

ON INDIGENIZING EDUCATION AND THE VIRTUES OF DECOLONIAL FAILURE

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ORIGINAL TITLE
Indigenizing Education? On the Virtues of Decolonial Failure

I. AYACUCHO, 2016

“Our individual and collective rights are not recognized,” argued nineteen-year-old Quechua activist, Gloria Quispe Girón, in January 2016, responding to my query about the merits and failures of Peruvian public policy and its multiculturalist goals of “diversity.” She elaborated: “[We lack] equal opportunity. [We cannot] feel part of the nation, nor accepted, nor recognized. The concept of Indigenous rights is a chimerica in a country that acknowledges the conquest and the colonial period with pride, ... [a country] that *still* lacks awareness of, and fails to show solidarity with all of its peoples.”³⁸

Quispe’s statement offers a starting point from which to consider what it has meant historically for Indigenous peoples in Peru that the state’s intention to guarantee their national belonging in fact operates through a sociocultural paradigm that is grounded in the premise of their non-belonging, and that the dominant national society that has long laid claim to the fruits of their labor assumes the basic inadequacy of traditional Indigenous economies and forms of work. Per governing discourse and its accompanying public policies, these two problems could only ever be solved by dint of state tutelage, or what we might call more succinctly in the context of LAPES simply, “education.” In light of numerous colonizing pedagogies that have been formulated toward such ends since the declaration of Peruvian Independence in 1821, what have been, and what might be now, the possibilities for “indigenizing” education and decolonizing knowledge more broadly?

³⁸ The interview and related commentary on which I draw here appear in: Devine Guzmán, “Povos indígenas e ‘a diversidade cultural’: uma visão desde Austrália, Brasil, Índia e Peru,” *Revista Observatório* Vol. 20 (2016): 1-37. This translation and all others are my own.

As my title suggests, one possible answer to this question is: not many. After all, the socioeconomic conditions of Quechua, Aymara, and Amazonian peoples in Peru remain far worse than those of their non-Indigenous compatriots.³⁹ And yet, as I also wish to suggest—alongside Quispe and the many other Indigenous activists and scholars who refuse to accept marginalization and exclusion—instances of decolonial failure also present us with opportunities for seeking inspiration, for radical learning, and for collaborating transnationally towards shared political goals motivated by a desire to strengthen and expand social justice. Alas, Quispe’s observation that Peruvian society “still” runs short on awareness and solidarity also reveals her belief that both goals reside within the realm of possibility.

Although Quispe has national and international experience advocating for Indigenous rights in the Andes and across the Americas, the primary focus of her work has been in southern Peru, where like thousands of Indigenous and rural families, she was forced to migrate due to the intense political violence that overtook her country between 1980 and the 2000, when Sendero Luminoso and state forces battled for control of the country—together taking more than 69,000 lives.⁴⁰ Three out of every four people killed in that conflict was a Quechua-speaking peasant, and more than 40% of them came from Quispe’s home of Ayacucho.⁴¹

From this background and in this context, then, Quispe’s efforts on behalf of her youth advocacy group, *Ñuqanchik*, Organización para Niñ@s y Jóvenes Indígenas de Ayacucho, ⁴²have been inspired

39 Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, *En el Perú 221 Mil Peruanas y Peruanos Dejaron de Ser Pobres en los Años 2014 y 2015*, 2016. https://www.inei.gob.pe/media/cifras_de_pobreza/nota-de-prensa-n074_2016-inei.pdf (accessed February 1, 2017).

40 The Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission estimated that 46 percent of deaths were caused by Sendero Luminoso; 30 percent by state forces; and 23 percent by other actors, including paramilitaries, self-defense groups, and rural community defense organizations (*rondas campesinas*). See Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, “Anexo 2: Estimación Total de Víctimas,” in *Reporte final*, 2003. <http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/pdf/Tomo%20-%20ANEXOS/ANEXO%202.pdf> (accessed March 17, 2017).

41 Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, *Informe Final*, 53. <http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/pdf/TOMO%20I/Primera%20Parte%20EI%20Proceso-Los%20hechos-Las%20v%20Edctimas/Seccion%20Primera-Panorama%20General/1.%20PERIODIZACION.pdf> (accessed March 15, 2017).

42 *Ñuqanchik* means “we” in Quechua—the most widely spoken Indigenous language in the

in large part by the discrimination she experienced personally upon being forced to leave her rural community and remake life in a distant, unfamiliar, and frequently hostile urban center. In the provincial city, she explained, she felt compelled by a continuous onslaught of racist, classist aggression to conceal her place of origin, her native Quechua language, and her most intimate and fundamental ways of being in and thinking about the world. In her communications with me, she asked, rhetorically: “How *not* to be part of the Indigenous movement? How *not* to help, if just like me, there are so many young people who live [...] in fear and shame? If they die of embarrassment because of our customs, music, and language?”⁴³ The rationale for a Peruvian “Indigenous movement,”⁴⁴ to engage with Quispe’s terminology, thus originates with the very notion of Indigenous rights that she finds lacking in mainstream Peruvian society. Grounded in a desire for self-preservation, as well as for collective Indigenous wellbeing, this rationale resonates with a long tradition of intellectual activism in the Andes, and runs counter to the colonialist renderings of Indigenous education that have long inhered in dominant sociocultural sensibilities and practices.

