or perhaps her older daughters—demonstrated a keen awareness of local political currents.

Like Ildefonso Coronel, the executor Maria Urbina was a prominent person, actively involved in the Patriot cause as well as being a money lender and investor. Urbina argued that the deceased lady had left her money to the cause of education, preferably to found a Carmelite convent, but if there were not enough, to help support existing schools. The will stated, “May her executors recognize the importance of the money in helping public education”. The money had gone to the recently reopened Jesuit *colegio*, and there was simply no money to spare from that worthy cause. “There is absolutely not one peso ...” added the director of the school in attached testimony. These statements were buried in lengthy legal papers replete with obscure language and even insults. “The maids [*criadas*] have had no other objective in their complaint than to plot against me”, wrote Urbina, for example. Using admirable self control, the former *criadas* ignored all such comments and zeroed in on the issue of education as they formulated their answer. It was astute of them to do so. In the enthusiasm accompanying the recent Republican victory, the idea of protecting the school could be a trump card in the hands of their opponents. The patriot government, including the judges of the case, wanted to create a new world of educated citizens; they discussed improved education with some frequency in their newspapers and government reports. If the women were seen as threatening the school, they would lose. The truth was that they did not give a fig for such schools, which would never benefit them, but they refrained from making a frontal attack. In the response they dictated to a very inept (and probably inexpensive) scribe, they said that the school was fine, and they did not want a penny from its own funds, but their house was supposed to be paid for by the estate *before* the remainder was turned over to the cause of education. They insisted that they in fact had nothing to do with the school and that their demand should not affect it. “Doña Maria should give us the house, and not the school, which has nothing to do with us” (“Doña Maria debe entregarnos la casa, y no el colegio, con que nada tenemos que hacer”).

Gender was also a factor in the slaves’ political thinking. Men tended to construct their arguments on their own behalf differently than did women. They did not usually base them on honorable agreements made between individuals, but rather on the fact that they had risked their lives for the patriot cause when they joined the Republican army. They eloquently tied their own choices to a notion of a larger cause. Alejandro Campusano remembered the day he left his master’s house forever:

There came to my ears the sweet voice of the Patria, and I, desiring to be one of her soldiers as much to shake off the yoke of the General Oppression as to liberate myself from my own slavery, ran quickly to present myself to the

troops that had liberated Quito, and which were then in Babahoyo, under the command of General Sucre.<sup>21</sup> (AHG document 5996, 1826)

Alejandro, who could read and write, emphasized that he had taken risks of his own free will, and mentioned the bloodbath that had been the battle of Guache: “It is very well known that in that time we saw the Action of Yaguachi, which I entered into with all my will, even acting as assistant to the late Captian Pedro Fobal, as Letter Number 2 that I attach states. Quickly we passed on to Guache, where we had the misfortune of losing”. Sucre had given him his “licencia absoluta” but he had lost it in a battle near Caracol, and now his former owner reclaimed him with the caprice of a tyrant reminiscent of a Spaniard: “He wants to enslave me again, making the greatest threat that a cruel master can pronounce”. Alejandro was writing from a hiding place where he had taken refuge since he heard his former master was after him. He seemed to have real faith that the new government would side with him so that he could emerge and take his place as the upstanding, hard-working, self-supporting citizen he believed the Republic wanted him to be. “I hope you will do me the favor of awarding me some security, so that my master, or whoever else, may recognize me as free and have no way to interfere with me for any reason, because I am now a fugitive without any way to earn a cent at the work that I do to maintain my old mother and myself” (“Espero se sirva concederme la gracia de un seguro para que ... mi amo, o qualquiera otro, me reconozcan por libre y no tengan que intervenir conmigo para nada, ... me allo fugitibo sin poder ganar un real en mi trabajo por mantenernos mi Madre anciana y yo”).

Pedro Franco, another “soldado de licencia absoluta”, argued in the same vein as Campusano when faced with re-enslavement. He moved between adept manipulation of his audience’s concerns and heartrending expressions of his belief in a freer world. He began with the very practical reminder that the country was still dependent on men like himself. “Sir: I took my place beneath the Colombian flag ... They want to make me a slave again, and such claims do not seem legal to me, as I am free and am ready to take to arms again as a faithful Colombian soldier”. Then he put in a plea for liberalism and the rights of man. He did not simply say that he desperately wanted to be free. He said: “Sir, I have committed no other crime except that I do not want to be a slave again, and for that reason they have thrown me in this prison”, (AHG document 501, 1830). In this new world it was not supposed to be a crime, an offense punishable with imprisonment, for a man to want to be free. This was what the elites had themselves argued in defending their own honor not so long ago. If it had been radical in their mouths, it was more so in Pedro’s.

