



The Legacy of Vicente Guerrero, Mexico's First Black Indian President

Theodore G. Vincent

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"A book that must be read by all Americans who desire a more critical understanding of the historical contributions that Africans made beyond the borders of the United States. It dramatically captures a history that has long been neglected by historians of the Mexican Revolution of 1810. . . . An important contribution that links the common histories of African and Latino Americans."--Carlos Muñoz, Jr., University of California, Berkeley

Elected the first black Indian president of Mexico in 1829, Vicente Guerrero has been called the country's Washington and Lincoln. This revisionist biography of one of Mexico's most important historical figures--the person who issued the decree abolishing slavery--traces the impact of race and ethnicity on Mexico's national identity.

An activist from boyhood and a mule driver by trade, Guerrero led a coalition of blacks and indigenous peoples during the difficult last years of Mexico's war for independence from Spain, 1810-21. In office, he taxed the rich, protected small businesses, tried to abolish the death penalty, and championed the village council movement in which peasants elected representatives without qualifications of race, property ownership, or literacy; he enjoyed signing his correspondence "Citizen Guerrero." In 1831 he was kidnapped and killed by his political opponents.

This book also tells the story of seven generations of Guerrero's activist descendants, including his grandson Vicente Riva Palacio, the historian whose well-known writings elaborate on the ideals of a multiracial and democratic nation. Still in print today, his novels, essays, and five-volume national history are used here to help explain the factors that made the region of "El Sur" a center for political radicals from 1810 up to the revolution of 1910.

For all readers interested in issues of diversity, this book will illuminate the evolving and distinct interactions of Indians, whites, and the descendants of the 250,000 Africans and 100,000 Asians brought to colonial Mexico.

Theodore G. Vincent, a retired history instructor from the University of California, Berkeley, is a former newspaper columnist for the *Los Angeles Herald Dispatch*. He is the author of four books, most recently *Keep Cool: The Black Activists Who Built the Jazz Age*, and has published many articles on Afro-Mexico.

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