

JOHANN JAKOB VON TSCHUDI (1818–1889)
TRAVELS IN PERU DURING THE YEARS 1838–1842 (1852)

In the tax registers, drawn up during the protectorate of Santa Cruz, in 1836, the number of the inhabitants of Lima is represented as follows:

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
1. White Creoles (being the descendants of foreigners, but chiefly of Spaniards)	9,423	10,170	19,593
2. Indians	2,561	2,731	5,292
3. People of Color (mixed races)	11,771	12,355	24,126
4. Slaves	2,186	3,606	4,792
5. Ecclesiastics (Lay and Monastic)	475	350	825
In all . . .	20,416	29,212	54,628

Possibly in no other place in the world is there so much variety of complexion and physiognomy as in Lima. From the delicately fair Creole daughter of every graduation of color are seen living in intimate relation with another. Two extreme classes—the whites and blacks—are as distinct in character as in color, and of either of those it is no difficult task to give an accurate portraiture. But it is different with the mixed races. To define their characteristics would be impossible for their minds partake of the mixture of their blood. As a general rule, it may fairly be said that they unite in themselves all the faults, without any of the virtues, of their progenitors. As men they are greatly inferior to the pure races, and as members of society they are the worst class of citizens. Here, as well as in the following delineations of the different races, I wish my observations to be understood only in a general sense. I have met with some honourable exceptions; though, unfortunately, they were mere solitary luminaries, whose transient light has been speedily obscured by the surrounding darkness.

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Having noticed the principal races, we will now consider the variegated mass of people of mixed blood, who in Lima form a considerable portion of the population. The subjoined list shows the parentage of the different varieties of half-casts, and also the proper designations of the latter:

PARENTS	CHILDREN
White Father and Negro Mother	Mulatto
White Father and Indian Mother	Mestizo
Indian Father and Negro Mother	Chino
White Father and Mulatta Mother	Cuarteron
White Father and Mestiza Mother	Creole (only distinguished from the White, by a pale-brownish complexion)
White Father and China Mother	Chino-Blanco
White Father and Cuarterona Mother	Quintero
White Father and Quintera Mother	White
Negro Father and Mulatta Mother	Zambo-Negro
Negro Father and Mestiza Mother	Mulatto-Oscuro
Negro Father and China Mother	Zambo-Chino
Negro Father and Zamba Mother	Zambo-Negro (perfectly black)
Negro Father and Cuarterona or Quintera Mother	Mulatto (rather dark)
Indian Father and Mulatta Mother	Chino-Oscuro
Indian Father and Mestiza Mother	Mestizo-Claro (frequently very beautiful)
Indian Father and China Mother	Chino-Cholo
Indian Father and Zamba Mother	Zambo-Claro
Indian Father and China-Chola Mother	Indian (with rather short frizzy hair)
Indian Father and Cuarterona or Quintera Mother	Mestizo (rather brown)

Mulatto Father and Zamba Mother	Zambo (a miserable race)
Mulatto Father and Mestiza Mother	Chino (a rather clear complexion)
Mulatto Father and China Mother	Chino (rather dark)

The white Creole women of Lima have a peculiar quickness in detecting a person of half-cast at the very first glance; and to the less practised observer they communicate their discoveries in this way, with an air of triumph; for they have the very pardonable weakness of priding themselves in the purity of their European descent. Despite the republican constitution, there prevails throughout Peru a strong pride of cast, which shows itself at every opportunity. In quarrels, for example, the fairer antagonist always taunts the darker one about his descent. By all the varieties, the white skin is envied, and no one thinks of disputing its superiority of rank. The Indian looks with abhorrence on the Negro; the latter with scorn on the Indio. The Mulatto fancies himself next to the European, and thinks that the little tinge of black in his skin does not justify his being ranked lower than the Mestizo, who after all is only an *Indio bruto* (brutish Indian). The Zambo laughs at them all, and says “if he himself is not worth much, yet he is better than his parents.” In short, each race finds a reason for thinking itself better than another.

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Though an article in the Charter of Independence declares that “in Peru no person is born a slave,” yet the National Congress has on various occasions thought fit to deviate from this principle. In Huaura it was decreed that children born in slavery shall be free on attaining the age of twenty-five, and the Congress of Huancayo prolonged the period to fifty years.

