

# **Our Indians**

Manuel González Prada

1904

# Contents

<b>I</b> . . . . .	<b>3</b>
<b>II</b> . . . . .	<b>5</b>
<b>III</b> . . . . .	<b>7</b>
<b>IV</b> . . . . .	<b>8</b>

## I

The most eminent sociologists consider sociology a science in formation and call for the advent of its Newton, its Lavoisier, or its Lyell. Yet no other works pullulate such dogmatic and arbitrary assertions as those produced by the heirs and disciples of Comte.<sup>1</sup> One might call sociology not only the art of giving new names to old things but also the science of contradictory assertions. If one great sociologist announces a proposition, we may be certain that another no less great sociologist will advocate the diametric opposite. Just as some pedagogues remind us of the teachers of [Eugene] Scribe, so many sociologists make us think of the physicians of Moliere — Le Bon<sup>2</sup> and Tarde are not far from Diafoirus and Purgón.

We might mention the question of race as one upon which the authors differ most. While some see it in the principle factor of social dynamics, others reduce ethnic influences to so small a scope that they say with Durkheim: “We know no social phenomenon which falls unquestionably under dependence upon race.”<sup>3</sup> Novicow, in spite of considering the opinion of Durkheim exaggerated, does not hesitate to assert that race, like species, is to a certain point a subjective category of our spirit, without external reality; and in a generous burst of humanity he exclaims: “All those pretended incapacities of the yellow and the black people are chimeras of sick spirits.” Whoever dares say to a race, “Thus far you may come and no farther,” is blind and stupid.

How convenient an invention ethnology is in the hands of some men! If one grants the division of humanity into superior and inferior races and recognizes the superiority of the whites and their consequent right to govern the planet, nothing is more natural than the suppression of the Black in Africa, the Redskin in the United States, the Tagalog in the Philippines, or the Indian in Peru. Since the supreme law of life is fulfilled in the selection or elimination of the weak and unadaptable, the violent eliminators and suppressors are merely accelerating the slow and indolent labor of Nature. They abandon the pace of the tortoise for the gallop of the horse. Many, like Pearson, do not write it but allow it to be read between the lines, as when he refers to the “solidarity among civilized man of the European race against Nature and human barbarism.” Where you read “human barbarism,” it is to be translated “man without white skin.”

But not only is the suppression of black and yellow people decreed. Within the white race itself, classifications are made of peoples destined to live and prosper and peoples condemned to decline and die. Since Demolins published his book *A quoi tient la supériorité des Anglo-Saxons*, the fashion has been revived of glorifying the Anglo Saxons and depreciating the Latins. (Although few Latins can really be called so — for example can Atahualpa be called Galician, or Montezuma, Provençal?)<sup>4</sup> In Europe and America we see many Cassandras flourishing who live

---

<sup>1</sup> Auguste Comte (1798 – 1857) was a French philosopher who developed a new social science, what he called positive science, and what he eventually labeled sociology. He is thus, the father of sociology. During González Prada’s time, many sociologists were Comtian one way or another. His two foundational sociological works were *Cours de philosophie positive* (1830–1842) and *Système de politique positive ou Traité de sociologie* (1851–1854) [TW].

<sup>2</sup> Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931) was a French psychologist and sociologist whose writings were well known for the explosive race theory they contained. Essential to his thought were analysis of national features that oftentimes degenerated into racial and even racist propositions. Among his popular books can be found *Psychologie des foules* (1895) translated into English as *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1897) [TW].

<sup>3</sup> Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) was a French sociologist roughly contemporary to González Prada. Durkheim was interested in behavior as exterior to the individual or as the result of individual consciousness, his favored view later in life. Like González Prada, he viewed morality as integral to social organization [TW].

