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Documented: The Colonial Archive and the Future of the Americas

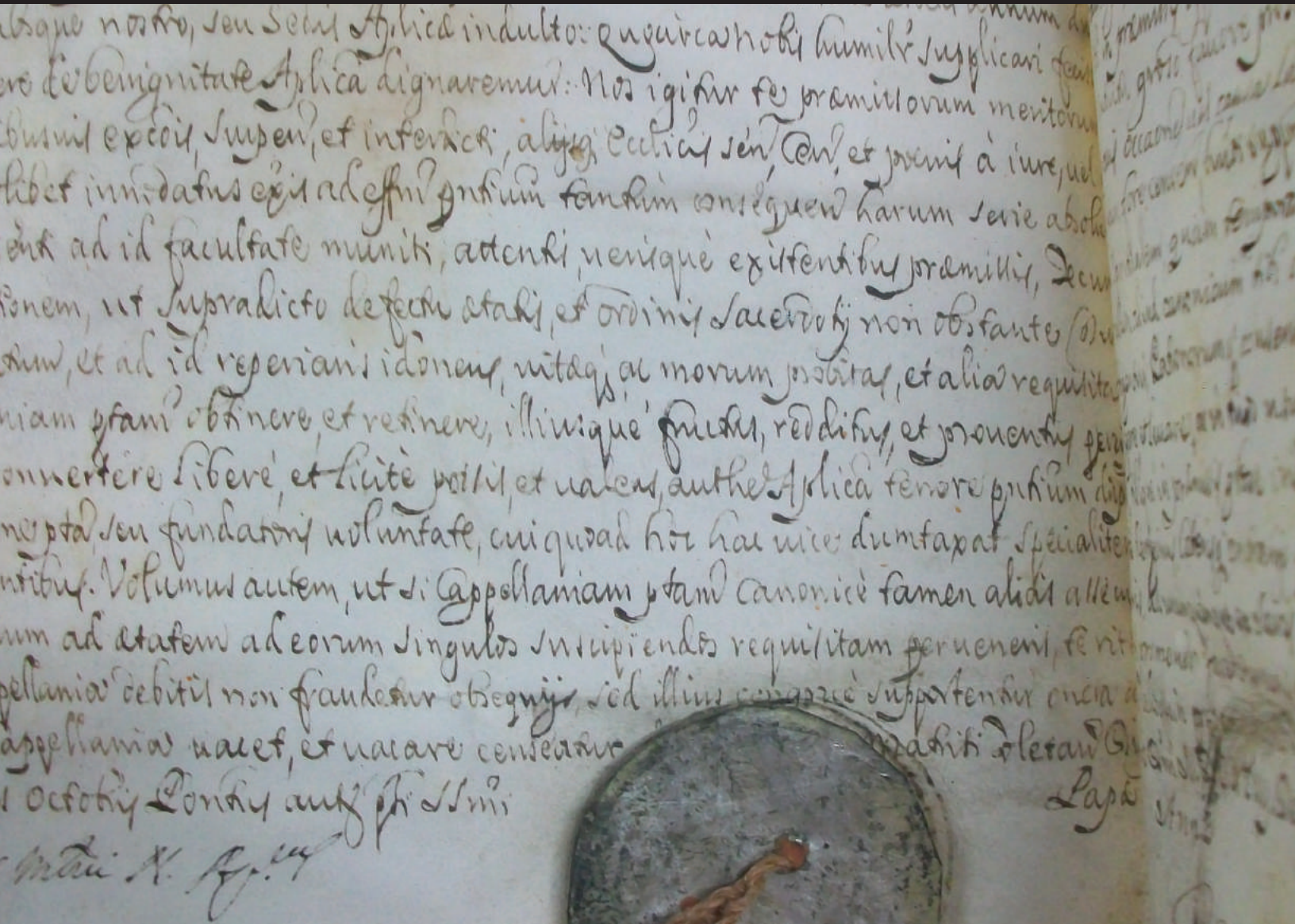
Abstract

In the last three years, guest editor Bianca Premo has participated in and led a series of hemisphere-wide seminars on the archives of colonial Latin America, specifically what the historical record reveals and what it hides, and how records affect the stories we tell and the lives we lead. For example, one of the objectives of opening the archives is to tell the human stories of the colonial disempowered and use those to better understand today's disenfranchised. This approach to examining the archives reveals far more than past accounts and parallels to the present; in many ways it also provides a window into the future of the Americas.

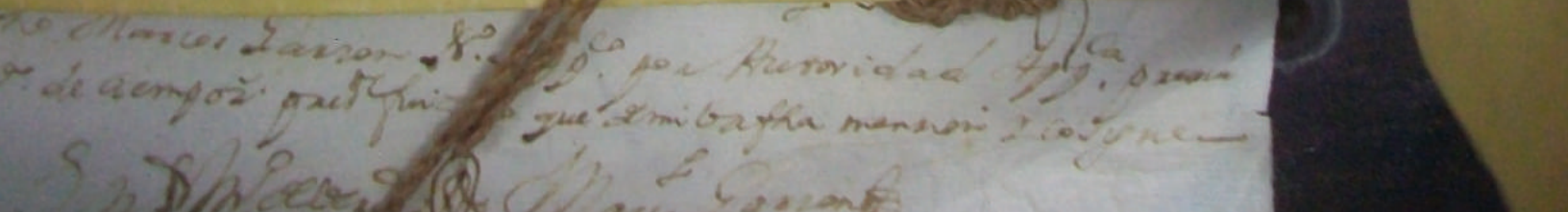
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Cover Image and Page 5: Matrix on eighteenth-century papal bull, used by permission of the Archivo Diocesano de Toledo, Spain. Photo by Bianca Premo.

Dear *Hemisphere* readers:

I was delighted when Bianca Premo, Professor of History at FIU, approached LACC about supporting her participation at *La Patrona* Collective for Colonial Latin American scholarship. She had already attended a meeting at Princeton University (March 2017) and a practicum sponsored by the University of Notre Dame in Rome (July 2017), and LACC sponsored her attendance at a meeting of the Tepoztlán Institute on Transnational History (August 2017). All of these intensive sessions delved into questions about critical approaches to colonial Latin American history and reinforced the importance of support of emerging scholars to ensure this important work continues.

After the success of these sessions, Professor Premo approached LACC about supporting an expansion of *La Patrona* meetings by organizing an open seminar at FIU, *Archivos*, in Spring 2018. LACC welcomed the opportunity to support and host some of the world's leading scholars of colonial Latin America to discuss what the historical record reveals and what it hides, and how records affect the stories we tell and the lives we live. Following the seminar's success, LACC decided to dedicate its next issue of *Hemisphere* to archives to share new, cutting-edge scholarship with a broader audience.

I was very pleased that Professor Premo accepted my invitation to serve as the guest editor of this special edition of *Hemisphere*. The issue brings together participants of *La Patrona* Collective and other scholars of colonial Latin America to "open the archives." One of the objectives of opening the archives, as Professors Premo and Anna More assert in the feature, is to tell the human stories of the colonial disempowered and use those to better understand today's disenfranchised. Interestingly, despite the years, the stories of marginalization and exclusion are quite similar. Furthermore, this approach to examining the archives reveals far more than past accounts and parallels to the present; in many ways, it also provides a window into the future of the Americas.

I want to give special thanks to Professor Premo for her hard work as the guest editor of this wonderful issue and for her tremendous intellectual and administrative contributions to FIU and the field of Latin American and Caribbean Studies. LACC remains committed to supporting interdisciplinary research and will continue to use *Hemisphere* to explore central theoretical, epistemological and public policy issues facing the Americas.

Frank O. Mora
Director & Professor
Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Center
Florida International University

FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

We live in an age of skepticism about the value of the “Humanities,” filled with debates about its utility in the marketplace and how much public funds should underwrite its study. In such times, dedicating one’s life to dusty papers from defunct empires requires constant self-examination. The contributors in this issue do not shrink from thinking about the value of this work, or from value itself as topic of debate. What counted as valuable in the past? What counts now as valuable about the past? Who gets counted, who gets documented, then and now? Framing the question this way makes it obvious that the topic of archives is urgent. Archives are ways of thinking that actively shape our hemisphere and its future.

As the contributors began to craft their essays in early 2018, debates raged about US immigration quotas and the value of people from different countries of origin. One afternoon, I joined an excited audience at the Little Haiti Cultural Center in Miami for a discussion and exhibit: “Visionary Aponte.” José Antonio Aponte, a carpenter of African descent, had been arrested in early 19th-century Cuba for conspiring to overthrow the Spanish government. An ordinary man, he had assembled his extraordinary ideas — some gleaned from his small library, some inspired by the Haitian Revolution, others from his own past — into a leather-bound book. Officials found it hidden in a trunk. Aponte’s book — his archive, if you will — contained drawings of cosmologies, historical figures, and more. A military official grilled Aponte about the drawings for three days. But the officials did not quite understand his complex ideas and drawings. All that was visible to them was the threat he posed. And now the book is gone. Historians cannot locate it.

The “Visionary Aponte” artists filled the void of Aponte’s book with their own imaginations. With the gracious permission of Edouard Duval-Carrié and the assistance of Drs. Ada Ferrer and Linda Rodríguez, this issue of *Hemisphere* features some of the artists’ pieces, reminders that the archive is incomplete without our own interpretations. This is the essential work of the Humanities. Surely, science is involved: a tangible record, a logic for the preservation of artifacts. The imprimatur of institutions on the archive is also enormous, attested to by the cover image: a document in Latin from the archives of Toledo, Spain with the metal matrix and wax seal of the Catholic Church still attached.

But science and seals aren’t all they seem. Before her untimely death, the historian of colonial Mexico María Elena Martínez prodded us to use our emotions and imaginations in the archives. By this, she meant that we must pay greater attention to how papers and artifacts touched actual humans and their lives. She wanted us to use archives to remember, relive, experience. We rely on our emotions to determine “fact.” Now, more than ever, we must approach Latin America’s past and the hemisphere’s future with our hearts and minds. We must enter archives ready to be numbed by what overflows, grapple with what we do not want to see, and feel heartache for what is undocumented. Only human imagination will fill in the blanks. Only human humility can stand against the idea that people from Latin America, or anywhere, can be reduced to just marks on a page, mere numbers.

Bianca Premo
Professor
Department of History
Florida International University





Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Photo by Karen Graubart.

Opening the Colonial Archive

by Anna More and Bianca Premo

History and the archives that house its inner workings are closed to all but a few. In fact, despite the ostensibly “public” nature of most local and national archives, closing off history often has been the very purpose of building archives. The types of documents archives hold, their order, and our access to them all conspire to control the historical narrative before it is even written. When we forget this, we risk assuming that the historical record is a transparent window onto the past. We also ignore archiving as a process in which documents are added, misplaced, reshuffled, altered or destroyed. Without thinking about the archive, we reproduce what others before us have considered history.

As the essays in this issue of *Hemisphere* show, scholars of colonial Latin America are working hard to “open” the archive. By this, we mean using archives to write histories or tell stories of those who were not empowered by colonial administrations. Opening the archive also means understanding the archive itself as a historical institution built to serve a specific purpose and place contents in a specific order. That, in turn, brings some witnesses to the past to the forefront, while obstructing our view of others. Finally, opening the archive means searching for ways to make documents more accessible to social groups usually excluded

from access. Opening the archive ultimately allows us to rewrite not just the past, but also the present and its possibilities.

In this introduction to the issue, we present how such an approach can change our reading of one discrete archive: a file currently located in Seville in the Archivo General de Indias, the largest repository of records from the Spanish empire. This file charts the appearance and disappearance from the late eighteenth-century Spanish bureaucratic record of an ordinary Peruvian woman named Tomasa Maldonado. Through our dialogue, which is one between a historian and a literary reader, we find glimpses of how Tomasa’s story came to be written and safeguarded, and use our imagination to reorder the pages and speculate on the missing parts of her archive. Along the way, we explore how Tomasa created her own archive from state papers, and how her archive inspires critical approaches to “the” archive that can bring history closer to present politics.

Archival Enclosure

The most immediate image of an archive is a building, usually architecturally designed to signal its importance as a monument. Archives are built, often explicitly, for a unique purpose: to safeguard written documents. A secondary goal of the archive is its own completion; the more extensive the archive, the more power it accrues. For this reason we associate

archives most often with the state. Although there are archives that serve organizations or communities, when these are deemed important they may be donated or engulfed by a state archive. At an impossible, imaginary point in this process we might imagine a singular, all-encompassing archive: the complete archive.

The Archivo General de Indias, like all archives, has a history. It was created in the eighteenth century as a repository for documents related to the Spanish empire. It centralized and combined a number of previous archives in one place as part of a larger attempt to manage the empire more efficiently. Realizing that the Archivo General de Indias was established at a specific moment in history reminds us that archives are not generally built as spaces where researchers might access documents, even if that is what they become. Rather, an archive often exists to serve a practical purpose. The state uses archives to protect political continuity or institute laws. It uses the archive to categorize subjects and to follow them through key moments in their lives, such as birth or death.

Not all societies have written archives, and those that do might dedicate more or fewer of their resources to them. But in the end, all archives exist because of political choices at certain historical moments, with certain political intentions. The decision to abandon, disperse or entirely close off archives altogether is a

political one. All of these decisions, whether active or passive, reflect the impact of political priorities on access to history. While states that fear being held accountable for the past may try to eliminate documents by shutting down archives, these actions also foreclose the possibility of writing history in a way that justifies or explains their own traits, laws, or approaches to problems. With no official archive, moreover, other sources may be found to explain the past. Even if a state is fearful of accountability, such as after a period of dictatorship or violence, the risk of losing an archive can be greater than the risk of keeping it.

As scholars of colonial Latin America, a period that covers anywhere from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries, we benefit from the relatively abundant archives of the Spanish and Portuguese imperial states. The Archivo General de Indias is only one of the archives that we as historians can consult. Archives exist in churches, in local government holdings, in private collections on plantations, overseas in distant libraries or in the central repositories of imperial government. But despite the availability of numerous avenues to search for documentation of the past, the record remains scant for many territories and entire populations. At any moment and place, specific interests determined what was recorded and stored, what could be seen and what was considered important. The king of Spain did not personally oversee and control the documentation of the colonial project and the storing of its artifacts. Throughout the archival process, a range of historical actors make discretionary decisions about what to include

or leave out. They might even include the very subjects of the documentation — colonial subjects, like conquered natives or enslaved Africans, or ordinary city dwellers — who can affect the way the documents develop.

In opening up the archive of Tomasa Maldonado, we see that the process of archiving was never fully planned and controlled by the state. Tomasa herself understood the power of documents and intervened to bend the process toward her own needs and purposes.

Entering the Archive

The manuscript file of the indigenous woman Tomasa begins with the end of the case. The top pages are those written during the last stages of her suit and contain official correspondence between powerful men who spar over their jurisdiction over Tomasa's lawsuit. We have no idea if the collection of papers was ever read after having been catalogued alongside millions of others in the same archival series. The series, generically called "Government, Lima," is focused on imperial officials and their bureaucratic affairs. Given the subject matter of this case — an ordinary marital spat between an indigenous couple from a town 60 miles south of Lima in the 1790s — it is unlikely that many scholars of past generations would have deemed these papers important enough to read and sort through.