Each of these men linked his own cause with the cause of the liberals in their ongoing struggles with traditionalists and closet Royalists, hoping in this way to gain supporters. Alejandro Campusano wrote about his would-be master: “He was weak enough to tell me that the Patria has no right to mandate in issues regarding slaves” (“El tubo la devilidad de desirme que *la Patria no tenía Autoridad para mandar en los esclavos*”), underlining the last words noticeably. Would the Republican government allow such a challenge to Sucre’s authority to stand? Pedro Franco went further, and actually accused his pretended-master

of treason to the new Republic, so that the latter was forced to gather several statements from prominent citizens attesting to his good name. With the help of their commanding officers, Alejandro Campusano and Pedro Franco eventually won back their freedom, although they both had to spend time in prison and the judge ruled that their former owners had to be reimbursed from the Manumission Fund. A number of others who claimed freedom were not so fortunate.

Masters fighting to keep their slaves could claim that although the enslaved did indeed make brilliant use of republican rhetoric for their own personal causes and might even join the army, they in fact had no wider political vision:

It is true that Teodor Zamora was one of the slaves who dedicated themselves to the Armed Service, not for love of an independent Republic, but rather out of his particular interest in gaining emancipation, so that without any risk he might gain all the advantages of those who served with true decision. (AHG document 6238, 1826)

The argument that Teodor Zamora's desire to be free himself invalidated his expressed desire to see the end of the colonial era was common among planters. It was, of course, illogical: Teodor's support of the cause might at first have been stronger than other men's—if he envisioned a republican nation as being more likely to protect his liberty and allow him to be true to himself. Certainly he was trying to make astute use of the current climate—an act for which other men often won respect—but that fact does not preclude the possibility that he believed in radical politics. In addition to making intelligent political use of republicanism to further their own personal causes, we have seen a number of Zamora's cohort drawing a philosophical connection between their own freedom and the freedom of a people and a nation.

Not all those who had been enslaved spoke as coherently as those cited here, and some had larger portions of their cases shaped by counsel. But nearly all of them speak to posterity through the descriptors they applied to themselves in the opening lines of their cases. Traditionally, a slave pleading for a favor would present himself as “esclavo infeliz”. But now they were, “Alejandro Campusano Natural del Canton de Babahoyo ...”, “Pedro Franco, soldado licenciado ...”, “Zeledonio Morillo, residente en esta Ciudad y natural del Chocó ...”, or even “José Mafarred, Vecino de Arequipa ...”. Sometimes they called themselves “slave that was”. Petra Iler, in the process of attempting to buy herself, said, “Yo, Petra Iler, vecina de esta Ciudad y esclava de mi Sra. Francisca Ayala ...”. Perhaps Petra was legally a slave, but she knew that she was participating as actively in the economic and civil life of the town as any of the wealthy ones who called themselves *vecinos*, and she said so.

### Conclusion

To some extent, we rely on common sense when we assert that the slaves at the end of the colonial period were well-versed in the political arguments of the era. Of course they were active agents in a world of conversation. It is also true, however, that we do not know what they talked about with whom, that at least

some masters attempted to hide certain issues from their servants, that very few people of any color could read for themselves. And workers might have been so occupied with their daily labors, loves and agonies that they paid little heed to the language of the philosophers—language that might have seemed somewhat ridiculous to a person scrubbing a floor. Enlightenment thought has been more often associated with free coloreds than with slaves (Geggus 1997). Thus it is important that we actually have proof of the ways in which enslaved people were exposed to political currents at moments that mattered to them.

