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The Effects of Neocolonialism on Indigenous Peruvians

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Bridgewater State University

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In this world, there exist histories that do not make it into textbooks or school curriculums. There are events that are born in the shadows of suppression, with victims stifled so much so that they have no means of telling their stories. Historical happenings do not always have the privilege of being accurately recorded where the pen meets the paper. Instead, these instances linger in the air, passed on from one generation to the next by storytelling and song, aging into myth. Colonization, or the act of settling into a foreign land and establishing dominance over the natives, has history extending as far back as ancient Greece, and now has spread like a disease to the far corners of the globe (Veracini 5). From New Zealand to Mexico, and many places in between, groups of native people have faced discrimination and erasure at the hands of colonists. Those who control history and how these occurrences are chronicled understand their immense power in this world, and continue to perpetuate instances of supremacy on a global scale. With the rise of modern technology, more and more of the horrors of neocolonialism (or modern-day colonialism) are being brought forth, into the sunlight, abuse and all.

Decades and decades of forced silence and exploitation have seriously altered the dynamics of these vulnerable communities, especially those in Peru. From the lush Amazonian basin to the rocky peaks of the Andes, indigenous peoples of Peru have found themselves the victims of oppression since the arrival of Spanish conquistadors in 1532. The introduction of European language, currency, and culture has since severely altered the lives of the native people. The destruction of the Inca Empire was seen as the first major victory for the Spanish conquistadors in South America (Andrian 3). Of course, those whose ancestors had settled in the region centuries before saw no similar triumph or success. They were beaten, raped, and killed for their land and resources. After multiple attempts at rebellion, Peru ultimately gained its independence from Spain in 1821, nearly three hundred years after initial contact with the Spanish. Despite its liberation,

Spanish culture had already seeped into the depths of mainstream society in urban Peru, and colonization efforts were perpetuated by other Peruvians themselves. Rural communities have simultaneously been the most and least affected by the influx of Spanish power in their country. Geologically, they find themselves so far removed from Spanish culture, and in many cases, rural communities do not even speak or understand the Spanish language. However, seeing as they are the most vulnerable of all Peruvian populations, they have been the most attacked in the centuries following European arrival. They had their people exploited and their sufferings ignored on the national level, as the Peruvian government often expresses little interest in acknowledging them as citizens. In these already-at-risk communities, this leaves indigenous women to be among the least protected groups of people in the Peruvian state. All of these sufferings are caused by the lingering effects of colonialism as well as modern attempts to take advantage of these susceptible societies. The indigenous communities of Peru are the most vehemently oppressed survivors of colonialism and neocolonialism, as their culture has been irreparably damaged by Spanish influence and modern progression efforts made by government officials who refuse recognize native people as citizens.

Indigenous people have been negatively racialized since Spanish colonization, and the perpetuation of these ideals preserves colonialism itself. Even into the twenty first century, the divide between indigenous Peruvians and Spanish-Peruvians is thick and heavy with the diseased legacies of colonialism that refuse to die out of the general public. In the introduction to the book, *The Colonial Divide in Peruvian Narrative: Social Conflict and Transculturation*, written by Misha Kokotovic and published in 2005, modern-day Peru is described as “a culturally heterogeneous society built on the colonial divide between indigenous Andeans and their Spanish conquerors” (Kokotovic 1). Essentially, Peruvians learned how to be racist from the Spanish forces

that oppressed them so heavily for so many years. By adopting Spanish culture, language, and spouses, Peruvians often found increased levels of prosperity in life because of the racial biases that plagued the native populations. This led to a shift by indigenous groups away from the cultures of their ancestors for purely social gain, and a sharp increase in discriminatory behavior by those with familial roots in the land. In their refusal to identify as indigenous, and their active participation in the persecution of those who did, new racial identities were created, the boundaries between native and Spanish became further blurred, as layers of multi-racial generations were increasingly added, and the development of mestizo cultures flourished.