Discrimination of Indigenous migrants by Euro-descended and *mestizo* urbanites is of course an old story in the Andes—one that predates nationhood and is linked foundationally to the prevailing concept and practice of “Peruvianness” through a host of national ideas and the pedagogical institutions designed to impart them. As in other New World settler states, public schooling in Peru has served since the inception of nationhood as a primary mechanism through which intellectual and governing elites would aim to plant, cultivate, and harvest civic-mindedness to overcome the “backwardness” of Indigenous and other “underdeveloped” peoples. In short, education was imagined as a mechanism to foster a culture and ethos of homogeneity that could contribute to the overall “improvement” and perceived well-being of the nation.

Americas, with nearly seven million speakers in the Andes.

43 *Cómo no ser parte del movimiento indígena, ¿cómo no ayudar, si al igual que yo, hay muchos jóvenes que viven [...] miedo y vergüenza? ¿Si por nuestras costumbres, nuestra música y lengua se mueren de vergüenza?* ”

44 Indigenous movement” was Quispe’s phrase and one of few affirmative uses of the term I have heard in the Peruvian context from a self-identifying Quechua woman in over two decades.

In light of these goals, it is unsurprising, perhaps, that state-backed education in the Peruvian Andes has been realized overwhelmingly in pursuit of “de-Indianization” and citizen-making as simultaneous processes designed to go hand-in-hand.⁴⁵ From racialized cultural movements to class-based literacy campaigns, and from social hygiene crusades to a wide range of religious dogmatism, programmatic efforts to edify Native peoples has over time revealed two common denominators: first, a perception of Indigenous deficiency; and second, the aspiration to “remedy” it, even at tremendous human cost. Developed out of nineteenth-century scientific racialism,⁴⁶ “improvement” efforts sought through education to remove Indigenous peoples from the present by transporting them through time: either back to a romanticized, pre-colonial past, or forward to a future of developmentalist modernization wherein traditional ways of being and thinking would belong mostly in museums.

In contraposition to the dominant educational goals and practices that sought to transform Native peoples into de-Indianized, exemplary citizens, Indigenous education practices by Indigenous peoples, whether in or outside the formal school system, have offered a compendium of decolonial strategies for navigating the violent assimilation of Republican rule, albeit with varied degrees of success. This paper examines the historical relationship between the colonizing and decolonizing imperatives of competing educational initiatives and their enduring implications for students and pedagogues alike. It is not solely because of their triumphs, I argue, but also because of their shortcomings and failures that decolonial learning initiatives and the ambition to indigenize education and other forms of sociocultural discourse can be valuable for confronting the political and environmental crises that Native peoples in Peru (and certainly elsewhere) inevitably share with the rest of humanity. To ground this argument, I shall consider some of the historical weight that Gloria Quispe Girón and her contemporaries in *Ñuqanchik* hold on their shoulders as they carry on their work in the face of great obstacles.

⁴⁵ For a similar situation in Bolivia, see Aurolyn Luykx, *The Citizen Factory* (New York: SUNY, 1999).

⁴⁶ See, for example, Nancy Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

II. CUSCO, 1920S

Early twentieth-century debates over the ideal physical and ideological place of Indigenous peoples in Peruvian society divided *indigenistas*—an assemblage of mostly elite, mostly male, mostly non-Indigenous intellectuals from the highlands and the coast—into several factions. While some indigenist thinkers advocated racial, social, and cultural *mestizaje* (mixing) as a positive and ultimately inevitable social force—the means by which a relatively homogenous nationhood might be eventually consolidated—others equated it with degeneration. Key among the latter school was one of Peru’s most zealous social thinkers, Luis Valcárcel, who was born in Moquegua in 1891, grew up in Cusco, and moved in 1930 to Lima, where he taught at the Universidad Mayor de San Marcos. He directed two major museums⁴⁷ as well as the Instituto Indigenista Peruano, serving as Minister of Education between 1945 and 1947. In the early 1960s he also helped found the still influential Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.⁴⁸

Although the tenor of his social and political advocacy for Indigenous peoples became progressively more moderate over a career spent travelling between the mostly Indigenous highlands and the predominantly Hispanist and *mestiza* coast, Valcárcel’s early political discourse was intractable during the early twentieth century, when a series of Indigenous uprisings against Cusqueñan *hacendados* (landowners) appeared to threaten the integrity and future of the Peruvian nation, then barely a century old.⁴⁹ From the context of that social and political upheaval, Valcárcel argued against the “perversion” of Andean peoples through contact with non-Indigenous society, contending that the proliferation of mixed-race peoples would lead to corruption, alcoholism, stupidity, and poverty among the general population.⁵⁰ His

⁴⁷ Valcárcel directed the Museo Bolivariano and Museo Arqueológico before uniting them into the Museo Nacional. He was the founding director of the Museum of Peruvian Culture until 1964.