There is in fact direct evidence that the enslaved had at least three sources of meaningful information: they spoke regularly with foreign sailors, with parish priests, and with the servants who helped their masters host political salons that hatched *independentista* plots. There are generally few comments on this topic on the part of the master class: either they did not notice how their slaves learned, or they preferred not to think about it. Nevertheless, in recounting the details of particularly dramatic periods, they illuminate aspects of slaves' lives with sudden clarity. A traveler mentioned without any surprise, indicating the normality of the event, a servant who carried messages between city and *hacienda* during the 1820 plot of the townspeople (Hall 1824, 124–29). Such a servant heard not just scraps of information, but as much as was available. When a slave woman went into labor and gave birth just hours before the new Law of the Free Womb went into effect, it was her priest who told her how matters stood and encouraged her to press the case of her child despite the intransigence of her mistress. She petitioned the governor of the brand new republic, and he sided with her, publicly stating that not only her child but also any others born just before the decree should be included (*El Patriota* May 4, 1822). Foreign sailors were another source of information in the busy port town, but here the case was complicated by language barriers. Travel writers noted melodies popular in New York or London being played in the streets of Guayaquil, but a tune is easier to convey than a news bulletin or political concept. Still, there were certainly some opportunities for the coincidental, if not purposeful, exchange of information between sailors and slaves, for they spent a great deal of time together. According to their irate captains, foreign sailors spent most of their time in port at the city's *chinganas*, or bars. Court cases indicate that free black women formed the largest group working in such places, and a number of them had personal ties to slaves who often stopped in (Townsend 1997). A black sailor from the U.S. was known to socialize with these women even outside of the *chingana*, and he hired one to do his laundry. Not all sailors were incipient radicals, of course, but at the very least they were widely traveled, and a number of scholars have insisted on these sailors' Jacobin tendencies and the thrill some found in spreading the word (Linebaugh and Rediker 1991; Scott 1991).

That slaves knew there were political and philosophical cases being levelled against slavery as well as colonialism is also evidenced by the fact the whites “knew that they knew”. Even slaveowners spoke now of “the desire for liberty that every slave has” (AHG document 6205, 1826; also 3471, 1830). The elites’

fear of “subversive words against the white class” partly bespeaks the whites’ own insecurity and feelings of guilt, but it also bespeaks a knowledge of anger and worldliness on the part of people of African descent (BMG, Volume 104, *Causas Criminales*, 1830–1832). The elites knew that the slaves would not necessarily side with them against the Crown merely because they were told to do so; rather they would analyze the issues for themselves. It was thus especially important that the fledgling Republicans maintain a united front. In 1823, when a disgruntled white citizen said “Shit on the Patria” and that “the King’s government was better”, the court considered his crime as having been the more serious because he spoke in front of a line of listening slaves waiting to make payments toward their self-purchase at the Bank of Manumission (AHG document 609, 1823).

In 1821, Simón Bolívar put into words what he and others like him knew about the thoughts of people who were not allowed to speak. He wrote to a friend about his soldiers:

They are without hope of gathering the fruit of what they have won by the lance ... I myself, who have always been at their head, still do not know all their capabilities. I treat them with extreme consideration; and yet this consideration is not enough to inspire in them the confidence and frankness that should exist among comrades and fellow citizens. You can be sure, Gual, that we are over an abyss, or, rather, over a volcano that is about to erupt. I fear peace more than war. (1951, 266)

Some of these soldiers had been slaves; some had not. In some ways it did not matter: Bolívar himself took the condition of the slave as an extreme example of the condition in which all commoners in his world found themselves, using the “terrifying” example of Haiti to talk about the liberation of Peru with its population of indigenous peons (1951, 307–08).