For the purpose of cataloguing, the case was summarized, as most cases and correspondence in the empire were, with a relatively thorough title naming the parties and the issues they litigated: "On the [affairs] brought before the Subdelegate of the District of the Cercado of Lima as concern the

stripping of [the Subdelegate's] jurisdiction by the Crown's Attorney [and] Protector of Indians, [the Subdelegate] advocates for his [authority] to hear the case that was pursued in his Court on behalf of the Matrimonial union of Joaquín Jordán and his Wife, María Tomasa Maldonado." The title makes clear that the main interest of the official who organized the documents is the powerful people embroiled in the dispute, namely the Subdelegate and the Crown's Attorney. Only secondarily does it mention that the root of the dispute was the "case that was pursued in his Court" involving Joaquín and Tomasa's marriage. As Jessica Delgado discusses later in the issue, women were ubiquitous in the colonial records, but the use of passive voice here — the title tells us that the case "was pursued" rather than that Tomasa pursued it — is typical of how women's historical activity can be subsumed under male textual authority.

Unless a researcher casts a wide net and happens upon a key term, or just gets lucky, a case like Tomasa's often remains hidden among the thousands of documents organized in categories that pertain to the colonial state's administrative functions and not to the subjects caught up in the imperial bureaucracy. The case does not appear in a keyword search in the AGI database. Premo discovered it completely by chance when scrolling through an inventory of papers filed away in the "Government" series.

Even when such a case is found, reading it is an exercise, in many ways, in reading backward and excavating. If reading a file sequentially, scholars must begin at the end, often starting with the last action of a series, such

as a judge's sentence or official decision, which was deemed the important part. Then the material shifts chronologically back in time, "closer" to the original documents and perhaps even closer to the people whose lives they touched. The official story, focused on lawyerly disquisitions, interim judgments and high-level brinksmanship, is intertwined with the everyday details of ordinary disputes, chronologies that take place both inside and outside of the institutions that produced the documents, and on and off the page. The result is dizzying, and skipping pages is dangerous, since in doing so the reader is likely to miss a turn of events, the introduction of a new judge into the affair, or a procedural move that will defy any attempt to put the past into chronological order. Even so, gaps and silences remain. But what if the gaps and silences, the missing pages or the reordering itself tell a story?

Reordering the Archive

As stated earlier, documents are fragments of time, plucked and guarded from the maelstrom of life. Often they are repetitious or aim not to document expansively but selectively. When they are stored, they must be ordered for retrieval, with a taxonomy that relates them to other documents of the same type. This taxonomy, or order of associations, is not itself a history. The taxonomy of documents is incomplete; as historians, we must create narratives by connecting archival fragments which are only partial witnesses to the past.

Additionally, the power of the archive lies in its restriction of access to a select few. Those who have automatic access are the state magistrates, and this power is so

compelling that a bureaucratic layer is needed to assure that documents are safeguarded first of all from those with political interests and present power. But anyone who gains access to an archive has the same potential power over history. The archive is the consummate site of democracy and it always holds out the possibility of being made to work on behalf of those not represented by the state.

And we must not forget that anyone can store documents that can be used later to tell divergent stories of the past. In fact, Tomasa had her own archive, of sorts, and in many ways the dispute she had with her husband, Joaquín, was about who had access to her archive. In their *pueblo* in Lurín, a six-hour walk from Lima, Tomasa had a box locked with a key, and the box contained money — 400 pesos, she said. She wanted that money, at least in part, to pay for a civil lawsuit against Joaquín for being a philanderer, for failing to provide for her, and for being a drunk. Joaquín took the keys from her and hid the box in the ceiling rafters of their house. Not to be deterred, Tomasa broke through the roof of their house and took the money so she could ride to Lima on her saddled-up mule to sue her husband. At different points in Tomasa's ongoing dispute with her husband, we might imagine that her box also contained the papers she paid various legal writers to draw up for the suit. Those papers were produced in various places, one by one, and collected to become a "case" when she turned them over to a judge in Lima. Whether all of those papers ended up in the file today in Seville is doubtful. When the papers arrived before Madrid's Council of Indies after their long voyage across the

Atlantic, a king's scribe "extracted" the parts he found to be important to present to the ministers of the Council. A gatekeeper, an editor, he decided what was important and left the rest out.

If we think of the power that the king's scribe had to edit and shape Tomasa's file, it becomes clear how archives can determine what becomes history. The scribe controlled the order in which the story was presented, the logic, and even the priority given the conflict between judges. But his power was not absolute. The documents from Tomasa's file suggest that she was an active participant in her own case, even sowing disorder in the archival process through her dogged insistence on using the courts of the empire for her mundane dispute. In fact, Tomasa and her incessant filings bothered the judge hearing her case in Lima. The case only reached Spain because Tomasa filed petition after petition, and when the judge became impatient with her, she threatened to recuse him and go to another judge. This was an offense to the first judge's honor and thus, he took his complaint to the Council of Indies in Spain. Tomasa's persistence had meant that her ordinary dispute made it all the way to the cupula of Spain's imperial administration.

This is not the only way that Tomasa sowed archival disorder. Neither Tomasa nor Joaquín could read, and at one point in their conflict, it seems Tomasa told her husband that the judge's writing at the bottom of one of the pages of her suit, which probably just contained some bureaucratic scribbling, was in fact, an order for his arrest. Joaquín's pleadings to the judge to be left free appear in the file, but are baffling and out of

place since no such arrest warrant was issued. Only by imagining what the documents were from Tomasa's vantage point did her clever use of legal papers, in her own way for her own purpose, make sense. Only by thinking about why Tomasa continually sued, why she would want to amass her own archive and control her own chest of papers, did it become clear that she had harnessed the power of the legal documents — their seals, their signatures, their enchanted words — to her own troublemaking cause.

Imagining the Archive

Tomasa's file is compelling not only because she is a subject whose life was less likely to be documented by the Spanish imperial state, but also because she saw the documents themselves as legitimating her version of events. The documents churned out by Spain's church and state bureaucracies captured many subjects whose lives happened to intersect with an inquisitor, a missionary or a magistrate charged with producing evidence for an institutional purpose. Tomasa's desire for control over her documents, her active seeking out of officials, and her strategic use of her papers tell us a great deal about the process of building archives, even those that are monuments of the Spanish imperial state. Tomasa's file shows that it is possible to think and act outside of the order that powerful men assign to archives to tell different stories and to direct the authority of the archive to reversals of social power.

If democracy can only be served by opening up the archive, the archive is also the only safeguard for democracy. In this sense, opening up the archive means expanding one's research and imagination to

democratize "documents." This may include aiding access and circulation, understanding the social process of the production of documents, searching for the stories behind this production, and filling in what was not written, even if we must do so speculatively.

Opening up the archive of Tomasa's case is therefore important for reasons that go beyond the restitution of one subject's story to the historical narrative of the colonial Americas. If we invest our energy in the battle to open the archive it is because we believe that the present draws upon the past, whether explicitly or implicitly. Actions, opinions and identities are established with reference to the past.

Let us return to the scene of Tomasa breaking through the roof of her house to get her box. Now imagine that the roof is not her home in a pueblo in colonial Peru but the imposing structure of the Archivo General de Indias in Seville. Finally, imagine that it is the roof of "the" archive, in the sense that philosophers and theorists of history mean the term, an abstract institution that would shut out all but her most disciplined entry into the historical record. That Tomasa defied that discipline while appropriating the state's papers for her own purposes helps us imagine narratives of our present and future that, by analogy or distant consequence, pay homage to her active participation in breaking open history.

Anna More is Professor of Hispanic Literatures in the Department of Literary Theory and Literatures at the University of Brasilia, Brazil.

Bianca Premo is Professor of History at Florida International University.

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Finding Order, Inspiration and José Martí in the *Libros de Pasaportes*

by David Sartorius

This past January I experienced a fleeting moment of fame in Cuba's national archive when I came across a bit of new information about José Martí, the nation's foremost patriot, author and independence leader. Tracking down Martí in the archive had never been my main mission. I was working my way through the weighty *libros de pasaportes*, registers of passports issued in Havana between 1828 and 1898, and I wanted to test how thorough they were. Slogging through the 40-pound book covering just two years of the Ten Years' War (1868-1878, Cuba's first war for independence), I remembered that Martí had been sent to Spain as a prisoner in January 1871. Had he received a passport to make the voyage? After scanning about 80 pages, I found his name listed among the people issued passports on December 21, 1870. At the end of a tedious research day, I placed the book in the reserve area and mentioned what I had come across to the reading room staff — hoping, in part, to convince them that bringing me those heavy books every day for two weeks had somehow been worth the backaches.

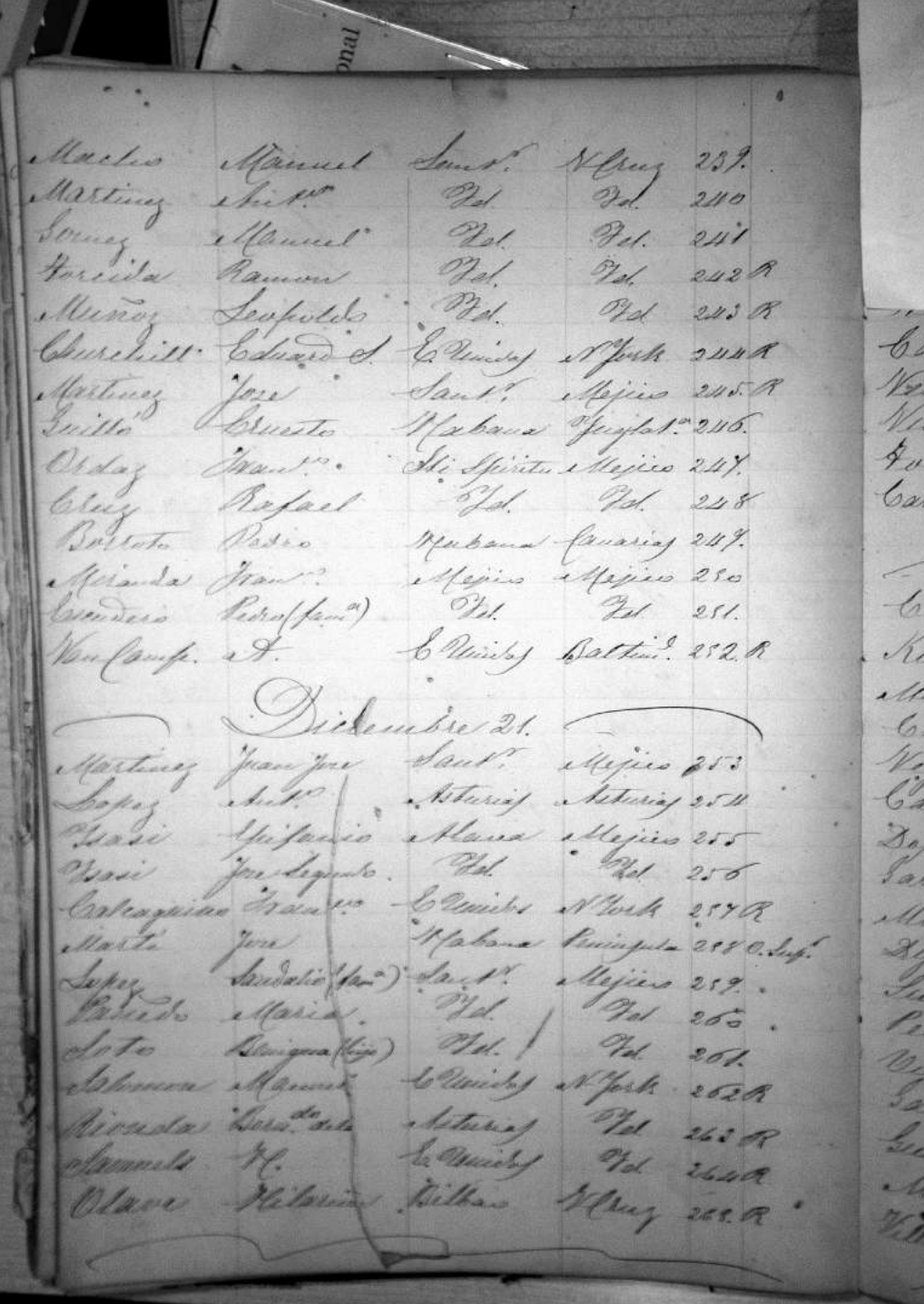
I arrived at the archive the next morning to find the *libro*

de pasaportes out on a table, surrounded by some of the archive staff and a few researchers. Word had traveled fast: a Cuban historian who documents Martí's biographical details was waiting to see the passport entry. He explained that although the date of Martí's passport appears in several studies, he had never found an archival document that corroborated its existence. Throughout my years of research in Cuba, scholars there who know the archive well have generously shared tips and leads, and the people who work at the archive have gone out of their way to help me make the most of my too-brief visits. I was thrilled to find this small way to reciprocate by sharing the reference from the passport book, and I certainly didn't mind the unexpected acclaim at the archive for my research prowess. But this was not the kind of research I had come to the archive to conduct.

Archives and their contents can serve manifestly empiricist purposes: They provide data, establish facts and constitute evidence. Even competing arguments about the past usually adhere to commonly understood rules that privilege archival documentation (and other firsthand sources). The historian seeking to find proof of every detail of José Martí's life looks to archives for certainty about an already famous

figure. Less prominent individuals do not fare as well; there's nothing neutral or democratic about the way that archives make historical actors accessible in the present. For scholars skeptical of studying history as "but the biography of great men," as the philosopher Thomas Carlyle put it in 1840, archives raise thorny issues of representation, exclusion and research methodology. A lone reference in a passport book may be the only glimpse of someone otherwise absent in the written record, and that glimpse may not tell us much. For no other person in the passport books can we look to piles of archivally grounded biographies — as well as twenty-six bound volumes of complete written works — to flesh out the details of a life in the way that we can with José Martí.

What led me to the passport books in the first place was an interest in migration, the stories of people who came to and from the island. Much of Cuban history can be told, at least in part, as a story of human mobility. What would the history of the island look like without Spanish colonization, African slavery, Chinese indenture, U.S. intervention, Caribbean intra-island migrations, railroads, passenger steamships, tourism and a wide array of linkages to the United States, including, of course,



José Martí and other historical figures in passport registry, *Registro de Pasaportes principa en 6 de noviembre de 1869*, used by permission of the National Archive of Cuba. Photo by David Sartorius.

mobility than the international system that exists today to issue passports to citizens. And just in case the point needs to be made, it can distort the big historical picture of global migration to focus, as most attention usually does, on the United States and Europe as the primary authorities that regulate borders and human mobility.

Locating the Cuban passport books in the opaquely titled *Miscelánea de libros* collection in the national archive helped me see the big picture during the nineteenth century, at least from the vantage point of the palace of the captain general (the island's highest-ranking colonial official). They also presented a research conundrum. While I was no longer reliant upon scattered examples of individual passports, I now struggled to find meaning in the thousands of entries that filled each of the dozens of books. On its own, for example, there is nothing especially revealing about the listing for Martí. It identifies him as a native of Havana and as someone destined for the “Península” (Spain). The notation “O. Supr” — *orden superior* — makes clear that this voyage was not of Martí’s own choosing. But it says nothing about his political sympathies, his prison sentence, his transfer from a prison on Isla de Pinos, or anything else that led to his departure for Spain.

For the most part, José Martí blends in with the other people whose names fill the passport book. No juicy anecdotes or contextual background accompanies the lists of names, the kind of information that might suggest why people traveled, what authority or protection a passport conferred upon them, who was being denied passports, and on what grounds. Since the books only

cover Havana, they cannot explain how other ports — Santiago, Matanzas, Cienfuegos and smaller coastal towns — regulated the comings and goings of people. Most important, the books only rarely list enslaved Africans on the rare occasions that they traveled alone, or when they were counted among the (nameless) servants accompanying the recipient of a passport. The books are silent about the illegal transatlantic slave trade that brought more than 300,000 Africans to the island even after an 1817 treaty with England prohibited the commerce. No state fully surveils its subjects, but the incomplete and uneven nature of recordkeeping in colonial contexts figures among the main reasons that historians over-associate the development of the passport with national citizenship and the twentieth-century bureaucratic state.