⁴⁸ For a comparative study of Valcárcel’s work and an earlier take on some of these questions, see Devine Guzmán, “Indigenous Identity and Identification in Peru,” *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 8.1 (1999): 63-74.

⁴⁹ Carlos Arroyo Reyes, *Nuestros años diez* (Uppsala: Libros en Red, 2005).

⁵⁰ See Luis Valcárcel, *Tempestad en los Andes* (Lima: Populibros, 1927), 41-44; 91-93;

solution—now nearly a century old—was to insist instead, against the grain of dominant indigenist discourse, on a hyperbolic re-Indianization of Peru. As he put it: “Peru is Indian and will be while there are four million men who feel that is the case, and while there is still a fiber of Andean atmosphere, saturated with the legends of a hundred centuries.”⁵¹ In terms of policy, this position advocated relative seclusion for traditional Indigenous peoples. For non-Indigenous peoples, the implications would be less clear, but resulted frequently in performative celebrations of Indian essence and symbolic appropriations of Indian “spirit,” particularly among highland elites.⁵²

Counter to Valcárcel’s proselytizing, *anti-mestizo* rhetoric, the sway of Lamarckian genetics led other indigenist thinkers to defend the notion that physical and cultural modifications could be inherited, resulting in the eventual association of *mestizaje* with “improvement,” rather than degeneration. A renewed “Indigenous race,” such thinkers purported, could be forged through repeated exposure to positive sociocultural influences, including sporting activities, enhanced hygienic and health care practices, and augmented musical and artistic instruction. Because schooling would provide the primary medium for disseminating these positive forms of influence, faith in “racial improvement” permeated education policy, resulting in the proliferation of didactical materials designed for “the 80% of illiterate Indigenous people who constitute[d] the national soul...and live[d]...very distant from civilization, ...relegated to oblivion.”⁵³

99-100; 107-108; 116-120. Valcárcel wrote of “*mestizos*” and “*cholos*,” referring to the latter group as “parasites” eating off of the “rotten body” of society. While *mestizaje* would develop into a relatively neutral concept, *cholificación* has maintained its mostly pejorative connotation into the twenty-first century, though the deprecatory meaning has long been called into question in both academia and popular culture. Whether or not these terms connote derision depends on the circumstances at hand, as the tendency to nickname based on ethno-cultural heritage and physical appearance is complicated by the fact that “racial” categories are also mediated by education, occupation, geography, language, and dress.

51 “El Perú es indio y lo será mientras haya cuatro millones de hombres que así lo sientan, y mientras haya una brizna de ambiente andino, saturado de las leyendas de cien siglos.” *Tempstad en los Andes*, 112.

52 On these questions see Marisol de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

53 “el 80% de analfabetos indígenas que constituyen el alma nacional [...] y que viven [...] muy

One primary school lesson from 1934 called, “El indio estudioso,” encapsulates this thinking succinctly:

Do you know this boy? Yes, I know him; it’s Anacleto. Everyone calls him ‘Indian,’ as if that word were an insult. But on the contrary, he feels proud, because his veins pulse with the blood of a valiant and heroic race: that of the Incas. The Indian Anacleto already knows how to read and write. Now we see him seated on a bench with his bare feet and his poncho, doing writing exercises [...]. He is also a hardworking boy. A few months ago he only spoke a few words. [...] In contrast, today he can read his book, recite some verses and ideas: flag, school, mother, work, etc. He’s learned a lot of things in a short time. Children! Be like Anacleto, because the Fatherland requires children who are useful to society! [...] **Now I know how to read. Now they won’t call me ‘stupid Indian.’**⁵⁴

Summoning Inca greatness to valorize the Native peoples of his day, the author of this passage hints at how Valcárcel and his adherents sought to “reform” Indigenous students without stripping away the desirable essence of their Indianness. Anacleto’s newly achieved literacy would make him beneficial to national society and ensure that he could no longer be disdained as “stupid,” for example, while his bare feet and traditional dress demonstrated that beneath the education he was still an authentic Quechua boy. In short, the social engineers wanted to have their cake and to eat it, too. As Valcárcel explained years later: “the indigenist crusade sought to remove the Indian from the amnesia that had made him forget his glorious past.”⁵⁵

distantes de la civilización y regalados al olvido.” Augusto Cangahuala Rojas, *¿Sabes leer? – lectura y escritura simultáneas, ceñidas a las últimas orientaciones de la pedagogía*. 3rd ed. (Lima: Instituto Pedagógico Nacional de Varones, 1934), 6.

