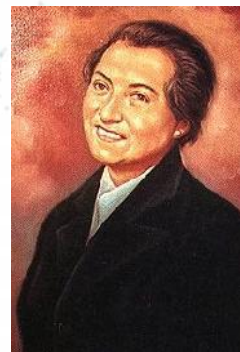


Women on Latin American Notes



Miguel Chirinos

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In some Latin American countries we can find notable women who have had important roles in their histories. Here are some biographies that I would like to share with you of women who were devout religious, illustrious patriots and famous writers and educators.

RELIGIOUS WOMEN

In Mexico **Sister Juana Ines de la Cruz** (1651-1695), christened Juana de Asbaje y Ramirez in 1684, was born in Nepantla, close to Mexico City. She was the illegitimate child of a Basque captain and a Creole woman, the youngest of three sisters. Proving herself a precocious student, she was made a lady-in-waiting to the viceroy's wife.

She left the court in 1667, when she was not yet nineteen, to enter the Convent of San Jose de las Carmelitas. Due to the hard life in this institution, she decided to come back to court.

In 1669 she entered another convent called San Geronimo, which is said to have had a library of 4000 volumes, which was probably an exaggeration since that would have made it the largest private library in the New World.

In Madrid in 1689 she published her first volume of poetry and, in 1692, her second. Through her poetry Sister Juana openly criticized

the Spanish-Mexican cult of machismo. Juana became the most important literary woman of that time.

She died in an epidemic in 1695, because she was taking care of poor people and her sisters in the convent.

Her portrait appears on the 1000-peso note of 1978 and the 200 new pesos of 1992.

Saint Rose of Lima, formerly Rosa Flores D'Olivea, a woman who had Inca blood in her veins, was born on April 20, 1586. The infant, one of ten children born to Spanish parents, Gaspar de Flores and Maria D'Olivea, was baptized Isabel.

Several weeks later the weak and tiny infant was carried to the nearby church of San Sebastian and was baptized Isabel by the priest, Don Antonio Polanco. Later, when she was confirmed by Archbishop Toribio of Lima, the name Isabel had been replaced by Rose and this was the name now bestowed on her.

Noted for her beauty, she resisted her parents' efforts to have her marry and practiced great austerities, taking St. Catherine of Siena as her model from her childhood days. She joined the Third Order of St. Dominic, donned the habit, and took the vow of perpetual virginity.

For many years Rose lived virtually as a recluse. Naturally her

health was affected, but the physical disorders which resulted from this regime - stomach ailments, asthma, rheumatism and fever - were suffered uncomplainingly.

Finally, Rose began to tell of visions, revelations, visitations and voices. People deplored her penitential practices more than ever. She endured their disapproval and grew in spiritual fortitude.

Rose was not wholly detached from what was happening around her and her awareness of the suffering of others often led her to protest against some of the practices of the Spanish overlords. Sometimes she brought sick and hungry persons into her home so that she might better care for them.

In ill health, she accepted the offer of a government official, Don Gonzalo de Massa, and his wife to take care of her and spent the last three years of her life in their home in Lima. This remarkable woman died on August 25, 1617, at the age of 31.

Pope Clement canonized her in 1671 and she became the first saint of the New World. She is patroness of Spanish-American countries and her help is enlisted in building churches, hospitals and schools around the world. She appears on the note of 200 new soles 1995.

PATRIOTS AND HEROINES

Policarpa Salavarrieta (1790-1817) was born in Guaduas, Cundinamarca, Colombia and she came to Santa Fe de Bogota to live, working in the houses of Spanish royalist women in this city.

She was a Colombian spy, passing on information she heard to the rebels. She was discovered and captured by Juan Samano's forces and this cruel ruler condemned her



Colombia
P-413
2 Pesos Oro
1972-1977
Policarpa
Salavarrieta at left.



Mexico
P-62
5 pesos
1969-1972
Josefa Ortiz De
Dominguez at right

place in their country's history.

Dona Josefa appears on the 5-pesos note of 1972.

FAMOUS POETS AND EDUCATORS

Gabriella Mistral (1889-1957), whose real name was Lucila Godoy Alcayaga, was a Chilean poet. She was born in Vicuña, northern Chile and brought up by her mother, a school teacher. She studied education, child welfare and labor problems and in 1904 began teaching in rural and secondary schools. In 1912 she became director of Liceo de los Andes, Punta Arenas, in southern Chile and soon attracted notice with her poems "Sonetos de la Muerte" (1914).

In 1922 her collection "Desolacion" was published and she was sent on a government mission to Mexico to study educational and library systems. She was honored on her return in 1924 for her outstanding cultural work. In that year she also published "Ternura."

In 1925 she began a new career as a diplomat as the Chilean delegate to the United Nations, acting as head of the Cultural Committee and of the Committee of the Institute of International Intellectual Cooperation in Paris (1926-1939).

At the same time she was a Chilean consul in Madrid (1934) and, after being made a unique "Life Consul," chose posts in Lisbon, Nice, Rio and Los Angeles. In 1944 she was diagnosed as diabetic and moved to the USA for her health. She served there as a delegate to the United Nations.

After a long break she returned to poetry in 1938, publishing "Tala and Lagar" (1954).