<sup>4</sup> González Prada signals a problem with calling people of Latin American heritage “Latins” or “Latinos,” Latin being the language of the Ancient Roman Empire and the people that were descended from it. Since people of indige-

by prophesying the conflagration and destruction of the New Troy. Some pessimists, believing themselves the Deucalions of the next deluge or even the Supermen of Nietzsche, decree the disappearance of their own race as if dealing with prehistoric beings or inhabitants of the Moon. It has not been formulated, but an axiom follows [from this]. Crimes and vices of the English and the North Americans are things inherent in the human species and do not forecast the decline of a people. On the other hand, crimes and vices of the French or Italians are anomalies and indicate racial degeneration. Fortunately Oscar Wilde and General MacDonald were not born in Paris and the round table of the Emperor William was not held in Rome.

It seems unnecessary to say that we do not take seriously dilettanti like Paul Bourget nor mystifiers like Maurice Barrès when they thunder against cosmopolitanism and weep over the decadence of the noble French race because the daughter of a syphilitic count and a consumptive marquise allows herself to be seduced by a healthy and vigorous youth without a noble pedigree. In respect to Monsieur Gustave Le Bon, we should admire him for his very vast knowledge and his great moral elevation, even though he represents an exaggeration of Spencer, much as Max Nordau does of Lombroso and Haeckel of Darwin. He deserves to be called the Bossuet of Sociology, but that is not to say the Torquemada or the Herod. If he had not made himself worthy of consideration by his observations upon occult matters (*sobre la luz negra*) we might say that he is to a sociology what doctor Sangrado [the ignorant physician of *Gil Blas*] is to medicine.

Le Bon warns us not in any way to take the term race in an anthropological sense, because pure races have long since almost disappeared, except among savage peoples. And to give us a secure road to march on, he decides: "Among civilized people there are only historical events." According to the Le Bon's dogma, Hispanic American nations constitute one of these races, but a race so exceptional that it has passed dizzily from childhood to decrepitude, covering in less than a century the course run by other peoples in three, four, five, and even six thousand years. "The twenty-two Latin American republics of America," he says in his *Psychologie du socialisme*, "although all situated in the richest regions of the Globe, are incapable of developing their immense resources... The final destiny of that half of America is to return to primitive barbarism unless the United States do it the great service of conquering it... To debase the richest regions of the Globe to the level of the black republics of Santo Domingo and Haiti, this is what the Latin race has accomplished in less than a century with half of America."<sup>5</sup>

It might be argued with Le Bon that he mistakes the skin eruption of a child for the senile gangrene of a nonagenarian, the hebephrenia of a youth for the homicidal mania of an old man. Since when do revolutions indicate decrepitude and death? None of the Hispanic American nations today displays the political and social misery which reigned in the Europe of feudalism. But the feudal epoch is considered a stage in evolution, whereas the era of Hispanic American revolutions is looked upon as an incurable, final state. We might also answer by confronting Le Bon the pessimist with Le Bon the optimist, [pitting] as one might say St. Augustine the Bishop against St. Augustine the pagan. "It is possible," affirms Le Bon, "that after a series of profound calamities, convulsions almost never seen in history," the Latin peoples, taught by experience, "may attempt the arduous task of acquiring the qualities they lack in order henceforth to achieve success in life... Apostles can accomplish much because they succeed in changing public opinion,

---

nous origin such as the Inca Atahualpa were never a part of the Roman Empire nor were they even aware of Europe, calling them "Latinos" is assigning them to a category to which they cannot possibly belong [TW].

<sup>5</sup> Santo Domingo is now called the Dominican Republic [TW].

and public opinion is queen today... History is so full of the unforeseen, the world is undergoing such profound changes, that it is impossible today to foresee the destiny of empires.” If it is impossible to foresee the fate of nations, how then announce the death of the Hispanic American republics? What the Latin Empires can achieve in Europe, may not the nations of similar origin attempt in the New World? Or are there two sociological laws, one for the Latins of America and another for the Latins of Europe? Perhaps. But happily, the assertions of Le Bon resemble nails which drive out each other.

It appears, then, that while August Comte intended to make of sociology an eminently positive science, his heirs have converted it into a heap of ramblings without any scientific basis.

