

Consciously I would not write if I try to justify the manner in which *hispano-americanos* [Latin Americans] still treat the Indians. The Indians are free according to law, but how can I deny that they are slaves of abuse and custom. The Indian, like his donkey is property without owner, belongs to the first occupant... The soldier occupies him in order to make him sweep the barracks and the filth; the mayor occupies him to deliver a letter twenty leagues [60 to 80 miles]; the priest occupies him to carry portable platforms of saints in the processions; the priest's housemaid occupies him to go and fetch water from the river, all of it [accomplished] with a bucket, if it's not done in this matter he receives a beating, so that he remembers and goes for another. And [still] the Indian returns because this is his condition when whipped, shaking on the floor; he gets up thankful to his tyrant [and says]: "*Diu su lu pagui, amu*" [God repay (bless) you, master] while he struggles with [pulling up] his underwear. Innocent, wretched creature! If my pen had the gift of tears, I would write a book titled "The Indian," which would make the world weep. No, we have not made this soul humiliated, morally broken, abandoned by God and his luck; the Spaniards left him this way, how he is and how he will be forever and ever... The oppressed and violated races during three hundred years need eight hundred in order to recover and return to their right of equality before God and justice. Moral freedom is the truthful and fruitful one. To say to a black: "You are free," and continue to sell him; to say to an Indian: "You are free," and to oppress him, is to mock the heavens and the earth. For this infamous tyranny everyone unites; and the whites do not have shame to collaborate with *mulatos* and *cholos* in one and the same act of perversity and barbarism.¹

¹ Juan Montalvo, *El Espectador*, tomo II (Paris: Librería Franco-Hispano-Americano, 1887). Although polemical for his critique of Ecuadorian society's treatment of *Indígenas*, Montalvo like Thomson imputes Spain for the *Indígena* problem. *Mulato* (mulatto) is the offspring of a white person and Afro-American while *cholo* is the progeny of a white person and *Indígena*.