She also wrote novels on Chilean

to death along with seven companions, including her lover, Alejo Sabarain, in Casanare.

She was also known as "La Pola." When she climbed up the scaffold wearing a blue dress and Cuban hat she said these words in the public square: "Vile soldiers! Return the guns against the enemies of our country. Indolent people! Different would be our luck if you knew the price of freedom. See, even though I'm a young woman, I still have courage to suffer death and one thousand deaths more. Don't forget my example."

After this, Policarpa was executed and became a legendary heroine of patriots' resistance. There are bronze statues in Bogota and Guaduas in honor of her, with the following legend: "Laid down her life for her country."

Colombian women had a distinguished participation in the independence war. Pola was one of 50 women republican agents executed during the rebellion.

Her portrait appears on the notes of 2 pesos 1972 and 10,000 pesos 1995.

Josefa Ortiz de Dominguez, was born on March 19, 1771, daughter of Capt. Juan Ortiz and Manuela Giron. After she became orphaned in 1789, she entered "Real Colegio San Ignacio de Loyola," a place better known as "Colegio de las

Vizcainas."

In 1793 she married a royal official, Don Miguel Dominguez, who was a notable lawyer in Queretaro City. In 1802 he became the Corregidor (ruler) of this city.

They were a couple enthusiastic for justice and defended Indian peoples against abuses. The Viceroy, Don Jose de Iturrigaray, received complaints about this and Corregidor Dominguez was suspended from his position and moved to Mexico City in 1808.

They organized some meetings with lawyers, military and business men which were known as "La Conjuracion de Queretaro." Dona Josefa conspired with and protected revolutionaries and is best known for saving Father Hidalgo from capture.

On September 16, 1810, she sent a message to the leader of the revolution and started the independence of Mexico.

She was arrested and got freedom in 1817. Dona Josefa later suffered from pleurisy and died on March 2, 1829.

At the turn of the century in Mexico, two ideologies converged to give impetus to the Mexican Revolution. Those forces were socialism and feminism, and while the former would not endure, the latter would impel Mexican women to create for themselves a unique and lasting



Nicaragua
P-124
30 cordobas
D. 1972
Rafaella Herrera
Igniting Cannon at
right

life and in 1945 was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Haunted by personal grief, from the suicide of her first love in 1909 to that of her nephew, who was also her adopted son, her poetry celebrated deep private emotions, yet she managed to become a symbol of the nationalist aspirations of her country.

Banco Central de Chile issued a 50-peso note with the portrait of Gabriela Mistral from 1981 up to date in honor of this notable South American poet.

Juana de Ibarbourou, initially Juana Fernandez Morales, was born in 1895 in Melo, Uruguay on the Atlantic coast of South America, of a Galician father, who inherited the love for poetry, and a Uruguayan mother. She was educated at a convent. At the age of 20 she married Capt. Lucas Ibarbourou, adopting this last name from France. They had only one son in their marriage. They lived in several places in Uruguay because of her husband's military duties and in 1918 they went to live in Montevideo.

In 1919 she published her first book of nature lyrics, "Las Lenguas de Diamantes," which was followed by the prose poem "El Cantaro fresco" (1920); "Raiz Salvaje" (1922) and "La Rosa de los Vientos" (1930). By 1929 she had become so popular

that she was given the title "Juana de America." Her husband died in January 1942 and in 1947 she became a member of Academia Nacional de Letras in Uruguay.

In 1950 she became president of the Uruguayan Society of Authors. She also wrote books and plays for children, religious books and her Autobiographia (1957).

In 1995 a note of 1000 pesos Uruguayos was issued with her portrait as tribute to this famous poet.

Adela Zamudio (1854-1928) was born in La Paz, Bolivia, a landlocked country in west central South America. She was a writer, painter, director and teacher of the elementary secular school in Bolivia. In 1911 she founded the first school for misses and another for children.

In 1928 she was awarded recognition as a poet by the national government. She started very young in poetry under the pseudonym "Soledad" and she became a famous poetess among writers of the Romantic Period. She handled all rhetoric forms successfully. Her main topics were life, nature, feelings and philosophical preoccupations.

Her tales reflect the environment of her time and she denounced social and economic injustice with fineness and irony. In her compositions one finds affliction and

sadness which came from philosophical distress. She combatted a mediocre environment and sentimentality that writers used in the last century.

She bravely fought for social and intellectual emancipation of women without loss of her femininity. Her revolt was related to a high Christian sense, however she was resisted by ecclesiastic authorities until this provoked a national polemic where the important Bolivian writers were solidly with this illustrious teacher and poetess.

She was author of theater pieces and lyric lessons for children. Her principal works are "Ensayos Politicos" (1887), "Intimas," "Peregrinando" and "Rafagas" (1914).

Adela died in Cochabamba in 1928 and her portrait appears on the note of 5 bolivianos from 1986 to date.

Other notable women in Latin America include Manuela Saenz (Ecuador), Eva Peron (Argentina), Rafaella Herrera (Nicaragua), Tania La Guerrillera (Cuba/Argentina), Rigoberta Menchu (Guatemala), Cecilia Meireles (Brazil); Emma Gamboa (Costa Rica), Antonia Santos (Colombia) and Luisa Caceres de Arismendi (Venezuela), whose lives serve as references when we study Latin American history.

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