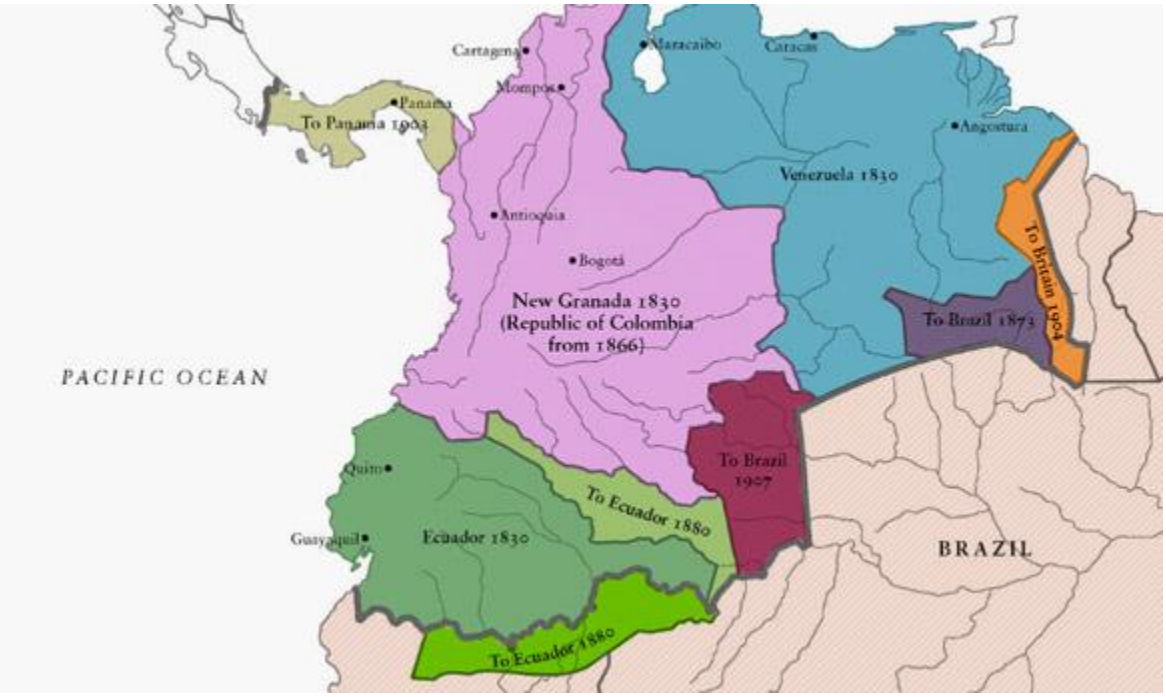
Women and Latin American War for Independence



Manuela Saénz (1797-1856) was a South American revolutionary hero who supported the revolutionaries during the Wars of Independence and protested for women's rights.

Born in Quito, the illegitimate child of a Spanish nobleman, Manuela had a difficult upbringing until her father arranged for her to marry a wealthy English merchant twice her age. Living in Lima, Peru as an aristocratic socialite, Manuela received military personnel and high-ranking politicians in her home and in 1820 became an active member of the conspiracy against the Spanish Viceroy of Peru. In 1822, Manuela left her husband and travelled to Quito, where she met Simón Bolívar. Their association and affair lasted 8 years until his death in 1830. Famously preventing an assassination attempt against Bolívar in 1828, Manuela came to be known as the "Libertadora del libertador" ("Liberator of the liberator"). Often dismissed as nothing more than Bolívar's lover, Manuela Saénz was also involved in the Battles of Pichincha, Junín and Ayacucho, serving as a soldier and also smuggling supplies to the rebels. As with many women involved in the revolutionary effort, Manuela's role was overlooked until the 20th century and presently she is revered in Latin America as a feminist symbol of the 19th century wars for Independence.

Juana Azurduy (1780-1862) was one of Latin America's most important revolutionary war heroes. In a six-year period, she fought in 23 battles across Bolivia, Peru and Argentina that helped to liberate the region from the Spanish at great personal cost, losing her husband and all of her children in war.

Born into a wealthy mixed-race family in what is now Sucre, Bolivia, she enjoyed a comfortable upbringing and fostered a great love of Bolivia's indigenous cultures. At age 17, her rebellious spirit led to her expulsion from the convent she joined as a young girl and she committed herself to improving the treatment of indigenous communities and the cause of independence from the Spanish crown. Juana fought in the Chuquisaca Revolutionary uprising which ended in 1810 with defeat by the royalist troops. Not to be deterred, in 1816, Juana led a force that captured the Cerro Rico of Potosí, a vital source of silver for the Spanish crown, and was

promoted to the rank of Lieutenant. In the Battle of La Laguna Juana fought while pregnant to rescue her captured children, all of whom were eventually killed. She went on to give birth to another daughter during a battle in Northern Argentina, returning to the fight shortly after the child had been born.

After the Independence Wars, Juana's efforts and sacrifice where largely forgotten. In 1825, when Simon Bolívar visited her, he was embarrassed by the conditions she was living in and promoted her to the rank of Colonel with an army pension, reportedly remarking to Marshal Antonio José de Sucre: "This country should not be named Bolivia in my honour, but Padilla or Azurduy, because it was them who made it free". Juana died in poverty and obscurity, but hundreds of years on, she has been granted posthumous honours by the Bolivian and Argentinean governments.

Policarpa 'La Pola' Salavarrieta was born in 1795 to a well-off Creole family in the small town of Guaduas, Viceroyalty of New Granada (now Colombia). In 1810, she moved with her brothers to Bogotá where as 'La Pola' she became a key figure in the movement for Independence from Spain. She used her skills as a 5.seamstress to gain access to Spanish royalist families, and passed on political information she overheard in their households to the underground resistance. She also helped forge documents.

When the Spanish authorities discovered La Pola's role as a spy, she and six other prisoners were sentenced to death by the Council of War. Execution was set for the morning of November 14, 1817. When ordered to turn round and kneel, the way traitors were normally shot, she refused. Facing the firing squad, she cried defiantly "I have more than enough courage to suffer this death and a thousand more". She called on people to revenge her death, and the response to her public execution triggered her legend as a Latin American resistance heroine. She was one of 50 female agents to be executed before Colombia achieved independence in 1819.