## II

In his *Der Rassenkampf* (*Race Conflict*) Ludwig Gumplowicz says that every important and powerful ethnic element seeks to make serve its ends any weak element found in its radius or which penetrates into it.<sup>6</sup> First the Conquerors and then their descendants in the countries of America constituted an ethnic element sufficiently powerful to subjugate and exploit the indigenes. Although the statements of Las Casas are marred by exaggeration, it cannot be denied that in some American countries, thanks to the avaricious cruelty of the exploiters, the weak element was almost extinguished. The ants which domesticate grubs in order to milk them do not imitate the lack of foresight of the whites—they do not destroy the productive animal.

To the theory of Gumplowicz should be added a law which has great influence in our way of life—when an individual rises above the level of his social class he usually becomes its worst enemy. During the time of black slavery there were no crueller overseers than the Blacks themselves. At the present time there are probably no harsher oppressors of the Indian than those very Indians who are Hispanicized and invested with some authority.

The real tyrant of the masses, who uses certain Indians to exploit and oppress the others, is the half-caste, including in this term not only the cholo or mestizo of the sierra but also the mulatto and zambo of the coast.<sup>7</sup> In Peru we see an ethnic stratification. Excluding Europeans and the small number of national or Creole whites, the population is divided into two parts, very unequal in quantity, the dominating half-castes and the dominated indigenes. One or two hundred thousand persons have been placed over three millions.

---

<sup>6</sup> Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838–1909) another of the creators of sociology. Being a Jewish man from Kraków (then an independent republic, later Poland) he became aware of ethnic strife between Germanic and Slavic peoples and of course the treatment that Jews received [TW].

<sup>7</sup> The use of such explicit racial terminology can be shocking to the modern ear. Yet it was quite common during González Prada’s time, appearing in other important contemporary essayists such as José Martí and Eugenio María de Hostos. The paradox consists in González Prada using racial terminology to attack race theory. This seems clear to us today, but at that time (before civil rights and the advances of the theories of heterogeneity, multiculturalism and diversity), it was hard to see the colonialist forest for all the racist trees. Getting beyond the language problem, one can see that González Prada continues a line of argument first established by the early seventeenth-century chronicler Guamán Poma de Ayala who tells us that priests and mayordomos (stewards) “and their companions all have mistresses”, the result, of course, being that “they have crowds of little mestizo sons and daughters” (Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, trans. & ed. David Frye (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2006, pp. 150, 185). Like Guaman Poma before him and José Carlos Mariátegui after him, González Prada seems to prefer pure-blooded indigenous peoples over mestizos in his plans for society [TW].

There is a real offensive and defensive alliance based on exchange of services between the dominant group of the capital and those of the province. The political bosses (*gamonal*) of the sierra act as political agents for the overlords in Lima, and the overlords of Lima defend the political bosses of the sierra when they barbarously abuse the Indian. Few social groups have committed such iniquities or have such a black record as the Spaniards and half-castes of Peru. Revolutions, squandering, and bankruptcy seem like nothing compared with the glacial cupidity of the half-castes to squeeze the blood out of human flesh. The suffering and death of their fellow creatures matters very little to them when that suffering and death yields them a gain of a few *soles*.<sup>8</sup> They decimate the Indian with their assessments and forced labor (*mitas*);<sup>9</sup> they import the Black to make him groan under the lash of the overseer; they swallow up the Chinese, giving him a handful of rice for ten and even fifteen hours of work; they bring the East Indian from his islands to let him die of nostalgia in the slave quarters of the haciendas; today they are trying to bring in Japanese... The Black seems to decline [in numbers], the Chinese is disappearing, the East Indian has left no trace, and the Japanese gives no sign of lending himself to slavery. But the Indian remains, since three hundred to four hundred years of cruelty have not succeeded in exterminating him. The vile creature obstinately insists on living!