Book by book and page by page, however, an image comes into view of how the Spanish colonial administration over a 70-year period made documentation important to people in transit to and from Cuba. The production of the records contained in archives today was a historical process in its own right, and the paper trail left by Cuba’s passport system reflects the structures and priorities — and anxieties and aspirations — of a government as wary as it was dependent upon mobility and migration. It matters, for instance, that passports only covered a single voyage and could be issued to foreigners, more suggestive of a provisional request for safe passage than a durable right of citizenship. It matters, too, that the only racial markers that appear in the *libros de pasaportes* identify people of African descent, and that women almost never received their own passports if they were traveling with their

husbands or fathers, whose passports covered all of their household dependents. Markers of social difference that mattered a great deal on the island, it turns out, were just as important when traveling to or from it. As steamship service reached Cuba at midcentury, connecting Havana even more closely to New Orleans, Charleston and New York (and to other port cities on the island as well), the size and frequency of the books themselves increased dramatically, which speaks both to the greater traffic and an expanding standardization of maritime travel. Insights like these abound in the passport books, despite their gaps and silences, as an emerging passport system attempted to regulate mobility in nineteenth-century Cuba.

In the end, though, do these observations accomplish anything more than the resuscitation of state designs? Do we really need the passport books to clinch the argument that racial and gender distinctions stratified Cuban society? Do the passport books help us understand any better the lives of people less prominent than José Martí, or is the scholar Saidiya Hartman correct that “to read the archive is to enter a mortuary”? One response to these questions is to recall that the paper trails generated by the passport system were not exclusively relevant to a governing elite; every person listed in the passport books received a piece of paper that carried significance as they went out into the world. Travel accounts and other sources illustrate this well, as do other archival documents about the use and misuse of passports. Reports of Chinese indentured workers seeking what they called “Go-Abroad Papers” attest to cross-cultural (mis)understandings about

travel documentation. Tales of forgeries, substitutions and lost and stolen documents help qualify the success of the passport system, as do documents about illegal African captives denied any documentary identity and stowaways who deliberately traveled without papers.

A second response to these questions is to suggest that archives serve purposes beyond empirical verification: They can be as useful for raising good historical questions as for answering them. I’m still curious to learn more about the dozens of African-descended Cubans who obtained passports late in 1823 to travel to Africa (permanently? where, specifically? how did they know each other?), or about the four men who arrived in Havana from Spain in 1854 with borrowed passports, their transgressions revealed when port officials noticed that no man matched the physical description listed on his document. The questions that emerge revolve less around the individual biographies of these people than what they reveal about the politics and materiality of mobility in Cuban history. Answers may emerge from more archival visits, or by turning to other types of sources, but even without demonstrable certainty there is value in identifying the problems and tensions that expand the scope of our inquiries. Scholars depend on issues like these to ignite our curiosity about the past, at least as much as stories about the comings and goings of national heroes.

David Sartorius is Associate Professor of History at the University of Maryland.

exile? With contemporary travel restrictions in mind, what began for me as a basic empirical question — what kind of paperwork have people needed to travel to and from Cuba? — became a wide-ranging project when I realized that there was no evident or easy answer. And accounting for the circumstances of people’s travels, rather than taking them as a given, raised new questions about the politics of documents that prompted a fresh approach both to the archives and to familiar Cuban stories of migration and mobility.

Throughout the ebbs and flows of Cuba-U.S. travel restrictions, policymakers and critics alike have referred to international travel as a right of citizenship, power materialized in people’s passports. Yet alongside letters of introduction, sailor’s certificates and other documentation, passports have a long history that precedes the development of nation states. A look at the structures of migration during the colonial period, before Cuba’s borders became national ones, reveals a far wider range of practices regulating

On Being Disciplined and Counted in the Early Modern Circum-Caribbean

by Karen Graubart

In 2008, UNESCO placed the small town of San Basilio de Palenque, Colombia, on its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In its statement, UNESCO recognized San Basilio's history as a settlement founded in the early 17th century by runaway slaves (*cimarrones*). African cultural ways have survived into the present, including a creolized language, whose grammar reflects Bantu, and West-Central African-influenced cooking, musical, medical and spiritual practices. UNESCO highlighted San Basilio de Palenque's historical status and unique culture to draw attention to threats against it, including the Colombian armed conflict, economic globalization and racism.

While UNESCO was cautious in its description of San Basilio's place in history, bolder claims have been made for the town. The head of the city's cultural council called it the "first free (Black) town in the Americas." Articles on Reuters and web- and video-features on *Al-Jazeera* have repeated that story, and *Smithsonian* notes more circumspetly that "[l]ocals claim that in 1713 the inhabitants declared it the first independent community in the Americas." The shaping of San Basilio's narrative as a unique victory of *cimarrones* against an imperial slaving system reflects a common thread in the history of the African diaspora in

the Spanish Americas: a desire to tell foundational stories of people of African descent defying slavers.

The main problem with contemporary liberatory narratives of Black towns in the Americas is that they are imaginative responses to the sparse and overwhelmingly depreciatory documentation about their past. There were many such Black towns across Spanish America, with historians and anthropologists telling us they date back to the late sixteenth century. Slaves frequently ran away and, in regions with the right environmental conditions, hid in communities of various sizes, sometimes called *palenques* (after the palos, or fencing, used to mask the sites). Some *palenques* survived for decades, eluding or fighting off military incursions. They became "Black towns" (*pueblos de negros*) often only because Spanish officials calculated that the cost of attacking them or ignoring them was too high, and instead offered them terms to regularize themselves. Accounts of these towns frequently elide the terms of negotiation with colonial authorities, which usually involved payment of a sizeable head tax, submission to structures imposed by the Catholic church and Spanish agents of justice, and agreeing to capture and re-enslave other runaways.

In the national archives of Spain, in Madrid, is a sheaf of handwritten pages that reveal the baseness of

the transactions that underwrote the creation of such Black towns. Penned in a crabbed but neat hand by Dominican priest Miguel de Monsalve around 1608, the papers are part of a group of memoranda (*memoriales*) the priest sent to King Philip III and his Council of the Indies, suggesting colonial reforms. Monsalve was an unusual character: a priest who tended to the souls of formerly enslaved Africans in Panama; wrote treatises on preserving indigenous communities, limiting shipwrecks and ending fraud by silversmiths; and ended up managing a mining concern in the Peruvian viceroyalty. The untitled 1608 treatise brings together these disparate interests, beginning with the description, "Information, which the Dominican Friar Miguel de Monsalve offers to Your Majesty so that there are no Black *cimarrones*, or runaways (as they are called in these Indies), which will result in an increase in the royal rents of more than 200,000 ducats of rent..."

In short, Monsalve proposes to resolve two problems at once: the need for income for the royal coffers and Spain's lack of control over the Black population of the Americas. While his opening sentence names *cimarrones*, his real concern are the free men and women of African descent who "don't recognize the King nor know who he is... do nothing in the King's service, nor a single thing for the utility of the republic. The cause of this is that they have not been

granted laws nor ways of living." The lack of *dominio* — of legal oversight, of proper authority, of civilizing structure — leaves them free to hide runaway slaves as well as to commit crimes rather than work: "Their occupation is simply to steal, rob and commit infinite offenses, against Spaniards as well as Indians, taking away their property, their wives, and killing them, taking away all they have. This is their occupation."

The solution is to establish *dominio*, or authority over free Blacks, and Monsalve does so by analogy with the barbarous Indians who inhabit the Americas. Here he follows in the footsteps of another Dominican priest, Bartolomé de las Casas, and a Mexican bishop, Vasco de Quiroga, who in the early 16th century used Thomas More's *Utopia* as a model for reorganizing dispersed and fragile indigenous communities into Catholic towns. Their idea was to take indigenous communities suffering from epidemic disease, overwork and the effects of ongoing warfare and place them in protected urban environments, called *reducciones*, that would allow them to labor more effectively for the Spaniards and convert to Catholicism. The towns were drawn up on grids, with important buildings at their center: church, jail, city council. Their everyday lives would be governed by Indian elites, according to their own customs insofar as these did not conflict with Spanish law, and a Spanish administrator and a priest would preside over the entire structure.

By the 1570s, *reducción* had become a widespread model for resettling communities in the viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru, with mixed results: Indigenous communities often returned to their places of origin, leading Spanish authorities to burn

or destroy their homes and fields. But the idea that indigenous communities could have limited self-governance became central to the economic policies of Spanish colonialism. The (usually) men who served as community leaders drew upon their legitimacy to collect a head tax for the crown and send Indians to mining camps or other forced labor. By the turn of the 17th century, most Indians were taking Spanish abusers to court rather than rebelling against them.

Monsalve's plan for Peru, then, was to bring *reducción* — previously only applied to indigenous polities — to free men and women of African heritage. The plan was formulated in Panama in the 1570s, in a very different kind of crisis. Panama was a transport linchpin between the earlier Caribbean and Mesoamerican settlements and the mineral and human wealth of South America. Spanish traders, officials and settlers would land at the ports of Nombre de Dios or Portobelo on the northern coast and trek south to Panama City, where they could embark upon ships to sail down the Pacific coast. Slaves were among the important cargo that made this journey, and many escaped into the mountains between coasts, where they joined runaways from the cities and towns. In 1549 there were an estimated 1200 *cimarrones* — men, women and children — and they were considered a nuisance. In 1574, King Philip II issued orders across the viceroyalties requiring free people of African descent to pay a head tax (called *tributo*), as Indians were required to do. He also proposed that *cimarrones* who came in peacefully would be placed in *reducciones* as free, tax-paying citizens. Those who refused would be hunted and, if captured, killed or sold back into slavery. By the early 1580s, three Black towns had been founded and populated by former *cimarrones*: San Miguel

de Bayano in the north, acting as a military presidio against corsairs as well as runaway slaves, and two in the south, Santa Cruz and Santiago del Príncipe. Each town was outfitted with a Spanish priest and judge as well as its own Black authorities.

Monsalve tells us in his *Memorial* that he had significant experience with such processes, having been some of the towns' "first priest." While the existing records do not mention Monsalve, we have no reason to doubt that he assisted in these communities. The towns were formalized with a ritual in which the *cimarrón* leaders officially requested the king's pardon, offering their and their subjects' vassalage via the Real Audiencia, or royal high court. The court's leader, as royal representative, then granted them liberty and vassalage on the grounds that they agreed to live in peace, justice and obedience. Adult males could appear at the court to receive their and their family's freedom papers, an act which would not only protect them from re-enslavement (a common problem) but also register them as taxpayers and residents of the town. This census also created a map of who belonged in the town, making it possible for the authorities to identify newcomers, including additional runaway slaves.

The new vassals, under their captains, were immediately redeployed to hunt for *cimarrones* who had not accepted Spanish terms. The men returned to the mountains and jungles, bringing word of the benefits of peace and capturing those who refused. Two Spanish administrators brought in free Blacks from Panama City to help build the town, which included two houses to jail captives, who were punished and returned to slavery, often in Peru. By the end of 1582,



Port of Panama with view of the mountains. The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Print Collection, The New York Public Library. "Panama." The New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1700. <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47d9-7aad-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

nearly all the known *palenques* had been dismantled, though Spanish administrators complained that runaways never ceased to find new terrain to hide in.

Monsalve's proposal for the free Blacks of Peru extended this experience. Instead of capturing and reducing runaway slaves to become farmers and taxpayers, he argued that free people of African descent should be forcibly removed from their urban homes and placed in new mining towns under strict enclosure and work discipline. Arguing that they preferred crime, sexual libertinage and laziness to hard work and formalized families, he called for a strict resettlement program. First, he stated, all the "free Black men and women, mulatto men and women, and people of mixed African-indigenous descent" in all of the Spanish kingdoms should be registered and brought together into sites on the outskirts of cities, where they would be assigned living space and build their own permanent homes. The term "permanent" here was key: While the King's vassals by right enjoyed freedom of movement, Monsalve wished the new Black towns to place limits on Black mobility. In those towns, Black citizens would take up occupations, as farmers, artisans or shopkeepers, and their children would be required to apprentice in professions once they reached appropriate age.

Monsalve's Black *reducción* differed from the indigenous one in key ways. Because African-descent peoples in the Americas did not have a local aristocracy with claims to territory, their leaders could rarely claim elite status. Indigenous elites could receive patents of nobility, and enjoy privileges such as exemption from tribute and permission to ride a horse or carry a weapon. In Black towns elsewhere, narratives of kingship and royal blood sometimes emerged

to explain new leaders, but more often men and women were elected to local offices. Monsalve's treatise is unique in refusing any role for Black leaders — either inherited or elected — at least in the early iteration of the town. Instead, he suggested appointing a Spanish governor to judge or collect tribute. The governor would also oversee the placement of apprentices, ensure that Black citizens attended church and worked, and visit the homes of single men and women every week to make sure that unmarried couples were not cohabitating.

The refusal to allow for self-governance, a cornerstone of colonial relations with indigenous peoples, stemmed from Monsalve's deep distrust of African-descent peoples, the very reason for reducing them. "They are our capital enemies," he stated, citing the uprisings and expeditions against *cimarrones* in Santo Domingo and Panama. He ordered that no Black citizens have weapons save for a bow and arrows to defend against enemies and round up runaway slaves. For the sake of security, even those weapons would be kept in a locked box in the Spanish governor's house, to be accessed as necessary. Those who captured and returned runaways would be paid a fee by the masters, unless the *cimarrón* had committed a crime requiring the death penalty, in which case the city itself would pay the slave trackers. This use of Black violence against Black runaways was Monsalve's proudest contribution: "Thus the whole world would be rocked, and no one would dare to flee nor even stir, for they would know that they would be captured and punished rigorously, giving the land great security and calm," he proclaimed.

Monsalve's plan was never put into action. The resettlement of indigenous polities into reduced towns had been

complex and its outcome uncertain. Removing tens of thousands of free people from their jobs and homes across the kingdoms was a vast undertaking which had little to argue for it. The free Black population of most Iberian American cities was entirely integrated into the local economy and its removal would have created violence and unrest as well as undermined aspects of everyday life. Colonial administrators continued to target free African-descent peoples to pay taxes and provide unremunerated labor, including isolated and unsuccessful attempts to move small groups to mining centers. But the main success of the *pueblo de negros* came from negotiating with *cimarrones* and offering limited self-governance in exchange for tribute payment and rounding up missing slaves. Across the Circum-Caribbean, particularly in Panama, Mexico, Colombia and Hispaniola, Black towns emerged as sites of policing and enclosure, though their residents also experienced them as spaces of freedom and self-governance.

San Basilio de Palenque's freedom, then, was predicated on its people's willingness to act as loyal vassals to the Spanish empire. It probably emerged as a palenque in the early 17th century, and did not receive legitimation and its residents' pardons until about 1717. The terms of that treaty reveal it as another in the long program of *reducciones*, in this case placing the new town in the isolating jungle that had served the inhabitants as *cimarrones* and requiring that they continue to police the region for other runaways. They seem to have been more than successful with that aspect of their status. A 1772 description states that the town included 178 families, with 396 souls and 90 slaves, men and women who were captured in their own flight or were purchased by *palenqueros*.