54 “¿Conoces tú a este niño? Sí, lo conozco; es Anacleto. Todos le dicen indio como si esta palabra fuera un insulto. Antes bien, él se enorgullece porque sus venas sienten correr la sangre de una raza valiente y heroica: la de los Incas. El indio Anacleto ya sabe leer y escribir. Ahora lo vemos sentado en un banco con los pies descalzos, con su poncho, haciendo ejercicios de escritura sobre el poyo. Es un niño por demás trabajador. Hace meses hablaba apenas unas palabras. [...] En cambio, hoy puede leer su libro, recitar algunos versos y pensamientos: La Bandera, La escuela, La madre, El trabajo, etc. Muchas cosas ha aprendido en poco tiempo. ¡Niños! Sean como Anacleto porque la Patria exige niños útiles a la sociedad! [...] **Ya sé leer. Ya no me dirán indio bruto.**” Cangahuala Rojas, *¿Sabes leer?*, 134-135; original emphasis.

55 “la cruzada indigenista quería sacar al indio de esa amnesia que le había hecho olvidar su pasado glorioso.” Luis Valcárcel, *Memorias* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1981), 217.



Figure 1: Anacleto: "The studious Indian" ⁵⁶

Images like the one of Anacleto (Figure 1), recurrent in textbooks from the first half of the twentieth century through the 1980s, illustrate how intellectual elites imagined the educational apparatus could reform Indigenous subjects, both inside and out. In a second example (Figure 2), an aimless, disheveled child wearing Native-looking attire appears in the background, while in the foreground—presumably meant to illustrate the social promise of schooling—the same child appears cleaned up, donning Westernized dress, and perhaps most importantly, carrying books. In all cases, some remnant of Inca greatness remains: for boys, a colorful poncho folded neatly over one shoulder, for example; for girls, long hair neatly arranged into braids (see Figure 3).

⁵⁶ Cangahuala Rojas, *¿Sabes leer?*, 134.

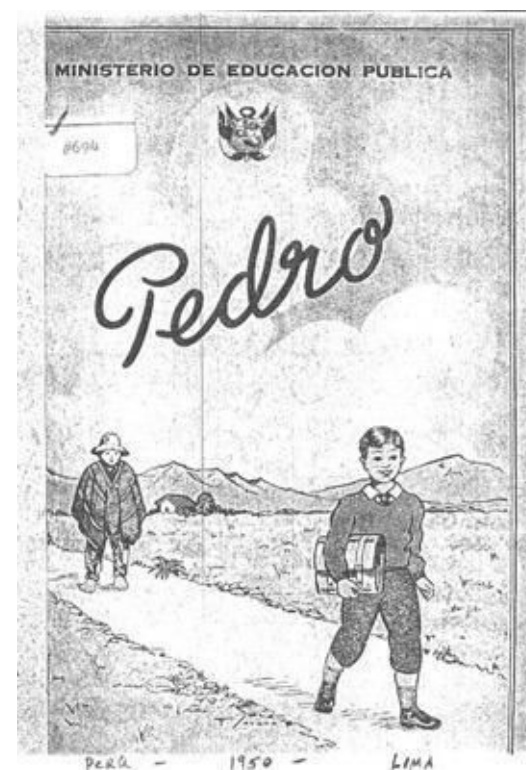


Figure 2: Ministry of Education textbook (1950) ⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Junta Militar de Gobierno, *Pedro: Libro de lectura para las escuelas de concentración de comunidades y Núcleos Escolares* (Lima: Ministry of Education, 1950), np.



Figure 3: "Literate Indian girl" ⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Cangahuala Rojas, *¿Sabes leer?*, 101.



Figure 4: Ministry of Education textbook for "Indigenous education" (1934) ⁵⁹

In addition to emphasizing superficial physical attributes, educational texts made frequent reference to the indispensability of good hygiene for social transformation and development. Another lesson (a poem) called "La limpieza" thus asks, for example:

Why is Juanito always so beautiful? / His house shines like the sun. / Why is it so beautiful? / Because it's clean. / Why do I see his hands so white? / and so soft like lilies? / It's because his skin is very clean. / His handsome suit is always magnificent. / Is it made of silk, like that of a rich man? / No...it is not silk. / But it is clean. ⁶⁰

While pointing out that the boy is "extremely tidy," and aptly dressed in a "beautiful outfit," the author of this passage also discloses the bleaching power of the educational process: Juanito's hands are not

⁵⁹ Cangahuala Rojas, *¿Sabes leer?*, 100.

⁶⁰ "¿Por qué está bello siempre Juanito? / Su casa tiene del sol el brillo. / ¿Por qué está tan bello? / Porque está limpio. / ¿Por qué tan blancas sus manos miró / y son tan suaves como los lirios? / Es que su cutis está bien limpio. / Su hermoso traje siempre es lúcido. / ¿Será de seda como el de un rico? / No, no es de seda, pero está limpio." Cangahuala Rojas, *¿Sabes leer?*, 110.

just remarkably clean, alas, but also lily white. This racialized permutation is reiterated by textbooks that portray the skin of illiterate children as darker than that of reformed, literate ones.