The viceroys of Peru never failed to condemn the violations nor spared any effort to achieve the protection, good treatment, and relief of the Indians. The Kings of Spain, yielding to the compassion of their noble and Catholic souls, conceived humanitarian measures and backed those initiated by the viceroys. There were more than enough fine proposals in royal cédulas. We do not know whether the Laws of the Indies formed a pyramid as tall as Chimborazo, but we know the evil continued unchanged, even though some were punished as examples. And it could not be otherwise. The exploitation of the conquered was officially ordered, but humanity and justice were asked of the executors of the exploitation. It was pretended that it was possible to commit iniquities humanely and to carry out injustice with equity. To stamp out the abuses it would have been necessary to stamp out the *repartimientos* and *mitas*, in a word, to change the whole colonial regime. Without the forced labor (*faenas* of the American Indian the coffers of the Spanish treasury would have been empty. The wealth sent by the colonies to the Metropolis was merely blood and tears converted into gold.

The Republic continues the tradition of the viceroyalty. In their messages the presidents urge the redemption of the oppressed and they are called protectors of the native race. Congresses elaborate laws which go beyond the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the ministers of government issue decrees, send notes to the prefects, and appoint investigating commissions, all with the noble purpose of assuring guaranties to the disinherited class. But messages, laws, decrees, notes, and commissions are nothing more than hypocritical jeremiads, fruitless words, and over-worked measures. The authorities who send threatening orders from Lima to the departments know they will not be obeyed. The prefects who receive the warnings from the Capital know that nothing will happen to them for not carrying them out. What the Marquis of Mancera said in his *Memoria* in 1648 could be repeated today, reading governors and hacienda owners for *corregidores* and *caciques*. “These poor Indians have as their enemies the greediness of their *corregidores*,

---

<sup>8</sup> The *Sol* or “Sun” was based on the Incan deity, “Inti.” Times change and the *Sol* in González Prada’s time and in our time is the unit of currency in Peru. The paradox in this is that what was once a spiritual entity is now a material count [TW].

<sup>9</sup> The *mita* was a form of tax labor in the Andes during the period before the arrival of the Spanish. After the conquest it became simply forced labor and in time grew into an institution called debt peonage [TW].

of their priests, and of their *caciques*, all trying to grow rich on their sweat; it would take the zeal and authority of a viceroy for each of them. Relying upon the distance [from authority] they falsely pretend obedience and there is not enough strength or perseverance to register a second complaint." The phrase falsely pretending obedience has great significance in the mouth of a viceroy. But even more significant is the statement which escaped from the defenders of the Indians of Chucuito.

There are many friends of the Indian who in their individual and collective capacities behave like the government in its official action. The groups formed to free the unredeemed race have been no better than political contrabandists, hiding behind a philanthropic banner. Defending the Indian, they have exploited the public pity as others have traded on patriotism by invoking Tacna and Arica. For the redeemers to act in good faith they would have to experience an overnight transformation, repenting the terrible measure of their sins, formulating a steady purpose of obeying the dictates of justice, becoming men of tigers. Is this conceivable?

Meanwhile, as a general rule, the dominant group approach the Indian only to deceive him, oppress him, or corrupt him. And we should remember that not only the national half-caste acts with inhumanity and bad faith. When Europeans become wool traders, mine owners, or hacienda proprietors, they show themselves fine exactors, extortionists, rivaling the old *encomenderos* and the present day *hacendados*. The white skinned animal, wherever he is born, is afflicted with the disease of gold. In the final analysis he yields to the instinct of rapacity.

### III

Does the Indian suffer less under the republic than under Spanish rule? While neither *corregimientos* nor *encomiendas* exist, forced labor and its recruitment remain. What we make him suffer is enough to call down upon us the execration of humanity. We hold him in ignorance and servitude, we debase him in the garrisons, we brutalize him with alcohol, we set him to destroying himself in civil war, and from time to time we organize hunting parties and massacres like those of Amantani, Ilave, and Haunta.