The story of San Basilio is a lesson in "reading around" as an archival strategy. For us, it is far easier to recognize the town as a site of Black liberation than to read it as embedded in multiple histories of the Spanish empire. Historians overwhelmingly define themselves in geographic terms, as historians of the British Empire, of Cuba, of Florence. The archives make this even more problematic, as materials from the Iberian imperial world can be found in imperial centers (Lisbon, Seville), in other parts of the metropolis (Madrid, Rome), in national archives of the independent nations (Lima, Ciudad de Panamá), and in far-flung provincial, ecclesiastic and municipal archives. But placing documents — and archives — against one another yields unexpected results.

To understand San Basilio in Colombia, it must be read alongside documents exposing the history of indigenous *reducción* in Peru as well as runaway communities in Panama. By doing so, I have found the links between the thematic divisions that historians often employ, connecting the celebratory histories of Black towns to the skirmishes against *palenques*, as well as native and labor history.

The popular narratives about Black towns are correct in that *palenques* were evidence of the failure of authorities to keep enslaved property under control, and of the humanity that could occasionally overwhelm the more common characterization of African-descent peoples as property. Archives preserve documents that were generated to manage those very human populations. They are not organized to reveal Black agency or unveil radical programs for liberation, though those existed. But those stories are embedded in other foundational stories. The story of Miguel de Monsalve's plot to resettle

free people of color across the Iberian Americas illustrates both the truth of that archival problem as well as the entangled story of humanity that lay beneath it.

Karen B. Graubart is Associate Professor of History at Notre Dame University.

For Further Reading:

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“Good Writing”: Other Archives, Languages in Contact, and a Letter to the King of Spain

by Ivonne del Valle

Translated by Alejandro Múnera and Anahit Manoukian

In one of the most cited texts among scholars who study archives, *Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression* (1995), Jacques Derrida, writing about Freud's archive, analyzes what an archive is, in general terms, and problematizes the question of its ownership; namely, who has the right to claim it. Derrida raises the tension between what is "proper" to the archive and what calls it into question, citing the Greek word *arkhé* or *arché*, which simultaneously denotes a commencement and a commandment. That is to say, every archive initiates something, tries to give form to something that is amorphous, and also implies a duty, the obligation of continuing something that begins in a certain form. Some archives were created to control a territory, for example, and others, to know how to govern new or old populations.

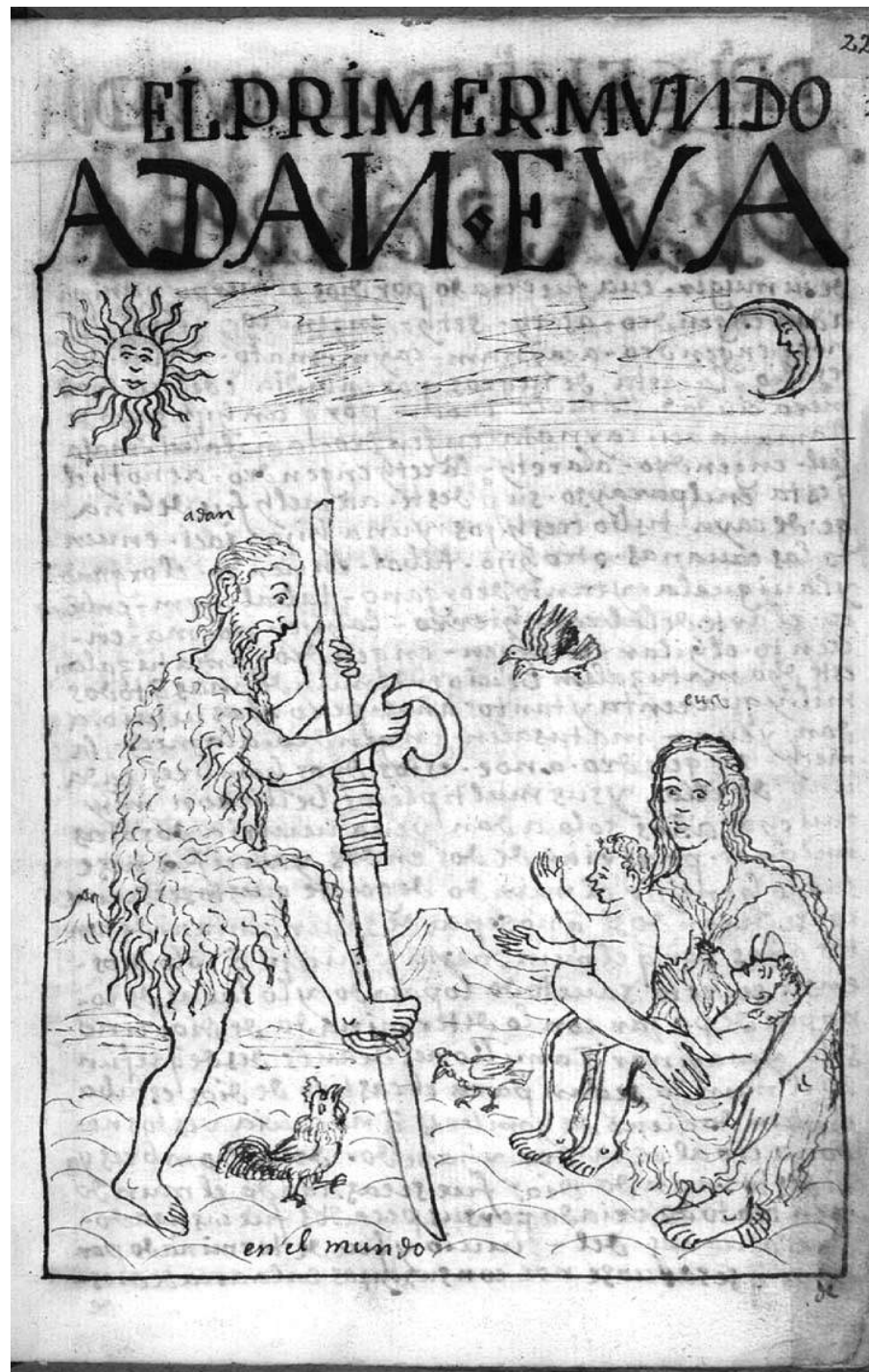
This tension is well understood by those who study the colonial period. It compels us to reflect upon which texts belong in the archive, in which languages and for what purpose. For example, most of the maps made by Mexico's indigenous peoples, full of words in Nahuatl, appear first in the archives of the colonial government. They are in the Archivo General de la Nación for a number of possible

reasons — to register disputes about land, or to demarcate territories and jurisdictions — but they also evince the scope of colonial institutions and their jurisdiction, under which indigenous peoples had to fashion documents to fight for their lands. However, it is only recently that historical documents are being read in another way: to showcase indigenous ideas about land, social relationships and their place in the colonial world. In one sense, these maps are contained in both the colonial archive (they document the Hispanic colonial regime in Mexico) and the national one (they register the past of contemporary Mexico). But at the same time, they erode the archives that contain them by exceeding their original purposes, their commencement and their commandment. They are something else: glimpses of the indigenous universe that could not, and cannot, be fully contained in any archive. They represent an anarchic principle, Derrida would say; in this case, the limitations of the colonial and national institutions that seek to include them in their scope, to domesticate them. In another sense, they might be the commencement of *another* archive: an indigenous one, alien to anything colonial and even perhaps to the nation as it is constituted.

The kind of content that calls into question the archive's constitution, or the existence of only *well-known*, well-established archives, is the subject of this brief essay.

Guamán Poma and “Savage” Writing

Very few cases so clearly illustrate this tension as *El primer nueva crónica y buen gobierno* (1615) by Guamán Poma de Ayala, perhaps the longest "letter" someone has ever written, now published in two volumes that include the nearly 400 drawings and more than 1,000 pages addressed to Philip III, King of Spain. It is an extraordinary text. In it, Poma not only gives an exhaustive account of the Andean past and the serious problems of the new colonial government, which had turned the region "upside down," but he also considers some possible solutions. The document, however, never reached its addressee in the 17th century. It was not "found" until the early 20th century, in a library (another kind of archive) in Copenhagen. Even though any of multiple historical circumstances might have prevented the text from arriving at its destination — pirates may have stolen the document, to cite only one possibility — the fact that the text never reached the king reminds us of what is literally excluded from the



"El Primer Mundo, Adán, Eva," from *Nueva crónica y buen gobierno* (1615).
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archive and that, from this distance, calls it into question.

From a contemporary point of view, it is not only logical but also an act of poetic justice that the king never read Poma's chronicle. Although Poma was an educated indigenous person who intimately understood colonial institutions and their functions, his lack of mastery of Hispanic genres is evident. He does not seem to know that writing requires formalisms and the use of a proper tone, especially when addressing a king. He includes rude, insulting words, mocking the subjects he is dealing with in his commentaries. He constantly shifts between genres (chronicle, allegation, legal document, history, ethnography, poetry), sometimes in the space of a couple of pages. He mixes Quechua with Spanish, often without translation or explanation, and one is left with the impression that the Quechua he uses is full of profanity.

It is in this sense that Poma's writing is "savage," without negative connotation. Quite the opposite; like the indigenous communities that Poma and other *mestizos* and Spanish *cronistas* considered too barbarian to be conquered and assimilated into the Inca or Spanish empire (the Chiriguano, for instance), Poma's set of relations is troublesome for the colonial archive. Perhaps this is the reason why the letter never reached its addressee and why it is possible to think that Poma wrote for another epoch and for other readers. When he fails to comply with the internal exigencies of the discursive, linguistic, legal genres he is using, it reminds us that there was a whole universe outside of the colonial archive that could hardly be integrated without destabilizing its very foundations.

Poma's atypical case matters precisely because, as Antonio de Nebrija pointed out in the first grammar of the Castilian language, published in 1492, language goes hand in hand with empire. Power can only expand on its own terms, in its own language and in its familiar, discursive genres (chronicles, letters, declarations, maps, etc.). In this sense, Poma's text is a sort of turbulent zone for the commencement and the commandment (the dominance of the Spanish empire) constituted by the colonial archive. It represents another truth. A new perspective of an emerging Andean world can be found in the interstices where Quechua and Spanish merge, where forms not typically intertwined share the same paragraph, and where popular language comes together with the formal and legal language of the 16th century. This was not only a bilingual (or trilingual, including Aymara), disorganized and muddled world, but a real one, full of vitality for the future. Poma's text articulates the truth that emerges from a colonial violence that put into contact, in conditions of drastic inequality, languages and imaginaries that were not in contact before. Poma's was a world where it was possible to depict Adam and Eve as peasants, and where dogs and horses constitute important personae and acquire proper names.

Even if Philip III had received the letter that was so urgently sent to him from across the ocean, he would not have understood it, nor would he have known what to do with it. His empire, his literacy, and the discursive genres that both he and his councils commanded were insufficient and superfluous for understanding what Poma had to say. Poma's writing has barely begun to say what it has to say in our own

century. This long silence or, rather, our long deafness, should nonetheless remind us that in this very moment we are surrounded by spoken and written documentary juxtapositions like those in his text.

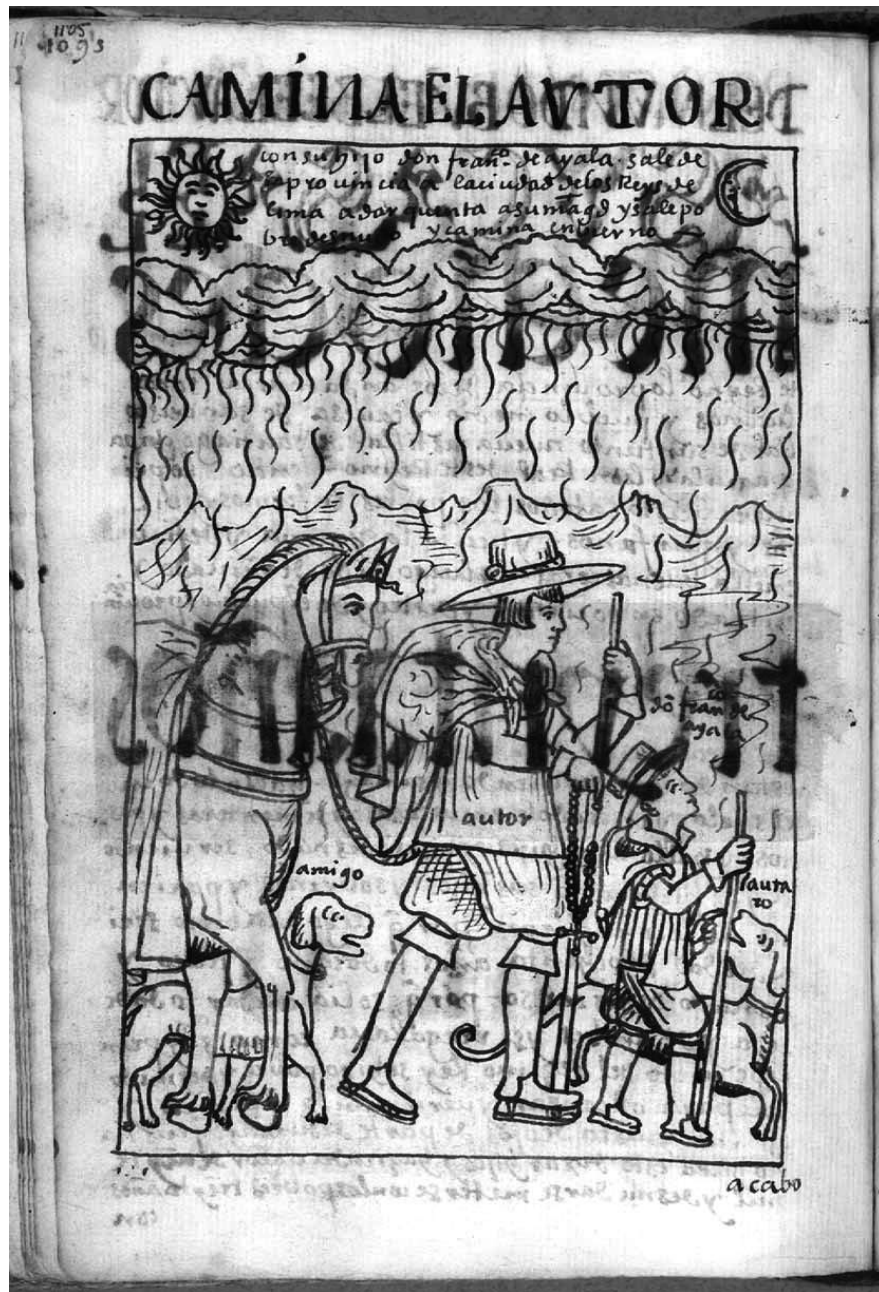
This is a reality for those of us who teach languages, literature and history, not only in the United States but also in Latin America. Here I think of my students in a course on Latin American colonial literature who read Poma and El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, a highly educated *mestizo* who wrote on behalf of the Incas of the Andes from Spain. Some of them "command" a number of languages and discursive genres (like El Inca), whereas others are remarkably unruly (like Poma); but because of this they should not be given less credit, or thought of as having less to teach us professors, who think we control our language with ease. And even though our students and the thousands of boys and girls who are "between languages," "between nations" and "between histories" in schools across the Americas may never be intellectuals like Poma and El Inca, their voices continue to represent a true perspective on history. Merely attempting to tame the "savage" grammar of our students or even our own, while we let the same brutality that forces many to cross borders and mix languages continue, seems not only an absurd act, but also an insensitive and small-minded one, equivalent to rejecting Poma's chronicles for being "poorly written."