Figure 5: The whitening effects of Indigenous education ⁶¹

By combining efforts at social whitening with the perfunctory valorization of select aspects of Indigenous traditions and cultural forms, thinkers like Valcárcel could portray state-backed education as a necessary undertaking to propel the country forward while simultaneously situating Indigenous peoples in an imagined context of pre-Columbian pristineness. “My ideal,” expressed the historian-anthropologist in his memoirs, “was to recover the resplendence of the Inca period.” ⁶²Valcárcel’s zeal to spread a renewed Indigenous culture through public education had an important linguistic component that he likened to an “orthographic revolution,” through which the vernacular languages of

Peru (by which he meant mostly Quechua) might throw off the “colonial yoke” of Spanish grammar. Pre-Columbian Quechua was thus favored over the adulterated, Hispanized versions spoken by those who had abandoned their traditional communities for the wretched settlements that he labeled “*poblachos mestizos*.” ⁶³He reasoned:

[I declare] war on the oppressive [Spanish] letters: on “b”; and on “v”; and on “d”; and on “z”; [...] Out with the bastard “y”, the exotic “x,” and the decadent and feminine “g”; and the specious, ambiguous “q.” Here’s to the manly “K” [...]. We shall write Inka and not Inca: new forms of writing will be a symbol of emancipation. [...] Let us purify the language of our fathers [...], the Children of the Sun: let their golden light shine, [...] recovered from five centuries of enslaving moss. Let us break the last link of the chain, even amidst the cries of those nostalgic for the yoke, those who defend Spain to the death, who sigh for the Golden Age of Castile, who perform their fanatic adoration of Calderon de la Barca, Tirso de Molina, Lope de Vega, with the reverent attitude of colonial servants. ⁶⁴

As this passionate interest in language indicates, Valcárcel circumscribed his harshest criticisms of *mestizaje* to the realm of symbolic and cultural forms, rather than to racialized or biological ones. Due to the perceived propensity for cultural *mestizaje* to cause social degradation, the idealized gradual change (“improvement”) would have to

⁶³ He complained: “Worms lost in the subcutaneous galleries of this rotting body that is the wretched *mestizo* community, the men sometimes surface; the sun drives them away, [and then] they go back into their holes. What do the troglodytes do? They do nothing. They are parasites, the woodworms of this garbage heap.” “*Gusanos perdidos en las galerías subcutáneas de este cuerpo en descomposición que es el poblacho mestizo, los hombres asoman a ratos a la superficie; el sol los ahuyenta, tornan as sus madrigueras. ¿Qué hacen los trogloditas? Nada hacen. Son los parásitos, son la carcoma de este pudridero.*” *Tempestad en los Andes*, 39-41.

⁶⁴ “*Guerra a las letras opresoras :a la b;y a la v; a l a d y a l a z; ... afuera la e bastarda y, la x exótica, y la g decadente y femenina; y la q equívoca, ambigua. Veng[aj] la K varonil ...Inscribamos Inka y no inca: la nueva grafía será el símbolo de emancipación. ... purifiquemos la lengua de nuestros padres ..., los Hijos del Sol: que brille su áurea, ... recubierta por cinco siglos de mugre esclavista. Rompamos el último eslabón de la cadena, aunque giman los nostálgicos del yugo, los españolistas a ultranza que suspiran por el Siglo de Oro Castellano y rinden fanático culto a Calderón de la Barca, Tirso de Molina, Lope de la Vega, con la reverente actitud de los siervos coloniales.*” *Tempestad en los Andes*, 99-100.

⁶¹ Junta Militar de Gobierno, *Pedro*, 48.

⁶² Valcárcel, *Memorias*, 250.

occur in a controlled environment and under the supervision of suitable authorities. This idealized space would once again be the rural school,⁶⁵ which would bear the burden of the state's social and indigenist experiments until the end of the twentieth century—and arguably, in many ways, until the present day.

In the aftermath of the politically tumultuous 1920s and 30s, Valcárcel became Minister of Education in 1945 under the democratically elected government of José Luis Bustamante y Rivero. The scrutiny of ideological adversaries and allies alike (including, notably, that of novelist, anthropologist, and educator, José María Arguedas) coalesced around the critique that Valcárcel's vision for Indigenous peoples was quixotic, anachronistic, and unrealizable, leading eventually to a softening of his radical position of isolationism.⁶⁶ As Valcárcel's work became more policy oriented and less theoretical, his thinking came to reflect a more pragmatic stance on Indigenous education; including, remarkably, one that incorporated investment from and collaboration with the same United States that had “annihilated” its own Indigenous peoples.⁶⁷ Paradoxically, it was through the Servicio Cooperativo Peruano-Norteamericano (SECPANE), founded in 1946, that Valcárcel and his cohort would come to reimagine and reconfigure their nation-building task. Following the wartime establishment

of the Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIA) and the Inter-American Indigenist Institute (III)—both founded in 1940—SECPANE would extend the workings of the Good Neighbor Policy to rural and Indigenous education in Peru for years to come.