It is an unwritten axiom that the Indian has no rights, only obligations. In his case a personal complaint is considered insubordination, a collective claim, a plot of rebellion. The Spanish royalists killed the Indian when he tried to escape the yoke of his conquerors; we republicans exterminate him when he protests against onerous taxes or tires of enduring in silence the iniquities of some satrap.

Our form of government is in essence a great lie, because a state in which two or three million individuals live outside the law does not deserve to be called a democratic republic. While in the coastal region one sees a shadow of protection under a feigned republic, in the interior the violation of all rights under a feudal regime is open. Here neither laws nor courts of justice rule, because hacienda owners and political bosses (*gamonales*) settle everything, arrogating to themselves the role of judge as well as executor. The political authorities, far from protecting the weak and the poor, almost always help the strong and the rich. There are regions where justices of the peace and [provincial] governors are servitors of the hacienda. What governor, what sub-prefect, what prefect, even, would dare oppose a hacienda owner?

A hacienda consists of small farms taken by force from their rightful owners. A landlord exercises the authority of a Norman baron over his peons. He not only influences the selection

of governors, mayors, and justices of the peace, but also arranges marriages, designates heirs, divides up inheritances, and imposes what is frequently a life-long servitude upon children to pay the debts of their parents. He imposes punishments that are terrible such as shackles, flogging, stocks, and death; or are ridiculous, such as shaving the head and cold-water enemas. It would be a miracle for one who respects neither life nor property to respect the honor of women. Any Indian woman, married or single, may be the object of the señor's vicious desires. Violation and rape mean little when one realizes that it is necessary to take the Indian women by main force. And despite all this the Indian never speaks to the landlord without kneeling and kissing his hand. It cannot be said that the lords of the land act in this way through ignorance or lack of culture. The sons of some hacienda owners go to Europe in childhood to be educated in France or England, returning to Peru with all the outward aspects of civilized people. But once ensconced in their haciendas, they lose the European varnish and proceed with more inhumanity than their fathers. When the son dons his sombrero, poncho, and spurs, the beast reappears. To sum up: the haciendas are kingdoms in the heart of the republic; the hacienda owners rule as autocrats in the midst of democracy.

#### IV

To justify governmental negligence and the inhumanity of the despoilers some pessimists of the Le Bon stamp a degrading stigma on the forehead of the Indian; they accuse him of being refractory to civilization. Anyone could imagine that if splendid schools could be built in all our towns, with competent well paid teachers buzzing around in them, that the rooms would be plenty empty because the children, obeying the orders of their parents, would not hasten to receive education? Could one imagine, moreover, that the natives would fail to follow the fine moral example of the ruling class and crucify without a scruple all who preach elevated and generous ideas. The Indian received what they gave him — fanaticism and liquor.

Now let us see what is understood by civilization. Over industry and art, over science and learning, morality gleams like a shining light on the apex of a great pyramid. Not theological morality based on punishment after death, but humane morality which seeks no sanction far removed from the world. The essence of morality, for individuals as well as for societies, consists in transforming the struggle of man against man into a mutual accord for living. Where there is no justice, pity, or benevolence, there is no civilization; where the struggle for life is made the law of society, barbarism reigns. What does it avail to acquire the wisdom of an Aristotle if one's heart is that of a tiger? What is there worthwhile in having the talent of a Michelangelo if one has the soul of a pig? It is better to go through the world distilling the honey of goodness than shedding the light of art and science. The societies that deserve to be called highly civilized are those in which the practice of the good has become an habitual obligation and the beneficent act instinctive. Have they any right to consider the Indian incapable of civilization?

The political and social organization of the ancient Inca Empire astonishes revolutionary reformers today. True, Atahualpa did not know his Pater Noster, nor had Calcuchima pondered the mystery of the Trinity. But the cult of the Sun was perhaps less absurd than the Catholic religion, and the high priest of Pachacamac scarcely exceeded Padre Valverde in ferocity. If the subject of Huayna Capac accepted civilization we see no reason why the Indian of the republic is inferior to the native encountered by the conquerors; but moral depression because of political



servitude is not the same as an absolute incapacity by organic constitution to achieve civilization. In any case, upon whom should the blame fall?