The importance, however, of Angela Batallas—so aptly named, as it turned out—lies in the fact that she not only heard everything that was going on around her, thought about it, analyzed it, and looked at the master class with her reactions in her eyes, but that she also, like others in her cohort, spoke out loud about the issues. If she could not write, she waited for the clerk to get it all down, and signed her name. Like others, she used her knowledge of republicanism to further her own case, and also vocalized connections between her plight and the plight of others who were unfree. Once she had done that, nothing in the former Kingdom of Quito could ever be the same again. For a fleeting moment, the “hidden transcript” merges with the “official” one, and we can read what she had to say. Because of this, the apocryphal stories and songs passed on by the slaves also become more meaningful. “Angela Batallas” is not a fragment of a folktale or the name given to a certain collective action. “Angela Batallas” was a real individual. Her bare feet pounded the cobblestones and muddy tracks of Guayaquil. She carried the weight of Maria del Carmen and other heavy burdens. She argued about politics. Almost two centuries later, her voice still speaks clearly.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This concept, present in much of the scholarship of the last two decades, was articulated by Scott (1990) and his phrase has become a popular common reference point.
- <sup>2</sup> The literature on rebellion and maroon communities is substantial, and the nature of the events often resulted in documents that leave us with clues as to the participants' stated beliefs in addition to the messages conveyed by their actions. In studying the overtly rebellious, however, we study a small minority of the New World's slaves. Thus many scholars have turned to a more subtle analysis of the choices made by the majority, realizing that they do not in fact bespeak passivity but negotiation. Genovese (1974) provided a key work in his study of the culture created by the slaves of North America. Scholars who studied slavery throughout the New World began to dedicate more time to explorations of the self-expression of the slaves and the ways in which they became agents in their own lives through their cultural practices. Rout (1976) provided a comprehensive framework for the study of slavery in Spanish America and others responded by filling out the study of culture. Klein (1986) provided a synthesis for Latin America as a whole. Palmić (1995) in a bibliographic essay offers an excellent summary of the work that has been done in the area in the last twenty years. The bibliography as a whole is immense, though it remains relatively small as regards the slave-holding coastal areas of the northern Andean region. See, for example, Navarrete (1995) on religion and Garcia-Barrio (1981) on folktales and sayings. See also Handelsman (1997) for commentary on why more such scholarship does not exist, at least in the case of Ecuador.
- <sup>3</sup> There are a few powerful exceptions. Cuba provides the only known actual slave narrative (Manzano 1996) as well as an "autobiography" based on a series of interviews with a former slave who was still alive after the Revolution (Barnet 1968). The literature on Brazilian slavery is immense, and a number of isolated documents where slaves speak in the first person have been uncovered. These have been recently summarized by Schwartz (1992, 20–21). We may also turn to other cultural traditions in the Caribbean for clues. Works by English-speaking blacks include, for example, the narrative of the famous Olaudah Equiano (1995), and the politically vocal Robert Wedderburn (1991) was the son of a Jamaican slave. Dutch Surinam became home to the Saramaka maroons whose oral histories include stories passed from generation to generation, many of which corroborate and are corroborated by government and missionary records dating from the same era (Price 1983 and 1990).
- <sup>4</sup> Da Costa (1994) uses trial records to uncover some of what the enslaved must have been thinking.
- <sup>5</sup> Those court records that have survived Guayaquil's legendary fires are now housed by the Archivo Histórico del Guayas (AHG). At the time of this writer's research, 375 cases from the given time period had been cataloged, of which twenty concerned demands for freedom presented by the enslaved. Document 1546 (1922–1923), or the Cuaderno de Conciliaciones, provides records of the cases successfully settled through arbitration.
- <sup>6</sup> A debate exists on the significance of subaltern participation in litigation. On the one hand, in choosing to use legal channels, they are accepting the authority of a system that is obviously stacked against them. On the other hand, they are searching for "cracks" in the armor of a system that through their efforts may be forced to widen and thus allow for change. Carlos Aguirre (1993) has summarized this discussion; he believes, as do I, that the second interpretation has at least enough merit to justify the study of slaves' legal statements.
- <sup>7</sup> Lynch (1973) provided the leading articulation of the revisionist view that the great and liberating era was neither for the peasant and the slave. Currently one of his former students (Blanchard 1997) is among those studying the ways in which the period did change the world of the non-elites.
- <sup>8</sup> This is not in fact a new view, but one that has moved from periphery to center in scholarly work over the years. Eric Williams (1944) touched off generations of debate when he expressed the view that slavery's demise was predicated on its declining profitability; David Eltis (1987) speaks for the majority of scholars today in his economic analysis that slavery remained useful to capitalist enterprise and we must look elsewhere to explain its end. Those scholars who have emphasized human agency differ in their focus: some, such as David Brion Davis (1975 and 1984), have concentrated their efforts on analyzing the changing patterns of what was