State-sponsored indigenism during Valcárcel's tenure as education minister perpetuated his old characterization of *mestizaje* as degeneration, but also sought to foster desirable sociocultural transformation through education. One major development of this period was the creation of the Núcleos Escolares Campesinos (NECs)—a rural education program inspired by a Bolivian model from the 1930s and funded by SECPANE with the collaboration of Indigenous communities who offered their land and labor in support of the initiative.⁶⁸ From starting points in Puno and Cusco, the NECs were expected to spread to other regions, where they would help reorganize rural life physically and conceptually around the institution and concept of the school. The program grew from some sixteen NECs in the late 1940s, to over seventy by the early 1960s, when they totaled enrollments of over 200,000 students, or approximately .02 percent of the national population.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ He explained: “In this process of cultural conflict, the school's mission was of primary importance. The educator would bear the responsibility for determining which aspects of the modern cultural archive merited admission into Indigenous culture. [...] Facing this delicate matter was not, therefore, merely a preoccupation of a single branch of administration, or of one sole Ministry, but of the entire administration of the State, including that of social sectors not directly implicated in the problem. “*En este proceso de enfrentamiento cultural, la misión de la escuela era de primera importancia. El educador se encargaría de discriminar los aspectos del acervo cultural moderno que merecían ser admitidos en la cultura indígena. [...] El encaramiento de tan delicado asunto no era, por lo tanto, preocupación de una sola rama de la administración o de un solo ministerio, sino de la administración entera del Estado e inclusive de los sectores sociales no comprometidos directamente con el problema.*” Valcárcel, *Memorias*, 350–51.

⁶⁶ Valcárcel's idealization of Indigenous purity remained intact during his stint in national politics, when he established the Instituto de Estudios Históricos, the Instituto de Estudios Etnológicos, and the Museo de la Cultura Peruana. In 1947, he became the inaugural director of the Instituto Indigenista Peruano—a research organization created by the national Congress in 1943 following Peru's participation in the First Inter-American Indigenist Congress, in Pátzcuaro, México. See Jorge P. Osterling and Héctor Martínez, “Notes for a History of Peruvian Social Anthropology,” *Current Anthropology* 23.3 (1983): 343–360.

⁶⁷ Valcárcel, *Tempestad en los Andes*, 147.

⁶⁸ J. Zebedeo García and Leopoldo Díaz Montenegro, *Núcleos escolares: informe sobre el programa de educación rural* (Lima: Ministerio de Educación Pública—División de Educación Rural, 1949), 36.

⁶⁹ The national population at the time was approximately 10 million. For more on the schools, see G. Antonio Espinoza, “The origins of the *Núcleos Escolares Campesinos* or Clustered Schools for Peasants in Peru, 1945–1952,” *Naveg@américa. Revista electrónica de la Asociación Española de Americanistas*. 2010, n. 4; <http://revistas.um.es/navegamerica> (accessed March 15, 2017); and Brooke Larson, “Capturing Indian Bodies, Hearths, and Minds,” in Andrew Canessa, ed. *Natives Making Nation* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005), 32–59.

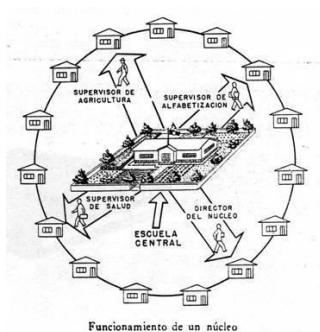


Figure 6: "Functions of a núcleo [escolar]"

Serving as a base for the "Nucleus Director," "Agricultural Supervisor," "Literacy Supervisor," and "Health Supervisor," the Central School is the heart of the new Indigenous community⁷⁰

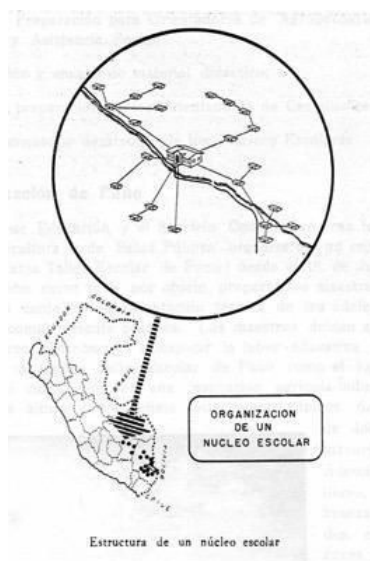


Figure 7: "Structure of the núcleo escolar"⁷¹

⁷⁰ García and Díaz Montenegro, *Núcleos escolares*, 35.

⁷¹ Ibid., 27.