Who Owns Language?

A few years ago, I was telling Lorena Ojeda, a friend and colleague, how many of my students at the university in California where I am fortunate to work do not seem to have "a good command" of either Spanish (in many cases, their native language) or English. They are

bilingual, but not completely, as if neither language really belonged to them. That was exactly what I said: "Neither of these languages belongs to them." I said this while at the same time thinking about effective ways of helping students gain access to a more standardized Spanish. Lorena said the same problem occurs at Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo in Morelia, Mexico, where she works. Some students whose native language is P'urhépecha don't have a strong command of Spanish. This is generally true of children and young people who have either not been educated in their mother tongue (like the students at the university in Michoacán) or who had to stop their education in one language without finishing it, to continue in another one. As we know, it is very difficult to fully learn a language — especially the peculiarities of its written form — unless one has used it since infancy. To learn two languages simultaneously and in far from ideal situations (precarious economic conditions, poor access to high-quality education, etc.) is even harder.

I share this anecdote because I imagine it to be commonplace. We believe one either masters a language or does not. It is for this reason that we study literature, for the fascination of seeing what a language can do. And it can do a lot, as the cases of Sor Juana, César Vallejo and so many other canonical Latin American writers show. Beyond the social or political content of any text, it is possible to appreciate the language itself, as a language that has enough confidence to do things one would think impossible. An example is "Altazor" (1931), a poem in which Vicente Huidobro creates worlds that defy gravity and every familiar rule simply by playing with Spanish. This is how language fascinates and



"Camina El Avtor con su hijo don Francisco de Ayala. Sale de la prouincia a la ciudad de los Reys de Lima a dar quenta a su Magestad. Y sale pobre, desnudo y camina enbierno," from *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (1615). Reproduction with authorization of the Royal Danish Library.

seduces us. This does not mean that all of us who are professors and teachers have absolute control or mastery over language, but rather that we appreciate it and, above all, would like our students to gain access to this universe.

It is in the name of documents

with strong traces of bilingualism, mixed registers and modes of existing in two cultures that I write this — documents that would not arrive today into the hands of a king. This is not to suggest that we need to stop teaching grammar or certain registers; instead, it is to maintain

that neither the Real Academia de la Lengua nor any other institution policing a language (or all of them together) can stop or contain what is already occurring. For this reason, it seems important to understand what is happening, to see with other eyes and listen with other, less institutional, more historical ears to the writing and speech that surround us. Far from appealing to a foolish piety, we should do this in the name of a future and archives yet unknown.

During class, when I think I am teaching in Spanish, a language that at some point did not exist and that took written form mixed with Latin, Arabic and other languages; when I think I am teaching about a country, Mexico, that also did not exist until recently, I feel a kind of vertigo. I do not know what possibilities exist in these mixtures between languages and histories, between people who come from different places. Whatever those possibilities are, we will not be able to see them. But it is for that very reason, for what cannot and should not be contained — for the force of history is immense — that I correct my students' papers with the knowledge that as I am correcting them, I am also waiting, for intelligence and aesthetic pleasure, as well as intellectual clarity, sometimes come to us in imperfect grammar.

The archive that commences with Guamán Poma de Ayala and other similar works is barely starting to speak. Perhaps it has come to join together, as my student suggests, with the unruly writing of our students, and our own writing, to say something that will only be clear to future generations.

Ivonne del Valle is Associate Professor of Spanish at the University of California, Berkeley.

The Common Exceptionality and the Exceptional Commonality of Black Thought

by Gregory Childs

In 1798, Luís Gonzaga, a free man of African descent, was arrested for promoting rebellion against slavery and colonialism in Bahia, Brazil. The rebellion was announced through handwritten bulletins that were placed in the most public spaces of the city of Salvador. Gonzaga, well known as a writer of petitions for military soldiers, was quickly suspected and arrested. Upon his arrest, colonial authorities discovered a collection of notebooks that contained a diverse array of writings, from poems to alchemy recipes and descriptions of African diplomats arriving on the shores of Brazil. When authorities saw the handwriting in these notebooks, they were convinced that they had caught the writer of the bulletins. Gonzaga was thus tried not only as a conspirator for rebellion, but also as a seditious black imperial subject who publicly promoted ideas of disloyalty to the crown.

In 1812, José Antonio Aponte, also a free man of African descent, was arrested in Havana, Cuba, for fomenting rebellion against slavery and Spanish rule. Prior to Aponte's arrest, five separate rebellions had erupted across the island. The timing and places of these rebellions prompted officials to wonder whether they were part of larger conspiracy to bring down slavery. A

series of interrogations had led them to Aponte, and upon arresting and confiscating the papers in Aponte's home, officials in Havana found a notebook containing drawings of everything from the Nile river to black troops defeating white troops. Aponte, like Gonzaga, thus became a name associated with leading a seditious rebellion, and both were ultimately executed for their roles in these revolutionary movements.

Historical interest in these two men lies not only in their executions, however, but also in the stories of the books they produced. For reasons that remain unknown and unexplained, the notebooks were either lost or destroyed after being deposited in colonial archives. Subsequent generations of scholars have long wondered how they were lost and what could they have meant for historical research. How did the men who possessed them amass the knowledge to produce such works? How did they learn to read and write? How were they able to compose these texts in societies where literacy in Spanish and Portuguese was sparse and limited even among the white population?

Underlining the entire ensemble of questions is the presumption that these expressions of intellectual production must have been exceptional and that the individuals

who left them behind were not only extraordinary but also merit further study, precisely because we seem to have no code or language of black artistic production during times of slavery that would help us register and read their productions in any easy or stable manner. For quite some time, the canon of writings produced by enslaved people of African descent has been reduced to a few well-distributed and published texts, almost exclusively in English. Examples include Sojourner Truth, David Walker, Phyllis Wheatley or Olaudah Equiano. Earlier generations of scholars who read and studied these writers as exceptional were largely following the dictates of the writers themselves, many of whom appealed to some notion of exceptionality when marketing their work. This is perhaps most explicit in Equiano's text, from the word "interesting" in the title to the first pages where he refers to himself as a "particular favorite of heaven," all while waxing poetic about his lack of vanity.

However, as Francis Smith Foster argued some time ago, while exceptionality and uniqueness were the catchwords one needed to get published, just as essential was commonality: belonging to a group that contained members who might be equally capable of intellectual production.



Artists Renée Stout and Jean-Marcel St. Jacques imagine a series of pages from the now-missing book of paintings by José Antonio Aponte, the intellectual rebel of African descent executed by Spanish colonials. These artists respond to Aponte's testimony about his rendering of history as distinct from History. The interrogation proceeded: "...Asked again why he mingled the destruction of the army of Senaquerib with the invasion of Tarragona when nothing connects one with the other, he said: that even though the two events do not go together, he included that of Senaquerib by reason of History, like everything else in the book...." Aponte, *Laminas 44b-45*, 2017. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy of the Visionary Aponte Exhibit.

The two sides of this tension could perhaps not exist without the other, for how could enslaved men and women plead for the commonality and the normativity of black intellectual production without first convincing white-owned publications and publication houses that they were unique? How many times in classes on slavery in the Americas do professors point out that, even though Equiano portrays himself as unique, he also starts his narrative by talking about the rich social and political culture of West Africa, in effect going straight to the matter of refuting racist notions about the exceptionality of Africa with regards to "civilization?" Or, what about the

fact that David Walker addressed his appeal to the colored citizens of the world and not a more general audience, making the assumption that people of color would be able to read, or at least discuss the ideas he had put on the page, despite the poor literacy rates of the era?

Of course, engagement with published black writers and artists in slave societies has continued to grow with research and the passage of years, and thus we are no longer only talking about Walker, Truth and the others who make up the small canon of authors. Now we also include writers such as Juan Francisco Manzano from Cuba and Machado de Assis in Brazil as examples of

published writers of African descent in Latin America. It is not, however, the belated recognition of already pre-existing and published texts that is helping us move beyond the narrative of exceptionality. As the opening paragraph of this piece suggests, it is the ongoing discovery of unpublished texts in a variety of locales throughout the Black Atlantic that signals a new opening of an archive of black thought.

In addition to the attention now given to individuals like José Antonio Aponte and Luís Gonzaga, the papers of men like Jorge Davison have also been added to our discussions. Originally from Jamaica (and having also lived

briefly in New Orleans) but arrested in Cuba for being in possession of anti-slavery literature, Davison's stack of pamphlets, newspapers and writings disturbed Cuban authorities enough that they had him arrested and isolated until a passing ship could be found to take him back to the British island. We also now have the diary of Ursula de Jesús, a mystic and visionary who lived in a seventeenth-century Lima convent and who wrote about her life and ecstatic visions. We know also of the case of California, an enslaved woman in Mississippi who used the mobility and the "comings and goings" associated with her labor as a laundress to collect prints and pieces of anti-slavery literature that she kept in her cabin. There is also Rosa Egipcíaca, an African-born woman who was enslaved in Minas Gerais, Brazil in the first half of the eighteenth

century. Rosa, like Ursula, became a mystic and left behind a text she called *Sagrada Teologia do Amor de Deus Luz Brilhante das Almas Peregrinas* (Sacred Theology for the Love of God, the Luminous Light of Wandering Souls).

These names do not exhaust the findings that have come to us through scholars' efforts to dig deeper into the archive. And this doesn't even begin to pull out the patterns, commonalities and discontinuities among these assorted writings that converge to demonstrate that this is indeed an archive of black intellectual history. But to do so, we will need to move beyond understanding the discovery of such texts as exceptional. It is not necessary to claim that graphic and literary representations by black subjects living under slavery was quotidian to recognize that black

intellectual production during slavery was far from rare.

It is perhaps more productive to see works like the notebooks produced by Aponte and Gonzaga as *unique* within their own societies but not necessarily *exceptional* in the long history of slavery in the Americas. The distinction between the two terms lies in the fact that uniqueness often refers to originality, while exceptionalism often refers to abnormality. In the case of Aponte, it was the method of composing his book that catches the eye of historians, scholars and artists. Pictures of Ethiopian, Haitian and Spanish kings were interspersed with drawings of the Nile River and of black armies defeating white armies. José Antonio Aponte's artistic execution was original, but its radical politics strove toward commonality: his art was meant to communicate his vision of freedom to black associates



In this piece, Teresita Fernández imagines the complex cosmology of José Antonio Aponte, the intellectual rebel of African descent executed by Spanish colonials. During his interrogation, he described this now-missing painting as "...the planet Jupiter in the sign of Sagittarius, its star bright, Father he of Vulcan, the first blacksmith, who was cast with a kick to the Pyrenees [?] mountains, and looking for the best metals, he found gold, made a forge, and fashioned rays sending them to his Father to return to his grace, of which he still had hope..." Aponte Láminas 10-11, 2017. Pyrite, oil, graphite on wood panel. Courtesy of the Visionary Aponte Exhibit.

and co-revolutionaries. It was a production of knowledge that was meant to inform and teach those he hoped would join him in a rebellion against slavery. In the case of Luís Gonzaga, his notebooks not only contained poems and alchemy recipes, but also translated and copied tracts of speeches from France, including portions of mystical, "occult" books that contemplated the relationship between Egyptian cosmology and Roman mythology, what we now call Neo-platonic thought. Copies of some of the same excerpts were found in the homes of Gonzaga's revolutionary associates and even the former owner of one of his accomplices.

Both notebooks, through their unique and different modes of expression, reflect the singular mental world of these two men. There are also openings into a world of textual sharing in late colonial Latin America that contributed to what might be called a submerged and secret world of black thought. Aponte seemed to suggest as much himself when asked by interrogating officials why he made the book. It was for "reasons of history," he said, a phrase that Ada Ferrer perhaps rightly reads as Aponte's last challenge to the colonial regime, a final act of defiance that allowed him to keep the meaning of some of his drawings to himself while denying this privilege to the colonial regime.

That Aponte and Gonzaga wrote and depicted the political world around them more vividly than other people of African descent they were in conversation with is what distinguishes their work, not the formation of the ideas that animated the works themselves. There is no telling how much of these notebooks may have been composed through and in conversation with other enslaved and freed peoples.

The archive does not readily yield this information, nor does it seem that colonial officials themselves considered the possibility that Aponte and Gonzaga did not work alone. Once Brazilian and Cuban interrogators decided that they had caught the culprits behind these two revolutionary moments, they were content to understand these men as the master ideologues of their respective attempted uprisings. They certainly asked other men they interrogated if they had seen the books in question, but at no point did they ask whether Gonzaga and Aponte had any help in the composition of their works.

Rather than adopt the optics of interrogators by seeing Aponte and Gonzaga as exceptional, I propose that we view them instead as unique thinkers who were able to create common, legible expressions of black intellectual discussions around questions of empire, freedom and racial politics. Considering their works in this light may be a way toward thinking about black intellectual history that considers not only the ways that grand political events or repeated and reinterpreted edicts from Europe impacted black thought in the Age of Revolution. It is also important to begin thinking in new ways about how works that appear to be the product of singular, isolated thinking may have been the product of ongoing collective conversations and exchanges.

Gregory Childs is Assistant Professor of Latin American History at Brandeis University.

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Palacio de Lecumberri. Photo by Frank Scherschel/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images.

On Women in Mexican Archives

by Jessica Delgado

Ordinary women fill the Mexican colonial archives: poor women, indigenous women, women of African descent, and women who lived their lives without money, status or privilege. This statement sounds like fiction to most people who ask about my work, given the limited amount, and relative newness, of scholarship about women's lives in colonial Mexico. But I can assure you that it is true. Women's names, women's words, things that happened to women, things women did, ideas about women are abundant in every archival collection for colonial Mexico. Finding them, however, is like finding a needle in a haystack. And understanding them — reckoning with them and taking the risks necessary to interpret them and try to make some sense of them — sometimes feels even harder.

To engage in historical research at the General Archives of the Nation (AGN) in Mexico City is to personally encounter layers of institutional and cultural power in the documents and books, and in the building itself. The archive's physical structure and location itself are saturated with more than 100 years of state power, sometimes brutal. The building that has served as the repository of the Mexican state archives since 1980 was built originally as a prison to house enemies of the dictator Porfirio Díaz in his tumultuous final decade.

From 1900 to his ouster in 1911, this prison served as a tool of his repressive regime, and subsequently, during the revolution that followed, former Díaz supporters (including the building's architect) were among those incarcerated there. It continued to operate as a prison until 1976, when it was remodeled and repurposed to hold the state's colonial and national archives. The General Archives of the Nation opened in 1980, and though the building has undergone renovation and expansion, historical materials are still stored in what were once cells where prisoners slept.

The cells containing documents have never been accessible to researchers; rather, we sit in creaky chairs at rows of tables, waiting — patiently or impatiently — for archivists to bring us requested material. We are cordoned off from the places where these artifacts reside by a long counter, behind which the archivists receive our written petitions and disappear from view to find and fetch the fragments of the past we want to behold, handle and try to understand. The rooms that house these tables, counters and storage cells are called galleries, and there are seven in total. These galleries are laid out like seven spokes extending out from an enormous circular center with a high ceiling and slippery stone floors. The space is designed in the form of a Panopticon, with observation areas circling high above it from which

guards could effectively monitor large numbers of incarcerated people.

Before a researcher takes the noisy walk to the galleries — the soles of her shoes squeaking or clacking loudly, depending on footwear, she has already participated in several rituals of discipline, inclusion and exclusion. Like many archives, access to the AGN requires registration, and registration requires credentials, affiliation or, at the very least, a letter of presentation and recommendation.