The facts give the lie to the pessimists. Wherever the Indian is educated in schools or simply by contact with civilized persons, he takes on the same level of morality and culture as the descendant of the Spaniard.<sup>10</sup> We constantly meet yellow men who dress, eat, live, and think like the suave gentlemen of Lima. We see Indians in legislatures, municipal governments, magistracies, universities, and scientific bodies who seem no more venal nor more ignorant than those of other races. It is impossible, in our national politics, to trace the lines of responsibility *in totum revolutis* [sic] so as to say what evil is caused by mestizos, mulattoes, and whites. There is such promiscuity of blood and color, each individual represents so many licit or illicit mixtures, that most Peruvians would be puzzled to figure out the dose of black and yellow they carry in their veins.<sup>11</sup> No one deserves the qualification of pure white, even though he may have blue eyes and blond hair. We need only recall that our president who had the broadest viewpoint belonged to the native race and was called Santa Cruz.<sup>12</sup> There were a hundred more, valiant to the stage of heroism like Cahuide or loyal even to martyrdom like Olaya.<sup>13</sup>

Novicow is right in saying that the supposed inferiority of Yellows and Blacks is a chimera of diseased minds. Actually, there is no cultural activity which cannot be performed by some black or some yellow man, just as the most infamous act may be committed by some white. During the invasion of China in 1900 the yellow men of Japan gave lessons in humanity to the whites of Russia and Germany. We do not recall whether the Blacks of Africa ever gave such lessons to the Boers of the Transvaal and the English of the Cape; but we do know that the Anglo-Saxon Kitchener showed himself as ferocious in the Sudan as Behanzin in Dahomey. If, instead of comparing white-skinned masses with dark-skinned masses, we compare one individual with another, we see that savages and redskins at heart abound in the midst of white civilization. Suppose we name as flowers of the race, or representative men, the King of England and the Emperor of Germany. Do Edward VII and William II deserve to be compared with the Indian Benito Juárez and the Black Booker Washington? Those who lived in taverns, barracks, and brothels before occupying a throne, or from the summit of power ordered the pitiless massacre of children, women, and old people may be white in skin but hide blackness in their souls.

Does the lowliness of the native race result merely from ignorance? Certainly national ignorance is fabulous when it is recalled that in many towns of the interior not a single man is found able to read or write, that during the War of the Pacific the Indians believed the conflict of the two nations was a civil war between General Chile and General Peru, and that not long ago rep-

---

<sup>10</sup> González Prada does not refer here to the elevated morality of the inhabitants of the Tahuantinsuyo state. He is simply referring to the degraded condition in which the decedents of the Inca's subjects continued to live [TW].

<sup>11</sup> "licit or illicit mixtures," meaning offspring resulting from marriage or from concubinage, from marriage or rape [TW].

<sup>12</sup> Andrés de Santa Cruz (1792–1865), the Bolivian president between 1829 and 1836, had the foresight that in a political union Peru and Bolivia would be stronger politically. Thus, he formed and presided over the *Confederación Peruano-Boliviana* during the years 1836 and 1839. Unfortunately, Chile opposed this union, as did many Creoles from Lima, setting the stage for its failure. Prophetically, down the road when Chile declared war on Bolivia and Peru in 1879, these twin nations would have been better prepared to wage war on the British-supplied Chile and would not have both been destroyed economically and carved up geographically [TW].

<sup>13</sup> José Olaya was a martyr in the Peruvian war for independence. A fisherman from Chorrillos, he swam with messages from there to Lima. He was captured and executed in the Plaza de Armas in the capital [TW].

representatives of Chucuito went to Tacna imagining that there they would encounter the president of the republic.