In Lima, and indeed throughout the whole of Peru, the free negroes are a plague to society. Too indolent to support themselves by laborious industry, they readily fall into any dishonest means of getting money. Almost all the robbers who infest the roads on the coast of Peru are free negroes. Dishonesty seems to be a part of their very nature; and moreover, all their tastes and inclinations are coarse and sensual . . . My opinion is, that the negroes, in respect to capability for mental improvement, are far behind the Europeans, and that, considered in the aggregate, they will not, even with the advantages of careful education, attain a very high degree of cultivation . . .

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The Mulattos now study theology; for, since the establishment of independence, the Indian law, which prohibited any person of mixed blood from entering the ecclesiastical state, is no longer observed. Many have devoted themselves to medicine; and most of the physicians in Lima are Mulattos; but they are remarkable only for their ignorance, as they receive neither theoretical nor clinical instruction. Nevertheless, they enjoy the full confidence of the public, who rank the ignorant native far above the educated foreigner.

Taken from Johann Jakob von Tschudi, *Travels in Peru during the Years 1838–1842: On the Coast, in the Sierra, across the Cordilleras and the Andes, into the Primeval Forests*, trans. Thomasina Ross (New York: George P. Putnam, 1852), 64–65, 75, 79–83.

SOR JUANA INÉS DE LA CRUZ (1651–1695)
LETTER TO SOR FILOTEA (1691)

I do not study in order to write, nor far less in order to teach (which would be boundless arrogance in me), but simply to see whether by studying I may become less ignorant. This is my answer, and these are my feelings . . .

To go on with the narration of this inclination of mine, of which I wish to give you a full account: I declare I was not yet three years old when my mother sent off one of my sisters, older than I, to learn to read in one of those girls' schools that they call *Amigas*. Affection and mischief carried me after her; and when I saw that they were giving her lessons, I so caught fire with the desire to learn that, deceiving the teacher (or so I thought), I told her that my mother wanted her to teach me also. She did not believe this, for it was not to be believed; but to humor my whim she gave me lessons. I continued to go and she continued to teach me, though no longer in make-believe, for the experience undeceived her. I learned to read in such a short time that I already knew how by the time my mother heard of it.

Later, when I was six or seven years old and already knew how to read and write, along with all the other skills like embroidery and sewing that women learn, I heard that in Mexico City there were a university and schools where they studied the sciences. As soon as I heard this, I began to pester my mother with insistent and annoying pleas, begging her to dress me in men's clothes and send me to the capital, to the home of some relatives she had there, so that I could enter the university and study. She refused, and was right in doing so; but I quenched my desire by reading a great variety of books that belonged to my grandfather, and neither punishments nor scoldings could prevent me. And so when I did go to Mexico City, people marveled not so much at my intelligence as at my memory and the facts I knew at an age when it seemed I had scarcely had time to learn to speak.

I began to study Latin, in which I believe I took fewer than twenty lessons. And my interest was so intense, that although in women (and especially in the very bloom of youth) the natural adornment of the hair is so esteemed, I would cut off four to six fingerlengths of my hair, measuring how long it had been before. And I made myself a rule that if by the time it had grown back to the same length I did not know such and such a thing that I intended to study, then I would cut my hair off again to punish my dull-wittedness. And so my hair grew, but I did not yet know what I had resolved to learn, for it grew quickly and I learned slowly. Then I cut my hair right off to punish my dull-wittedness, for I did not think it reasonable that hair should cover a head that was so bare of facts—the more desirable adornment. I took the veil because, although I knew I would find in religious life many things that would be quite opposed to my character (I speak of accessory rather than essential matters), it would, given my absolute unwillingness to enter into marriage, be the least unfitting and most decent state I could choose, with regard to the assurance I desired of my salvation. For before this first concern (which is, at the last, the most important), all the impertinent little follies of my character gave way and bowed to the yoke. These were wanting to live alone and not wanting to have either obligations that would disturb my freedom to study or the noise of a community that would interrupt the tranquil silence of my books.

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Well, and what, then, shall I tell you, my Lady, of the secrets of nature that I have learned while cooking? I observe that an egg becomes solid and cooks in butter or oil, and on the contrary that it dissolves in sugar syrup. . . . I shall not weary you with such inanities, which I relate simply to give you a full account of my nature, and I believe this will make you laugh. But in truth, my Lady, what can we women know, save philosophies of the kitchen? It was well put by Lupercio Leonardo that one can philosophize quite well while preparing supper. I often say, when I make these little observations, “Had Aristotle cooked, he would have written a great deal more.”

Taken from “Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz’s Letter to Sor Filotea,” in *Colonial Latin America: A Documentary History*, eds. Kenneth Mills, William B. Taylor, and Sandra Lauderdale Graham (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2002), 209–210, 212.