These letters accompany a written description of our projects, detailing our reasons for consulting the archives and the collections we hope to see. This exercise tends to induce anxiety in most researchers, since the full scope of a project is not always evident in the beginning, nor is the full range of materials one might eventually need to consult. Following the submission of these materials, researchers are called for interview with one of the reference staff. This is an opportunity to seek guidance from a knowledgeable and usually helpful archivist and to learn the ropes of the consultation room, where digital and printed finding aids are made available. Since this encounter usually occurs prior to having gained full access to the archives, there is pressure on the researcher to sound credible, and like she has a right to be there. It is unclear how many of these processes are actually exclusionary ones; I have not personally heard of



Incarcerated woman with child standing in the women's cell block of the Black Palace of Lecumberri prison in Mexico City, Mexico, 1950. The large prison, located on the northeast border of Mexico City's Federal District, served as both a national penitentiary and the central jail of Mexico City from 1900 to 1976. Photo by Frank Scherschell/The LIFE Picture Collection via Getty Images.

any scholar being denied access to the archives. But, speaking for myself, the registration rituals evoke strong feelings of petitioning a skeptical authority for access to something fiercely guarded and protected.

Once the researcher gains approval, she or he pays a nominal fee, submits official government-issued identification and proof of current residence, and gives the ID office several small photos. After a waiting period, this office issues an official researcher ID, which the staff members recommend be laminated at one of the nearby shops that sell candy, chips, pens and notebooks. Laptops and other devices must then be registered and stickered, and promises of proper behavior agreed upon in writing, signed and dated. Every day upon arrival, the researcher must pass through three security points, staffed by credential and bag checkers — some armed with guns and some overseeing heavy, bound entrance and exit logs. Only after these shared rituals of belonging, potential exclusion and ongoing regulation are we allowed into the main circular and spoked building, with its many doors flanked by yet more armed security guards who check our credentials, computers and papers as we enter and exit.

These processes, spaces and historical resonances discipline, socialize and impact each researcher differently depending on our personal biographies, experiences and circumstances. In other words, through these embodied experiences, scholars at the AGN do not come to our work in the same frame of mind or sense of permission, entitlement and capability. When we sit down at those tables and plot out the painstaking work ahead of us for the day, we do so from differing starting points, emotionally, physically and

intellectually. This would be true even without the aforementioned rituals of entrance and credentialing, which serve to further reinforce existing differences.

I often found myself reflecting on these differences as I waited for my documents to arrive and looked around at the other researchers waiting and working alongside me, and I brought those reflections with me as I turned to my work. I thought about these differences as I found women's names, words, actions and experiences scattered across worm-eaten, water-stained papers that had not been indexed in any way that related to the women. I thought about these differences as I learned which indexed categories tended to lead to papers with more women's names, words and actions scattered across them. Over time, day after painstaking day, I learned not only about how these women's names, words and actions came to be recorded, but how the pages that bore them came to be in these particular boxes, files or leather-bound manuscripts, and how these boxes, files and leather-bound manuscripts came to be organized, labeled and mapped. And as I learned all of this, I continued to think about the differences highlighted by our collective and individual experiences with security check points, credentials and echoing footprints on Panopticon floors as researchers make our way into the inner chambers of this former prison holding the ephemeral record of a long-ago past.

Without exception, the women named in the archives had gone through procedures and rituals meant to discipline and regulate them precisely at the moment these documents were produced. Without exception, the physical environment

in which they testified, responded to questions, silently submitted to observation, or listened to words directed at them or someone else nearby were exercises of domination and authority. The power dynamics in these interactions had an impact on women's choices, behavior and words and how they were heard, remembered, documented, organized and indexed. The differences among them — race, age, economic and social status, relationship to the church and religious practice, geography, and individual life circumstances — shaped the depth and nature of this impact.

The immediate context of women's appearances in these documents was rarely documented except in oblique and partial ways. It therefore becomes important to imagine these contexts as best we can. When a woman presented a petition about an abusive husband before an ecclesiastical judge in a diocesan court, or when she spoke about someone else in an Inquisition case in which she had been compelled to testify, or when she herself was the accused in either of these judicial settings, the physical processes that took place during or immediately prior to the recording of her words shaped what she said. And these processes were themselves determined in part by who she was in the eyes of those enacting them.

It is a characteristic of early modern women's history in general, and the history of women in colonial Mexico in particular, that the only evidence we have of their lives and choices comes from interactions with authorities and institutions marked by sharply unequal power dynamics. The evidence goes beyond elite women, such as literate nuns and the rare, wealthy laywoman who found the opportunity to write about her experiences. Even in these

cases, the circumstances of their writing were almost always regulated or mandated by a confessor, father, husband or other patriarch. Putting these exceptional women aside for the moment, the archives are in fact full of reflections of ordinary colonial women. Poor women, indigenous women, women of African descent appear in every archival collection housed in the colonial section of the AGN, even if these reflections are often faint, always fragmented, and mediated by mechanisms of control and authority that distorted, curtailed and, to a certain extent, fabricated them.

Researchers — some of us already worn out by the exercises of disciplinary authority we had to move through before we even arrived at these documents — might feel overwhelmed at the prospect of making sense of women's lives in the colonial past under these circumstances. To do so means confronting the layers of power head on: the historical forces that shaped women's words and controlled their bodies; the interlocking institutional histories that partially documented their experiences and then relegated them to the miscellany of the archive; and the contours of the academic professions that have devalued their stories.

It is tempting not to look that closely. And yet, it is also exhilarating, once we recognize the sheer volume of these fragments: splintered shards of lives lived, like broken glass reflecting small and distorted images. When these images and fragments are gathered up by the tens, twenties and hundreds, patterns begin to surface. The variety of women's life circumstances begin to take form, and the women themselves start to emerge from the shadows of the institutions, authorities and categories

around which archives are built. Once visible, I see them everywhere. They are hidden in court cases, invoices, property disputes, wills, bishops' papers and hospital records. They are buried in files that don't name them, organized by people who did not see them. They are woven throughout countless documents that were not written about them, by authors, notaries, judges and secretaries who had forgotten them by the time the ink dried.

So I return again to my first assertion: Ordinary women are everywhere in Mexican colonial archives. But it takes a lot to find them, and still more to try and make sense of them. To accomplish this, we have to pay attention not only to these women of the past, but to ourselves as well. How do our histories intersect with these women's? What relationship do we have to the genealogy of power that connects their circumstances and the ways their stories were documented, ordered and contained to the structures of access, discipline and legitimation in the production and management of knowledge? And how do we enter, move through and sit in the same spaces where their partially documented lives are stored? If we do not turn away, if we pay attention to the stories being etched in our registration materials, bound in the archive's entrance and exit logs, told in our exchanges with security guards, laminated in our archive credentials, and echoing off the walls as we walk to the work rooms, we will learn that the past still echoes into the present with the forgotten memories, buried names and muffled words of the women that fill these archives.

Jessica Delgado is Assistant Professor of Religion at Princeton University.

Religion and Emotion in the Archives of Empire

by Jennifer Scheper Hughes

There is a nearly religious sort of reverence that descends when one enters a colonial archive: a solemn regard for the sources and their miraculous and simultaneously inevitable survival over centuries, perhaps too for the ghosts that haunt the pages of the unresolved histories of empire, histories of violence, cataclysm and loss. Archival labor is readily legible as ritual action. The body of the scholar, habituated as if to prayer, sits in stillness before the document raised on its foam stand as if on a dais. In the archive, the researcher works in hushed silence, head bowed. By temperament I am fairly restless, so I often fail at this obligatory exercise. After a few hours the required discipline of stillness begins to betray me (or I it): I rise to stand, to stretch, to peer at the 400-year-old script from a different angle, willing it into legibility.

At the Archivo General de Indias in Seville, staff personnel found my unsettled archival practice nerve-racking. A guard was sometimes posted near my table, hovering close by to keep an eye on me, as in perplexing agitation I stood, sat and stood again before my text. Sometimes the physical agitation reflected the content within. How is one to respond when beholding a hastily penned letter sent centuries ago from the New World to the Old, a simple plea that contains

oceans of history: "Here, the Indians are all dying. Send African slaves"? Is one to sit, rise or fall before such a terse missive that so baldly works the conjoined suffering of peoples across hemispheres? The archive affords an intimate confrontation with grave violence. As Saidiya Hartman writes, "to read the archive is to enter a mortuary; it permits one final viewing and allows for a last glimpse of persons about to disappear into the slave hold."

From the perspective of Religious Studies, one could say that there is nothing new in the recent "archival turn" that is reshaping many fields. With its Protestant-normative ethos, the field has always privileged text and word over a range of other sources for knowing things about past and present practice. Only recently and somewhat begrudgingly has it begun to engage bodies, oral histories (that is, verbally rendered stories, archived), objects of material culture and, perhaps even less tangibly, emotions, feelings and affects. Yet these too may archive and communicate history. I have written elsewhere, for example, about how religious images serve as archives of community memory in local communities throughout Mexico and Latin America.

Approaching texts in a confessional frame, that is, with the eyes of faith, evokes a range of religious emotions. *Lectio divina* is the monastic

discipline of praying over sacred scripture in search not of scholarly understanding but rather of divine connection. This sort of "reading" does not resist but rather rouses emotion. We are brought to tears with elation at feeling touched by God through the divinely inspired Word; moved to despair at how God's presence so often eludes us; or finally, slain by grief at our own miserable human condition as reflected back at us through text. But the historian of religion, like other secular scholars, is compelled to read in a critical or analytical frame — to vacate the text of emotion in staid, restrained opposition to the sentimentality of *lectio divina*. We have thus inherited a profound disciplinary ambivalence to text and archive.

Searching the imperial archive for word about religious belief and emotion in the context of colonial cataclysm is an exercise in exegesis. Mundane letters of ecclesial administration are the documentary maintenance of bureaucracy. At the same time, we know that they contain evidence of the collateral violence of ordinary acts of colonial rule. For the scholar of religion, these same materials are also often self-evidently Christian texts, characterized by a superabundance of religious meaning and resonance accrued over two millennia. These can be mined in an almost scriptural search for religious attitudes and understandings. Consider, for

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EXR. 58

SECRETARIA DE GOBERNACION.

DEPARTAMENTO DE INVESTIGACION POLITICA Y SOCIAL.

2-1/A.G.D/1171.

RADIODIFUSORAS.

1941.- Enero.- Expediente global.

Homenaje a María Elena Martínez. Photo by Elliot Young. As Martínez, a historian of colonial Mexico, taught us in her work, the protocols of the archives—including the required use of medical gloves and masks—can militate against our emotional and physical connection to the past.

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example, a letter sent from a pastor in Mexico to the king to request that a campaign to raise funds from indigenous parishes be delayed after a particularly destructive epidemic. In the context of the mundane affairs of administration, the beleaguered pastor appeals to the colony as the *corpus mysticum*, the mystical body of Christ, now badly harmed in the most recent demographic crisis. The king and his Christian emissaries are thus theologically compelled to tend to the mystical body of the colony, now broken and wounded. If the colony is mystical body, then colonial administration is an exercise in tender ministrations as if to the broken body of Christ. The archive reveals the potency of tender attachments to uphold spiritual (and other) regimes.

The bureaucratic apparatus captured in the archives of empire has a sort of brutal neutrality that can be seductively numbing for the researcher — an attitude that has now become fixed in the habitus of the archival scholar. The affective regime of the colonial archive surfaces emotion only to contain it. We might say it creates an affective regime, that it makes emotions visible at the same time that it limits their expression. After the middle of the twentieth century, demographers of the Berkeley School combed archives and radically revised upward estimates of the indigenous population of the Americas before the arrival of Europeans. Sherburne Cook and Woodrow Borah (1971) illustrated the size of the indigenous population at the time of European contact. Their conclusions were suggestive of an entirely new scale of human suffering under foreign rule. But Cook and Borah explicitly eschewed the political, ethical and emotional implications

of their results of their labor and “confined their publications to the question of numbers,” even as they asserted their lingering interest in other forms of analysis of human experience. Devoid of sentiment or affect, theirs was an empiricist engagement with the archive of imperial cataclysm. Even as they counted, quantified and enumerated the indigenous people who died in the colonial mortality crisis, they succumbed to the regulatory power of the archive and, at least in their publications, distanced themselves from the implications and significance of these deaths. They distanced us in the process.

The archive’s power, then, resides in its capacity to police and patrol the boundaries of emotion and reduce human suffering to so many marks captured on a page. One of the most potent modes of reading against the grain, of subverting the effacing power of the archive, might be to enter the colonial archive armed with affective approaches to reading and narrating history. Rather than accepting that the archive is empty of affect, what if we allowed emotion, our own and that of historical others — others whose feelings haunt us even from the distant past — to penetrate our sources and our selves? What I am proposing is, I think, something beyond existing approaches that pertain to the relatively recent pursuit of the history of emotions. I am suggesting that we allow the manuscripts that we engage to be illuminated with emotion, empathy and presence, and that we occupy the archives with our bodies, in all their discomfiting disruption.

Jennifer Scheper Hughes is an associate professor of History focusing on religion at University of California, Riverside.

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A Miami Field Report from the Colonial Past

Iglesia-Museo de Nuestra Señora de la Merced/

The Chapel of Our Lady of Mercy at Corpus Christi Parish, Miami

by Carol Damian

There is a jewel in downtown Miami that houses one of the most important collections of colonial art and documents in the United States. Five miles east of Miami International Airport, Allapattah has long welcomed immigrants from South and Central America and the Caribbean. Mostly known for bodegas, textile manufacturers and the University of Miami's Jackson Hospital, Allapattah is now also home to La Iglesia-Museo de Nuestra Señora de la Merced (Chapel of Our Lady of Mercy) at Corpus Christi Church and future cultural center. Ten years ago, Father José Luis Menéndez, pastor of Corpus Christi Church, and several of his Peruvian parishioners were inspired by an Andean-style church they visited in Lima to build a chapel of similar type. That endeavor has evolved into the Florida Colonial Heritage Project, and today, with more than 150 colonial paintings and sculptures from Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia and Mexico, La Iglesia-Museo de Nuestra Señora de la Merced is the beginning of an endeavor dedicated to reviving, restoring and exhibiting masterpieces of colonial art, as well as numerous Latin American, and specifically Cuban, historical documents.

Eventually, the project will include a museum, library, and research and conference center, with the consecrated chapel as its art museum, concert hall and main focus.

Andean churches, with their magnificent Baroque interiors, were the inspiration for the chapel museum. It has a coral rock façade from the Dominican Republic; marble floors from Brazil; and carved and gilded wooden columns and a hand-carved cedar ceiling from Bolivia. Its Solomonian columns were carved in Cochabamba, Bolivia; local craftsmen made the other carvings, gilding them with gold leaf. The people of the neighborhood laid the foundation, built the walls, and installed the marble floors and altars, carved doors and other decorative details. It is truly a community project, completed over a decade by hardworking people who devoted their time when they were available, reminiscent of the way communities built churches in the Age of Cathedrals.

During the Gothic Period (13th to 15th centuries) in Northern Europe, building a cathedral was not only an economic necessity to draw people to cities that housed relics brought back from the Crusades, but also an act of mercy that showed

the power of the Roman Catholic church. Clergy recruited workers by ensuring them that, that if they helped build the cathedrals, their sins would be forgiven. A cathedral is the largest, most grandiose of churches. The seat of the bishop, its stained glass, statuary, and gold and silver details are meant to be impressive and maintain public faith through spectacle. As the years passed into the Renaissance and the Baroque, church building became even more grandiose. Priests who ventured to the Americas had an even more difficult task, needing first to convert and then maintain faith, and the beauty of the decorations of Andean Baroque churches assisted them with their efforts. The Andean priests employed the same sophisticated system of labor distribution in the community, with artists and craftsmen contributing their special areas of expertise to a project.