Figure 8: "Maps of the zones where núcleos escolares operate (departamentos of Puno and Cusco)"⁷²

III. MIAMI, 2017

So, why should this story matter to people residing in a time and place far removed from the Peruvian highlands of the mid-twentieth century? I offer as a tentative response that although Luis Valcárcel's tenure as Minister of Education was short lived, the impact of his work and of the educational ideas, institutions, and processes outlined here, was not. The legacy of his school of thought—progressive for its time relative to competing forms of social and cultural policy, albeit colonialist according to our own thinking, and certainly racist, if we sanction the anachronism—is indeed with us today. It manifests, for example, in the popular attribution of differentiated citizenship rights and divergent tenets of human worth (in Peru and elsewhere) depending on: 1) the way one looks; 2) the languages one speaks; 3) one's place of origin; 4) one's current place on the map; 5) one's level of formal education; 6) one's occupation; 7) one's engagement with particular

⁷² Ibid., 8.

modes of production; 8) one's contribution to the local economy; 9) one's contribution to the national economy; and 10) one's contribution to the global economy. And it manifests in the disquieting possibility for dominant thinking to extrapolate from the first point to the tenth without any empirical basis for making such a verdict. In other words, does the vitriol and intolerance of prevailing political discourse at home and elsewhere not invite us to pass judgment on one another's potential contributions to the global economy—to surmise one another's conditions of belonging and overall state of worthiness—just by taking a quick glance? Considering the current onslaught of anti-indigenous developmentalist policy and political rhetoric represented, for example, by the revival of the Keystone XL and Dakota Access oil pipelines, are indigenous rights elsewhere in the Americas any less the “chime-ra” observed by Quispe Girón in her homeland? Does North America not share the lack of “awareness” and “solidarity” of which she speaks, even as its elected representatives lay claim to the “greatest country on God's green Earth” and preach the “shining example” of U.S. democracy to the rest of the world?⁷³

We might attribute different manifestations of this calamitous state of affairs to racism, classism, jingoism, anti-intellectualism, corporate greed, the disavowal of scientific knowledge, or to the confluence of several or all these things. In every case, we would probably be correct, and in every case, the specificity of the rationale and explanation would matter deeply. But to return to the Peru of Gloria Quispe Girón—to end with our feet on the ground—the legacy of racialized educational thinking and the importance of understanding, challenging, and decolonizing it might be delimited more specifically.

I shall close with two examples: First, Hatun Willakuy, the official report of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, published in 2004 after a two-year investigation and systematic collection of more than 17,000 testimonies, found that perceptions of “racial difference” and the assumed “inferiority” attributed to that difference were two of the main sources of violence perpetrated during the war. As the

⁷³ Donald Trump, Inauguration speech, January 20, 2017. <http://www.npr.org/2017/01/20/510629447/watch-live-president-trumps-inauguration-ceremony> (accessed January 21, 2017).

President of that Commission explained:

[It is overwhelming...] to find among these testimonies, over and over again, the racial insult and verbal abuse suffered by the poor—an abominable refrain that precedes the beating, the sexual assault, the kidnapping, [...] the shot fired point blank by an agent of the Armed Forces or the police. It is equally exasperating to hear from the leaders of the subversive organizations strategic explanations about why it was convenient to annihilate this or that peasant community.⁷⁴

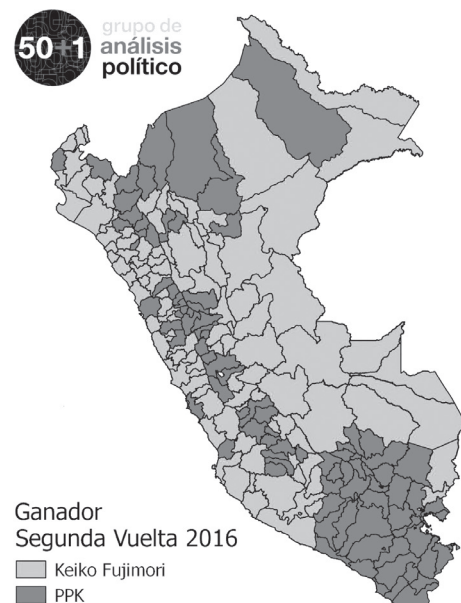
I submit, then, that one key antecedent of this atrocity—the logic that accompanied a twenty-year long genocide in which three out of four victims was a Quechua-speaking *campesino*—was the benevolent ethnocide that made erasing traditional Andean and Indigenous ways of being and thinking by dint of educational “improvements” not only a national priority, but as we have seen here, also a source of national pride.