Some pedagogues (rivaling the sellers of panaceas) imagine that if a man knows the tributaries of the Amazon and the median temperature in Berlin, half the road to the solution of all social problems has been traversed. If, by some superhuman phenomenon, our national illiterates should arise some dawn not only knowing how to read and write but with university diplomas, the problem of the Indian would not be solved. A proletariat of bachelors and doctors would merely replace that of the ignorant. [Even] in the most civilized nations physicians without patients, lawyers without clients, engineers with nothing to build, writers without a reading public, artists without buyers, and teachers without students abound, making up a numberless army of shining intelligences without bread for their stomachs. Where the coastal haciendas run to four or five fanegas and the estancias of the sierra measure thirty or even fifty [square] leagues, the nation must be divided into lords and serfs.

Education does indeed usually change an impulsive brute into a reasonable and magnanimous being, teaching him and lighting for him the path he should follow in order not to get lost at the crossroads of life. But to see a path is not the same as to follow it to the end; firmness of will and toughness of feet are also necessary. A proud rebellious spirit is also needed, not the submission and deference of the soldier and monk. Education may keep man in [a state of] meanness and servitude — the eunuchs and grammarians of Byzantium were educated. It is the right of every rational being to occupy on the earth the decent place due him instead of accepting that which is assigned, to ask for and get his daily bread, to demand a roof and piece of land.

Nothing changes the psychology of man more quickly or more fundamentally than property. Upon escaping the servitude of hunger he grows a hundred palms. By merely becoming the owner of something the individual rises several steps on the social ladder, because classes are essentially groups based upon the amount of wealth. Quite the opposite of a balloon — the more he weighs the more he rises. To one who says *the school*, reply *the school and bread*.

The problem of the Indian is economic and social more than educational. How is it to be resolved? Not long ago a German conceived the idea of restoring the Inca Empire. He learned Quechua, made himself known among the Indians of Cuzco, began to gain supporters and might, perhaps, have attempted an uprising if death had not surprised him when returning from a voyage to Europe. But is there any place for such a restoration today? If it were attempted and carried out the result would be a petty imitation of past greatness.

The situation of the native can improve in two ways. Either the heart of the oppressors relents to the extent of recognizing the rights of the oppressed, or the spirit of the oppressed acquires sufficient vigor to chasten their oppressors. If the Indian were to spend for rifles and bullets what he wastes on alcohol and fiestas, or if he were to conceal a weapon in the corner of his hut or on the hollow of a rock, he might change his situation, making his property and life respected. To violence he might then reply with violence, punishing the patron who steals his wool, the soldier who levies in the name of the government, and the bandit who robs his cattle and beasts of burden.

To the Indian one should not preach humility and resignation but pride and rebellion. What has he gained by three or four hundred years of conformity and patience? The less he is subject to authority the more injury he escapes. It is a revealing fact that there is more well being in the regions most remote from the big haciendas and that the towns least often visited by the authorities enjoy greater peace and order.

To sum up, the Indian will be redeemed by his own efforts, not the humanization of his oppressors. Every white, more or less, is a Pizarro, a Valverde, or an Areche.

**1904, 1924**

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)  
Anti-Copyright



Manuel González Prada  
Our Indians  
1904

Retrieved on march 2021 from <https://evergreen.loyola.edu/tward/www/gp/english/Indians.htm>  
“Nuestros indios” did not become part of *Horas de lucha* until the second edition in 1924.  
Manuel González Prada, “Nuestros Indios”, *Horas de lucha*. Second edition (Callao: Tip. Lux, 1924, pp. 311–338); Translation: Harold Eugene Davis, “Our Indians,” *Latin American Social Thought* (Washington: The University Press of Washington, 1961), pp. 196–208. For original footnotes, please consult Davis’ original text. The editor has slightly modernized this translation as well as cleared up a few ambiguities. Prepared for WWW by Dawn DeLeonardis.

**[usa.anarchistlibraries.net](http://usa.anarchistlibraries.net)**