Andean Baroque churches are exuberant in every detail, a reflection of the extraordinary wealth that emerged in the region in the 17th and 18th centuries thanks to mining, ranching, forestry and the export of exotic products to Europe. Recent converts were especially devoted to the new Catholic religion (even as it often



Main altar — Iglesia-Museo de Nuestra Señora de la Merced, The Chapel of Our Lady of Mercy at Corpus Christi Parish, Miami. Photo courtesy of Colonial Heritage of Florida.

remained syncretic and uniquely Andean). Expert indigenous craftsmen quickly adapted to the demands of the Church to build houses of worship in cities, remote towns and villages. The closer a town was to a mining operation, the more silver and gold were available, and the more extravagant the churches and their decoration. To this day, a seemingly simple, unadorned church in the middle of mountains and bleak surroundings will transport the visitor to world of spiritual beauty with gold and silver ornamentation and altars, painted and gilded ceilings, and extraordinary statuary throughout.

The more remote a church was from a metropolitan center, the more creative the artisans and builders seem to have been. With few European architects and artists on hand, local Amerindians led the way, following an Andean aesthetic mixed with European, especially Spanish, models. The artisans added their own embellishments and personal touches in keeping with old and new beliefs. The result is a dazzling effect with ornate decoration, sparkling gold leaf, and paintings of the Virgin Mary, Christ, the saints and angels displayed to create a total Baroque experience, unique for its Andean interpretations.

The most extravagant feature of the chapel of La Merced in Allapattah is the altar. A combination of statuary and gilded columns frame two paintings: *Our Lady of Mercy (La Merced)*, to whom the chapel is dedicated, and *Our Lord of the Earthquakes*, an image of Christ on the cross special to Cuzco, Peru, that commemorates a miraculous event in the 17th century. Inspired by Spanish *retablos* found throughout Spain and the

Americas, the altar also has a marble altar table held up by hand-carved polychrome angels, complimenting the cherubs flying above the paintings. The Archangel Michael hovers at the very top. Michael is the Prince of the Archangels, the protector of faith and the will of God. He is a perfect guardian for the Virgin Mary and her chapel. Life-sized statues from Bolivia of Saints Peter and Paul flank the altar in carved niches, adding to its religiosity. The outer niches house statues of angels, now missing their wings. A team of artisans completed the planning: designers, sculptors, painters, gilders, woodworkers, and a priest to present and interpret the Eucharistic program. The chapel is dedicated to the Royal, Celestial and Military Order of Our Lady of Mercy and the Redemption of the Captives (Latin: *Ordo Beatae Mariae de Mercede Redemptionis Captivorum*, abbreviated O. de M.), also known as the Mercedarians, a Catholic mendicant order established in 1218 by St. Peter Nolasco in the city of Barcelona. Its members, priests and nuns, wear white habits with a red scapula and the white cross emblem of the Order, found throughout the chapel.

Four side altars are dedicated to particular saints or images of the Virgin Mary. The one closest to the entrance is for Santa Rosa de Lima, the Patroness of Peru and its indigenous people, and the first saint canonized in the Americas. Celebrated in a large painting that shows her as the Bride of Christ, receiving a wedding band from the Child Jesus and crowned with the roses that identify her, Santa Rosa wears the Dominican habit of her order. Another altar is dedicated to the Virgin of the Annunciation, depicted innocently facing the Angel Gabriel as he tells her that

she will be the mother of Jesus. On the other side of the chapel is an altar dedicated to the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception, surrounded by her symbols and rising to the heavens on a crescent moon, as described by St. John the Evangelist in the Book of Revelation. The fourth altar holds a painting of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, done in the uniquely Andean style of presenting the three holy personalities in the one image of Jesus Christ. All four paintings are from 18th-century Peru, as are the majority of the works in the chapel. Peru, especially Cuzco, had one of colonial Latin America's most successful programs for artistic production. Cuzco is considered to be the home of the first school of painting in the Americas (17th century) because of its successful organization of indigenous artists to create a unique, syncretic style adorned with gold stencils and special symbols of the Andes. Artists still work in Cuzco today in the same barrio of the city and in the same manner as their ancestors. The chapel contains more than 20 works from Cuzco, a representative selection that offers opportunities for discussion and appreciation, as well as examples from Baroque Europe that represent the same exuberant aesthetic.

Currently undergoing conservation is a painting of the Virgin Mary by Diego Quispe Tito (1611-1681), an indigenous Cuzco artist. He was one of the few artists to sign his name to his works; most of his fellows were anonymous members of workshops. The paintings of the Cuzco artists, often characterized by gold stenciling, usually depict Spanish Catholic religious figures from an indigenous perspective. Images of the Virgin Mary are especially



Main altar — Iglesia-Museo de Nuestra Señora de la Merced, The Chapel of Our Lady of Mercy at Corpus Christi Parish, Miami. Photo courtesy of Colonial Heritage of Florida.

beautiful interpretations of the most venerated Catholic personality and incorporate symbols that announce her association with the Inca Coiya, or Queen, and Pachamama, the Andean Earth Mother. The three personalities merge through a symbolic repertoire that includes flowers, jewelry, textile patterns, birds and other indigenous holy references unrecognizable to the Spanish priests, who saw only the Catholic symbols. Three small paintings of the Virgin Mary from 16th-century Cuzco feature gold stenciling and elaborate wood and

mirror frames typical of colonial Peruvian craftsmanship.

One of the chapel's most extraordinary examples of Baroque sculpture is a life-sized silver statue of the Archangel Asiel from Bolivia. He is depicted with an arquebus (an early muzzle-loaded firearm) instead of the sword usually associated with archangels and guardian angels, marking him as a warrior and guardian protector of God's treasures. Made of repoussé silver with semi-precious stones, the angel is a masterpiece, displaying a technique prominent in the silver

mining towns of Bolivia. It was made in 1789 by a Jesuit priest trained as a silversmith in Italy who took his trade to the highlands, with remarkable results.

The chapel's many other treasures include polychrome woodcarvings from South America and a dramatic image from Guatemala of the Virgin Mary, crowned as the Queen of Heaven with a silver halo. The diversity of the artworks from the countries that local residents once called home is a direct reflection of the demographics of Miami, a crossroads of hemispheric culture.

As a former Professor of Art History and Director and Chief Curator of the Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum at Florida International University, I am the curator of the art collection for the project. Along with other volunteers, I regularly lead private tours and have begun a series of concerts and other celebrations in the acoustically perfect venue. Undoubtedly, once it is finished and open to the public, it will be a much sought-after location for special ceremonies and receptions. The participation of the local community, not only as artisans but also as musicians and singers, is another aspect of parish outreach. Father Menéndez describes the chapel-museum as demonstrating the beauty of the people living in Allapattah and their pride in their diverse hemispheric cultural roots, and he welcomes their participation.

Carol Damian is Professor Emeritus of Art History at Florida International University.

Peasant Archives and Identity Documents in Peru

by José Ragas

Personal documents can be analytical tools to explore how we engage, manipulate, and store histories. Storage is crucial to provide a more nuanced perspective on how archives are historically constructed, and decenters attention from “national” and “institutional” archives to personal collections, where identification documents occupy a special place. It is important also to note that personal documents do not constitute the only artifacts possessed and archived by individuals. Latin Americans developed special bonds with passport photos, family pictures, handwritten notes and diaries, and conferred these objects with special meaning and value.

I would like to focus on a particular type of personal archive: those developed by indigenous groups over Peru in the last century. I build on recent studies by Marisol de la Cadena, and Manuel Llamojha Mitma and Jaymie Patricia Heilman to understand the historical construction of a “peasant archive.” De la Cadena offers us the stories of Mariano Turpo and his son Nazario Turpo. The Turpos, together with Manuel Llamojha Mitma, provide an invaluable source to explore the social and political segregation of the indigenous population and the role personal documents fulfilled in the complicated relationship between them and the Peruvian government.

Their personal archives complicate the narrative of indigenous citizenship in the Peruvian Andes. The existence of various artifacts they used to identify themselves — not necessarily artifacts designed by the Peruvian government — challenges the notion that indigenous people constituted an “undocumented population.” It also invites us to rethink the strategies they and other minority groups developed to ensure material proof of their legal existence throughout the 20th century.

What Documents Say about Us

For most of its existence as a republic and a post-colonial country, Peru legally excluded a vast number of its citizens by denying them the possession of a national document the *libreta electoral*. Created in 1931, the *libreta electoral* was granted to a small number of individuals who fulfilled the restrictive ideal of citizenship envisioned by Peruvian elites. A citizen was to be a literate adult male who was culturally white and lived in an urban setting. Under this segregationist criterion, neither women nor indigenous people could vote. Women would eventually obtain the right to vote and to bear such a document in 1955, while the literacy restriction that barred indigenous people from voting was lifted in the late 1970s.

In recent decades, the Peruvian government has sought to reverse

that trend by expanding its identification system nationwide and granting every Peruvian national over 18 years of age a *Documento Nacional de Identidad* (DNI), which is the modern successor of the now obsolete *libreta electoral*. RENIEC, the entity responsible for civil registration, deployed an impressive number of personnel and resources nationwide for this task. As a result, the rate of undocumented citizens significantly dropped among native populations, and more newborns received birth certificates to prevent child trafficking. Identity cards became a ubiquitous element in daily activities. Due to their prominent status as personal identifiers, DNIs are required for any mundane transaction in Peru. Not having a DNI or even not carrying one represents a social death for the individual.

While the expansion of identity cards, especially among vulnerable populations, is cause for optimism, it is also necessary to be wary about the dominance of a single document to certify legal identity. The overwhelming presence of the DNI and its easy access has over shadowed the existence of previous documents, practices, and artifacts ordinary citizens employed to prove their identity and to curb state restrictive categories. A close examination of personal archives, like those from peasant activists, offers an opportunity to

examine how subaltern groups identify themselves, engage with written documents and, ultimately, subvert political, social and spatial hierarchies of power that both restrict and dominate in the Andes.

Peasant Archives

Although Mariano Turpo and Manuel Llamojha Mitma probably never crossed paths, they both shared similar life and professional experiences. Turpo and Llamojha Mitma were rural activists born in Cuzco and the Mantaro Valley, respectively. As leaders of their communities, they not only mediated between the central government and their fellow community members but were also “earth beings” — intermediaries between Andean deities and humans. In the course of their convoluted lives, both men met with presidents, politicians, police officers and other interesting characters. Their experiences led them to engage with documents, which they diligently learned how to use and how to forge to advance their struggle for recognition.

Mariano Turpo’s personal archive, which was held in a box, consisted of approximately 400 documents collected between the 1920s and the 1970s. Anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena, who catalogued and examined the papers, asserts that a great number of the documents came from legal procedures against local and regional state representatives. Mariano Llamojha’s collection was probably less vast than Turpo’s and was destroyed by the police in 1992, during the years of political violence. Falsely accused of belonging to the terrorist group Shining Path, Llamojha fled to Lima in 1981. He forged a birth certificate with a false name to pass the strict checkpoint in Ayacucho.

Both cases reveal the heterogeneous repertoire of identification formats that circulated in the Andes. Since colonial times, indigenous communities have been embedded in dense and overlapping networks of power and authority that connected the highlands with Lima, Madrid, and other imperial centers. Targeted for their souls and labor force, the native Andean population was rapidly integrated into imperial databases, and the subjected were subjected to close scrutiny to justify the presence of the Spanish crown, as well as to extract their labor on rural estates, textile workshops and mining centers.

For centuries, priests and colonial local administrators kept careful records of indigenous subjects. This system continued operating after the end of the colonial rule, and the indigenous population was exposed to a new set of government entities and, therefore, papers. Between the 1820s and the 2000s, internal passports, military cards, road construction certificates of work (*concripción vial*) — especially voting cards for illiterates (since 1978), and birth certificates, among other papers — were produced for the Andean population. Not all of them were obtained voluntarily, but they were mandatory if the applicant wanted to travel (internal passports) or avoid the army (*concripción vial* certificate). Until the late 20th century, the possession of any of these documents was not necessarily associated with a political right (i.e. voting), but receiving any of them was an enduring symbol of exploitation. Securing a proof of identity in the Andes became tantamount to a concession to the abuse and power of the granting institution.

As both personal collections show, Turpo, Llamojha Mitma, and many other Peruvians developed alternative devices to

identify themselves that escaped to the government’s radar. Turpo kept small pieces of paper where he tenuously rehearsed his signature until he reached perfection. Signatures were important, especially for peasants, to authenticate their approval in documents on behalf of the community, and for their leaders when addressing a petition to a certain authority. Beginning in the colonial period, non-literate subjects who could use a quill might sign a document with a cross. Around the 1920s, Peruvian illiterate peasants were also experimenting with fingerprints to replace signatures in similar documents, or just learning how to sign if fingerprinting — a technique very popular in those years to identify criminals — was not yet available in the countryside. By putting their signatures — or initials — on official documents, they reclaimed legal authority to initiate commercial actions and defend themselves from abuses by proving their literacy. Unsurprisingly, these small pieces of paper, along with calligraphy exercise notebooks called *mosaicos*, made their way into personal archives.

Another important piece of documentation, this one rescued from Manuel Llamojha’s archive, is a small black and white passport photograph, where he appears looking at the camera and wearing a white shirt. The only information we have is a laconic caption at the bottom of the picture, presumably written by Llamojha, that says, “En China, 1965.” The photo is a memento from his five-week visit as the leader of the Confederación Campesina del Perú. Like Llamojha, many Peruvians valued these *foto* carnets for their affordability and personal bond. They were easier to get in



A Peruvian retablo, an artistic sculptural genre depicting everyday life in the Andes, shows peasants from the highlands (upper portion of retablo) and natives from the Amazon (lower portion) receiving birth certificates from the government office in charge of civil registries. Used by kind permission of the piece's owner.

urban areas where clients simply posed in studios for *cartes de visite*, but in the highlands this service was provided by itinerant photographers who visited hundreds of villages and captured thousands of faces with their cameras. These photos had endless purposes: they were exchanged with loved ones, sent inside letters

to romantic interests, and given to relatives as mementos when they moved out of town.

Getting a document or producing a new kind of identity artifact was only one way peasant leaders and the indigenous population engaged with technology and official bureaucracy. Repurposing

them opened new opportunities to navigate intricate and restrictive legal procedures. Llamojha, for instance, had established a solid reputation among the local police as an expert at counterfeiting documents. In a raid in 1948, detectives confiscated a typewriter, a set of seals, stamps, and numerous documents addressed to authorities.

Documents Today

These two prominent rural activists' archives illuminate the complex interaction between the indigenous population, the government, and personal documents throughout the 20th century. It can also help shed some light on a recent and tragic phenomenon: Vulnerable groups are losing their social and political rights even while obtaining an identification document. In India, some reports warn of the failures of the Aadhaar program, which is an ambitious high-tech project developed by the Indian government to grant a 12-digit unique number to every national citizen, including those never counted by the state in the past. Designed to centralize every service citizens receive, from social benefits to access to subsidized grain, the hyper-centralization and compulsory enrollment into Aadhaar is in fact impeding people's access to food and welfare benefits. Indian peasants, for instance, are encountering more difficulties in obtaining grain from the government because their villages lack access to the Internet, they do not know how to use the system properly, or they are unable to approach an Aadhaar station to verify their own identities.