My second example is the electoral map from the 2016 Peruvian presidential elections, in which 49.87% of the electorate chose as the next leader of their democratic country Keiko Fujimori—daughter of the authoritarian former president who was incarcerated from December 2007 to December 2017 for graft, fraud, bribery, corruption, illegal trafficking of drugs and arms, the forced sterilization of thousands of Indigenous women, targeted killings, and a series of forced disappearances during the final decade of the war.⁷⁵ In a historically

⁷⁴ “[Agobia...] encontrar en esos testimonios, una y otra vez, el insulto racial, el agravio verbal a personas humildes, como un abominable estribillo que precede a la golpiza, la violación sexual, el secuestro, ... el disparo a quemarropa de parte de algún agente de las Fuerzas Armadas o la policía. Indigna, igualmente, oír de los dirigentes de las organizaciones subversivas explicaciones estratégicas sobre por qué era oportuno...aniquilar a ésta o aquella comunidad campesina.” Salomón Lerner Febres, “Discurso de presentación del Informe Final de la Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación,” year? http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ingles/informacion/discursos/en_ceremonias05.php (accessed April 1, 2016).

⁷⁵ See Jo-Marie Burt, “Guilty as Charged: The Trial of Former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori for Human Rights Violation,” *The International Journal of Transitional Justice*, Vol. 3 (2009): 384-405. Amidst controversy, accusations of corruption, and protest, President

controversial and close run-off vote, Quipe Girón's battered home region of Ayacucho indeed voted counter to the Peruvian majority and in support of Fujimori's painful legacy, creating a complex and indeed, contradictory national picture about the political impact of state-backed human rights abuses and the thresholds of "acceptable" moral cost for economic stability and protection from insurgent violence.



Fuente: Elaboración propia en base a información de ONPE.

Figure 9: Electoral map for the second round of 2016 presidential elections in Peru ⁷⁶

And so, despite all the evidence that one might stockpile to substantiate the argument against self-identifying in such a context as a

Pedro Paulo Kuczynski pardoned Fujimori on grounds of poor health on December 24, 2017. See "Indulto de Navidad para Fujimori y protestas en Perú por pacto infame," *Telam*, 25 December 2017.

⁷⁶ Infolatam, "Perú elecciones: División exacta," June 19, 2016. <http://www.infolatam.com/2016/06/21/peru-elecciones-division-exacta/> (accessed March 15, 2017).

Quechua person—including the argument that doing so during the war might have come at the cost of life itself—we have again the example of Quispe Girón, her *compañeras y compañeros* in *Nuqanchik*, and alongside them a relatively recent proliferation of NGOs, social movements, and organizations of young people who against all odds, and arguably even against their own self-interest, continue to identify from their individual communities with national and international juridical concepts of indigeneity. While it is fundamental to recognize the historical and conceptual limitations of this identification—its generic resonance for the sake of expediency, or *survivance*, to adopt (and adapt) the terminology of Anishanaabe scholar, Gerald Vizenor ⁷⁷—it is equally, if not more urgent in times of crisis and decolonial failure to recognize its emancipatory potential.

In 1938, José María Arguedas reflected thus on the possible (future) indigenization of Peru and its cultural and intellectual production:

The shame of being Indian created by the *encomenderos* [colonial landholders] and their descendants will be destroyed when those who run the country understand that the wall erected by egoism and self-interest to impede the achievement of Indigenous people—to block the free flow of their souls—must be demolished for the benefit of Peru. On that day, a great, national, Indigenous art, environment, and spirit will blossom to resound powerfully in music, poetry, painting, and literature—a great art that, due to its national genius, will have the purest and most definitive universal value. ⁷⁸

If our cup is half empty, Arguedas's words—to date, failed words—might sound like a strategic essentialism that never had its desired

⁷⁷ Gerald Vizenor, *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).

⁷⁸ "La vergüenza a lo indio, creada por los encomenderos y mantenida por los herederos de estos hasta hoy, será quebrantada cuando los que dirigen el país comprendan que la muralla que el egoísmo y el interés han levantado para impedir la superación del pueblo indígena, el libre desborde de su alma, debe ser derrumbada en beneficio del Perú. Ese día aflorará, poderoso y arrollador, un gran arte nacional de tema, ambiente, y espíritu indígena, en música, en poesía, en pintura, en literatura, un gran arte, que, por su propio genio nacional tendrá el más puro y definitivo valor universal." *Canto kechwa*. (Lima: Horizonte, [1938] 2014), 18-19.

effect. If our cup is half full, on the other hand, we might hear the same prophecy as an interpellation into an old, but still expanding and changing transnational community that begins anew to realize its political potential through the ceaseless efforts of people like Gloria Quispe Girón, the Standing Rock protestors, and perhaps some of the people reading this essay—all of whom might refuse to equate failure with defeat. In these arduous times, we might find encouragement in the words of the tireless, if controversial Brazilian anthropologist, Darcy Ribeiro, who summed up his life's work thus: "I failed at everything I tried. [...] But the failures are my victories. I would hate to be in the place of those who beat me." ⁷⁹ ■

⁷⁹ "Fracassei em tudo o que tentei na vida. [...] Mas os fracassos são minhas vitórias. Eu detestaria estar no lugar de quem me venceu." Darcy Ribeiro, *Mestiço é que é bom!* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Revan Ltd., 1996): 156-57.