- acceptable within the confines of Western thought, while others, such as Vincent Bakpetu Thompson (1987), have studied the impact of slave resistance on the unfolding discourse. Rebecca Scott (1985) produced a monograph that succeeded in uniting the latter traditions, moving between the metropolis, the planters and the slaves and demonstrating how the actions of each had an impact in the drama that ultimately doomed slavery. Three recent studies of the end of slavery on the Andean coast have followed Scott's lead and privilege the demands and wishes of the slaves as a factor in bringing about the system's end. See Blanchard (1992), Aguirre (1993) and Hunefeldt (1994).
- <sup>9</sup> A classic in the field remains Lynch (1973). A new interpretation is Kinsbruner (1994). For a biography of Bolívar see Masur (1969).
- <sup>10</sup> Many studies treat this moment as a turning point. See Blackburn (1988). On the friendship between Bolívar and Petión see Zapata (1986); for a more cynical view of Bolívar's dealings with the Haitians see Lara (1984).
- <sup>11</sup> Coastal plantation slavery was only one aspect of the institution in the former Viceroyalty of Peru. Mining was equally important in the region as a whole. See Bowser (1974) and Sharp (1976).
- <sup>12</sup> For complete studies of the region's political economy, see Hamerly (1975), Laviana Cuetos (1987), Contreras (1990) and Andrien (1995).
- <sup>13</sup> Hamerly (1975) gives the statistic 7.7 percent for the year 1825 for the city as a whole. The *Padrones* of 1832 (BMG, Volumes 136 and 137) provide excellent detail for studies of the parish of the Matriz: it is possible to count and categorize each resident of each block. I, too, find that roughly 8 percent of the city's counted people were slaves. However, I estimate the city's total population to be greater than does Hamerly, in that government correspondence indicates that a wide ring of newcomers lived on the savanna north of the city who had not been counted in the *padrones*.
- <sup>14</sup> The *Cuaderno de Conciliaciones* for 1822–1823 (AHG document 1546, 1823) contains more cases of this kind than any other, though not all the diseases discovered were sexually transmitted. For examples of cases that went to court see documents 467 (1821) and 776 (1824).
- <sup>15</sup> Fazio Fernández (1987) has briefly explored this tension in the city of Guayaquil. Sales de Bohigas (1970), who studied the contradictory impulses evident in the Patriots' treatment of the slaves who fought for them, noted that even debating whether or not the enslaved should be freed in exchange for fighting was a new phenomenon, in that under the colonial administration, one of the legal duties of the slave was that he fight for the master at the master's orders.
- <sup>16</sup> Mallo (1991) has studied tensions evident in the language of the patriots in the case of Buenos Aires. Blanchard (1992) and Aguirre (1993) treat the issue in Peru.
- <sup>17</sup> My source for Angela's case throughout the following pages is AHG document 698, 1823. Gould (1996) has delineated a similar and yet dramatically different story of an enslaved woman in nineteenth-century New Orleans who had a relationship with her master, but Gould's primary goal is to discover whether the experience was empowering or disempowering for the woman, rather than to illuminate in a more general way the woman's beliefs and imagination as far as possible.
- <sup>18</sup> Coronel is mentioned with some frequency in the city's paper, *El Patriota de Guayaquil*. See Arosemena (1995) for a summary of his life and Fazio Fernández (1988) for a discussion of the political books and pamphlets known to be circulating in the houses of the wealthy at this time.
- <sup>19</sup> I include the original Spanish text where it is particularly important: "La unión de dos personas de diverso sexo, las constituye en una misma, pues de esta resulta regularmente el prole: et erum duo in carne una. ¿Y es posible que con buen juicio se crea que lldefonso Coronel, cuando me propuso su unión, quisiese que la mitad de su cuerpo fuese libre, y la otra mitad esclava, sujeta a servidumbre, venta y mas odiosidades, que en algunas desgraciadas Personas, se conservan como reliquias del sistema feudal, en que cerca de tres siglos hemos estado envueltos?"
- <sup>20</sup> "No lo creo de la Justificación de este tribunal, ni que unos beneméritos de la República que llena de sentimientos filantropicos y liberales ha dado relevantes pruebas de liberalismo, empleando sus armas y esponiendo sus heroicas vidas por liberarnos del Yugo Español, quiera

comprometerse a mantenerme bajo la servidumbre contra la promesa que Coronel me hizo la primera vez que se unió conmigo.”

- <sup>21</sup> “Llegó a mis Oydos la dulce voz de la Patria e deseando yo ser uno de sus soldados tanto por sacudir el yugo de la Opresión General como por liberarme de la esclavitud en que me allaba, corrí veloz a presentarme a las tropas libertadoras de Quito que se allaban en Babaoyo, en las ordenes del Sr. General Sucre.”

## Abbreviations

AHG Archivo Histórico del Guayas (Guayaquil)  
 BMG Archivo de la Biblioteca Municipal de Guayaquil

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