In the United States, the enforcement of new voter ID laws that require a document with a photo to exercise the franchise may affect underrepresented groups — namely Black voters — that in the past could not obtain proper documentation or appear in national and state databases. This situation is aggravated further when certain states decline to accept drivers' licenses in airports and security checkpoints as valid documents for domestic travel, forcing citizens to present specific documentation to obtain a passport.

Archives, and how people organize and imagine these sites through their personal items, continue offering invaluable lessons about the past and the unexpected records of long-term inequality and dispossession. They also may provide alternatives for resistance in the current scenario of the criminalization of “undocumented” citizens by national governments.

José Ragas is an assistant professor at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.

For Further Reading:

Marisol de la Cadena. *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice across Andean Worlds*. Duke University Press, 2016.

Manuel Llamojha Mitma and Jaymie Patricia Heilman. *Now Peru is Mine: The Life and Times of a Peruvian Campesino Activist*. Duke University Press, 2016.

Reetika Khera, “Why India’s Big Fix Is a Big Flub,” *The New York Times* (January 21, 2018) <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/21/opinion/india-aadhaar-biometric-id.html>

Archives as Activism at a Hispanic-Serving University:

A Conversation with Catherine Nolan-Ferrell and Agnieszka Czeblakow

In this piece, we look at archives not just as things that were created but as they are being created. Czeblakow, a rare books librarian at the University of Texas-San Antonio, and Nolan-Ferrell, a historian and professor at the same institution, dialogue about teaching in the archives, power in the archives, and their initiatives with students who are archiving projects to document the undocumented on campus.

CNF: My name is Catherine Nolan-Ferrell and I am an associate professor of History at UTSA. My main research focus is on the Mexican-Guatemalan border, where I explore issues of nationality and citizenship, refugees, human rights, and responses to poverty/social injustice. My first book, *Constructing Citizenship: Transnational Workers and Revolution on the Mexico-Guatemala Border, 1880-1950* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012) examines how and why indigenous workers along the border developed strong national identities. My current research looks at the expansion of Guatemalan labor in Chiapas, culminating with the mass exodus of indigenous Guatemalans fleeing genocidal violence in their country. The influx of an estimated 200,000 refugees both ruptured and created distinct community identities as refugees, local Mexicans, and state authorities

from both Mexico and Guatemala sought to define citizenship along the border. At UTSA, I have been actively involved with organizations for undocumented students and was recently named a faculty contact person for DACA students/Dreamers.

AC: My name is Agnieszka Czeblakow and I am the rare books librarian at University of Texas at San Antonio Special Collections. I am responsible for curating and promoting access to our rare book collections about the history and print culture of the Mexico and Mexico-Texas border regions and the culinary history of Mexico, as well as developing print collections related to South Texas communities and groups traditionally underrepresented in the historical record. I help students, researchers and community patrons discover and navigate the collections through reference services, exhibitions and social media. Most of my time, however, is devoted to teaching and instruction using archival materials and rare books, and to thinking strategically and creatively about how special collections materials can better support and contribute to the University's mission of teaching and learning.

CNF: Why did you become an archivist/rare book librarian?

AC: I trained to be a historian and to teach at a university level. I wrote a dissertation about early modern prisons and punishment in the colonial Audiencia de Quito (now Ecuador), got my PhD in 2011, and moonlighted as an adjunct while also working as collections manager of an academic rare books, manuscript and archives library in Atlanta.

In 2012, while browsing online for "anything on prisons," I came across an article by Dutch archivist Erik Ketelaar in which he likens not only the architecture but also the internal procedures and "ceremonies" of archives to prisons and temples, where surveillance, knowledge and power can function often simultaneously to erase, silence, memorialize, validate and delegitimize the state, communities, identities and ways of thinking. For Ketelaar, "the archivist is the link between these different panoptical systems and fulfills a role in these different systems. As priest, as guard, as guardian? As accomplice of oppression and torture? As friend of liberation and justice? As warden of a temple sanctuary or a stark prison? As purveyor or with-holder of knowledge-power? Maybe each and every of these roles."

Reading his work helped me reflect on my own research experience in Ecuador's National

Archives, the seemingly random granting and denial of access, the dis/appearing documents, folders and boxes with fluid numbering system, minimal description or lack of inventories, and a puzzling arrangement of documents. I knew that Ecuador's colonial documents were far from "neutral," but I had not considered the effects of centuries of institutional processes, internal logic, local descriptive conventions, interventions or neglect by archivists, and past and future uses. Archives as institutions and *the colonial archives* as a set of documents suddenly became visible to me as a site in which institutions, the state, the archivists in charge, and any past/future users attempting to access them for a variety of personal or political reasons exercised power. With each use, the documents could be simultaneously and paradoxically capable of silencing and validating, as well as oppressing or giving voice and legitimacy to struggles for justice.

CNF: It sounds like archivists are much more than passive, impartial, silent and invisible handmaidens of history. Rather, I am seeing powerful "puppeteers" controlling and shaping memory, historical research, the past and the future.

AC: Yes. Archivists have incredible power in shaping how we locate and see the archive, what it contains, what gets saved, what doesn't, what even constitutes "a record." Their labor, however, goes largely unnoticed or unacknowledged. Terry Cook, another archival theorist, once noted that "the archive(s) is a foreign country to many historians," and he likened historians to tourists just passing through. I have been that tourist. I was ignorant of the paths that Ecuador's colonial records have traveled, from their imperial and local creators to

archivists laboring under the auspices of national governments and ministries replete with personal biases and national agendas, and to indigenous and international users who use the records for a multiplicity of personal, political and cultural reasons. To combat my ignorance, I got my master's degree in Library and Information Science, focusing on archival studies. I discovered a field rich with theoretical and practical scholarship and provocative insights pertinent to any humanistic inquiry into "the archive," including my own research into colonial prisons and their surviving archival records.

CNF: I have worked with you now for three semesters, bringing students in my History Research and Methods classes to examine archival materials related to the topics of individual courses (modern Latin American history, immigration, citizenship). Instruction and teaching with archival materials is a central part of your job. Traditionally, we tend to think of archivists as gatekeepers, guarding treasures hidden away in vaults, but in your classroom, "the treasures" become the bread and butter of student activities.

AC: I think exposing students to archives as institutions and archival materials or rare books early in their undergraduate careers is paramount at a Hispanic-Serving Institution. Many of our students are first-generation college students and the communities they come from have been historically underrepresented, misrepresented and, more often than not, erased and silenced in and by the archival record and cultural heritage institutions. As a result of this, the students haven't been exposed (or welcomed) to institutions holding rare books or archival documents, nor have

they seen materials that reflect the histories of their communities, ethnicities, places or collective memory. Few even realize that the first printing press in the New World was established in Mexico City around 1539, almost 100 years before any book printing took place in the English-speaking colonies. This is their chance to uncover these marginalized stories and to begin to pay attention to the misrepresentations and devaluing of their histories, identities and heritage. Students also feel intimidated by the age or fragility of the materials and the endless rules of archival etiquette. Early experiences in Special Collections help them build up a certain comfort level with handling the materials, navigating the reading room spaces and rules, and charming the "gatekeepers."

I find that students often view books or historical documents as sources of data and facts about the past, without much consideration to the sociopolitical processes of their creation, dissemination and, once within an archival institution, their preservation or disposal, management and subsequent uses. Why is this stuff here? Who decides what gets saved? Students seldom think of archives, records and record keepers as active and powerful facilitators of technologies of rule and control, white supremacy, colonialism, symbolic and actual annihilation, human rights abuses and political action.

In my work, I seek collaborative partnerships with UTSA's faculty to create archival literacy instruction programs to provide students with immersive, hands-on learning experiences that empower them to become knowledge creators rather than merely consumers. I also want to help them realize that archivists

and librarians are not neutral and impartial stewards of the historical record or knowledge, but rather active, subjective mediators and co-creators of the archival documents under their custody, and, more often than not, shapes the of state's cultural and historical practices and memory. Teaching is a way for me "to take visitors off the beaten path to the back roads where the real country may be experienced," to quote Terry Cook again.

AC: In Fall 2017, you received a grant from UTSA Special Collections to develop and implement an innovative, archives-centered pedagogical approach in your course on citizenship. The resulting course, History 6813: Proseminar on Citizenship and Nationalism, not only explored how ordinary people in South Texas practiced and understood ideas of citizenship and nationality, but also introduced students to archival thinking as both a method of historical analysis and a framework for political and social struggles. Why did you choose the particular topic of citizenship and nationality?

CNF: As a historian of mass atrocities and genocide, I am repeatedly struck by how peoples' histories get erased. After mass violence, access to and dissemination of its archival existence is often blocked. In this way, ordinary people are truly obliterated by their oppressors. Kirsten Weld explains archival thinking as both a method of historical analysis and a framework for political analysis. For Weld, archives are a "site of social struggle" that not only includes facts/data, but also reflects archivists' choices about what they believe to be valuable information. In this, she mirrors Michel Rolph Trouillot's discussion of how particular groups

or narratives can be highlighted or silenced through decisions about what to record, save/archive and retrieve. Ultimately, archival thinking requires students to evaluate the ways in which historical analysis expresses power relationships. By focusing on the biases inherent in creating archives, the class highlighted historical memory as a "process," not a "thing."

AC: Can you talk about your experience exposing students to archival theory readings in your course and bringing them into Special Collections to work with archival materials, often for the first time?

CNF: My goal as a historian is to get students to think critically about whose history the archives privilege. So many students use the Internet for research that they tend to see documents "in a vacuum" — disconnected from their archival context — which leads to problems with historical analysis. Documents become providers of "factoids" used to describe events in the past instead of contested narratives that explain why people acted in particular ways at particular times. This disconnection creates the exact situation that you just mentioned: Students become "tourists" in the archive, but fail to understand the complexities of the archival process.

For example, students in my course had to incorporate theoretical knowledge on national identity and citizenship practices with concrete archival content. Current political discourse on topics such as immigration or refugee resettlement draws sharp distinctions between "us" (US-born, Christian, white) and "others" (non US-born, not necessarily Christian, and not white). Within

the nation, all citizens (i.e. people born in the US) have the same rights and responsibilities. Yet this emphasis ignores the ways in which citizenship exists along a continuum. The records from local community organizations provided a window into how marginalized populations in San Antonio (primarily Mexican-Americans and African-Americans) refused to accept being categorized as "peripheral" citizens. Instead, people forced city action on issues such as drainage, education and housing, thereby compelling government authorities to recognize them as full members of the nation. One student used documents from a neighborhood organization to explore racial hierarchies in San Antonio. He had access to census statistics and knew that there was a "pocket" of working-class people in an otherwise elite neighborhood. His project reflected the tensions between the "official story" of neighborhood decline and a vibrant, close-knit community of mixed African-American and Mexican-American workers. The official story is one in which brown and black people were not "civilized" enough to organize, but the materials the student saw portrayed a vibrant urban community.

AC: This example demonstrates the power community archives can have to change the official record. Residents' personal stories, memories and photographs serve to not only strengthen the archive, but also to complicate the mainstream, dominant narrative of a community, serving as a springboard for citizen mobilization to unpack and better understand the narratives and institutions of oppression. This is what South African archivist Verne Harris calls the "archival sliver." For Harris, archives are not simple reflections

of reality; instead, they are a constructed "sliver of a sliver of a sliver" of a window through which we can peek into the constructed documentary record of personal or collective memories, experiences and events.

CNF: As historians, our goal is to hear the voices of those who are silenced, but often our own biases interfere with our ability to listen. Harris's work challenges us to recognize that what to us are valuable documents are often shunted aside in favor of a triumphant "metanarrative." We examined a collection that purportedly focused on Texas. From its title, students made assumptions about the types of documents it contained. However, they were surprised to see that the collection actually told them much more about colonial Mexico than about Texas. It was only after looking at the documents themselves that they saw how the label privileged one side of the story and silenced the much larger set of documents.

AC: Yes, that collection is called The Sons of the Republic of Texas Kathryn Stoner O'Connor Mexican Manuscript Collection (SRT). The scope and content note in the archive is perhaps my favorite, as it illustrates the problem with assuming archivists' neutrality and objectivity. In the case of the SRT collection, the privileging of one side of the story over another, the erasure of the colonial subject and historical context of the collection, the silencing of indigenous and Mexican voices as the source of the collections' provenance is quite telling. The historical note about the collection in the archive provides a brief history of the Texas fraternal organization and O'Connor's biography rather than



Students gathered in the University of Texas, San Antonio Special Collections reading room, re-documenting history. Photo by Agnieszka Czeblakow.

the historical context of Spanish colonial administration from its inception to independence. After a lengthy description of the various types of colonial documentation as well as their subject matter, our archivist/storyteller refocused the attention of potential users on one document among the nearly 7000 in the collection: "Perhaps the most significant document in the collection is a contemporary manuscript copy of the Articles of Surrender signed by William B. Fannin at the Battle of Coleto (Texas) on March 20, 1836." It is no wonder that students, faculty and researchers searching for materials on colonial Mexico overlook this collection, assuming it is about

Texas. In small part it is, but it is up to future archivists to begin to listen for the marginalized voices and bring out the complex provenance and subject matter of the colonial and post-colonial documents contained within the SRT while resisting "the systemic imperatives to privilege, to exclude, to control."

AC: This semester you are teaching a class on human rights. I know that you have been active in community and campus organizations. Can you tell us more about the intersection of scholarship and activism?

CNF: To me, my research on human rights issues in Latin America requires me to take

action in my community. I am a Liberation Theology Catholic, and through my parish I became involved in Communities Organized for Public Service/Metro Alliance, a coalition of congregations, schools and unions, to work on the campaign for improving educational access for all students. In San Antonio, that meant increasing access to dual-language education in public schools in order to improve educational outcomes for both English speakers and English Language Learners. While teaching Latin American history at UTSA, I was approached by undocumented students in my classes who wanted a faculty sponsor for a new campus organization, which eventually became a part of the DREAMER movement. I continued teaching about causes and impacts of migration from Mexico and Central America, and remained involved with Dreamer and DACA students. In response to pressure from DACA and other students, faculty and staff, UTSA now has a Dreamer Resource Center.

AC: In the human rights course, you will be introducing students to archival spaces and requiring them to do archival work. But this time it is slightly different. Can you speak more about the student projects and how the project grew out of your role as an activist?

CNF: The students in my senior seminar class are working with you on a project to create an archive for Dreamers/DACA students. Because we are a Hispanic-Serving Institution and have had an active DACA organization on campus since 2006, UTSA students have played an important role in supporting DACA and DREAMER rights in general. Yet, their activities

have remained clandestine due to very real concerns about privacy, family protection, etc.

In spite of these fears, students have created multiple strategies to advocate for their rights. As a historian who has been privileged to work with DACA students, I believe the significance of this student-led social movement will be important for future generations. Our national history has been characterized by the “love-hate” relationship we have with immigrants: We want their cheap labor for jobs that US citizens often refuse to perform, but we cling to a national narrative that values northern Europeans over other immigrants. For me, the DREAMER movement marks a critical juncture in our history. In a few decades, historians will look back and try to make sense of these debates. Without archiving the DREAMERS’ version of events, we risk silencing them, forgetting the myriad of options we (as a society) had, and “remembering” an imagined history that serves the needs of the powerful.

Agnieszka Czeblakow is the Rare Books Librarian at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Catherine Nolan-Ferrell is Associate Professor of History at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

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