Because of the complexities regarding the overall topic of race, the concept of a tangible ethnicity becomes hard to grasp, especially for citizens in countries with immense ethnic blending, such as Peru. To be indigenous means to be in touch with the culture of the society that existed in a particular space before colonization and to maintain an identity individual from that of the mainstream (de la Cadena 4). However, as concrete as the definition may sound on paper, the term becomes more complicated when applied non-theoretically. The country of Peru was forced to become totally inundated with Spanish culture; this was not a choice. Refusal to adopt Spanish ideologies, ranging from religion to language, and everything in between, had the potential to lead to death. In order to save themselves and their families, many adopted Catholicism and abandoned the traditions taught to them by their ancestors. Still, there were some that only pretended, while ancient traditions lived in the shadows. In these cases, Inca culture persisted in the opaque depths of society when the colonizers had their eyes shifted. However, despite maintaining a strong relationship with their ancestral customs, mainstream culture has the incredible ability to permeate adobe walls and cloth curtains. Elements of Spanish culture are often found in communities that claim themselves to be indigenous even today. Crosses stand tall over vast fields where village

leaders believe they protect the harvest, and communal buildings are referred to as ‘chapels.’ Holidays such as Palm Sunday are observed, though all of these Christian aspects are adapted to their societies. Simultaneously, these people also keep their native traditions intact. They sacrifice guinea pigs, hold annual ceremonies to ensure a plentiful harvest as well as maintain healthy relationships with the communities and natural life that surround them (“Sallqa Mama: Natural Communities in the Andean Highlands”).

In these instances, populations who adopt Spanish customs can still maintain a very concrete relationship with the traditions that existed years before their ancestors had been colonized, and they call themselves indigenous all the while. This complex redefinition of an identity has made it increasingly difficult to get political recognition or assistance. The consistent evolution and adaptations of these communities, often made for the sake of survival itself, have served to delegitimize their status as indigenous on the political level. Indigenous Peruvians did not receive acknowledgement in the national constitution until their first self-proclaimed native president Alejandro Toledo made amendments in 2001, nearly two hundred years after they had received their independence from the Spanish. Indigenous peoples were actively persecuted upon the arrival of the Spanish, thus forcing them into the outskirts, literally the only physical place that allowed for native traditions to prosper. Because of this active persecution and the intensely negative stigma associated with being indigenous, many people did not even want to classify themselves in this manner. In the introduction to the book, *Indigenous Mestizos: The Politics of Race and Culture in Cuzco, Peru, 1919-1991*, written by Marisol de la Cadena and published in 2000, it mentions that “cultures are vessels” that work to “[legitimize]—and naturalize—hierarchies among human groups.” It goes on to detail how explicitly overt racism is in Peruvian society: “... the discriminatory practices that derive from a belief in the unquestionable intellect

and moral superiority of one group of Peruvians over the rest” make up a majority of the primary causes that lead to social and racial discrimination in Peru (de la Cadena 4). Because the concept of race exists on a different plane in Peru, racism often exists without a race to assign it to, and instead, is directed at those who live indigenous lifestyles.

Those who defy assimilation and maintain a strong connection with their heritage in the face of the Spanish establishment threaten the supremacy of the colonization system on the whole. Their absolute refusal to integrate, as well as their cultivation of their ancestral values, has been a significant testament to their strength in the face of their oppressors. In the early days of Spanish colonization, indigenous people would often run from enslavement and forced labor that took so many lives, finding refuge in the highland communities. Suicide was the result for many who were eventually captured (Andrien). Their absolute rejection of integration, in life and in death, established their ability to imperil the structure that took so many other indigenous lives. In the effort to reassert complete power over the people that blatantly negated the authority of European rule, the Spanish built the racial hierarchy, placing indigenous men (and just below them, indigenous women) on the very bottom. They were not only discriminated against, but ignored. These isolation methods regarding the relationships between indigenous communities and those deemed “superior” to them are simply an extension of colonization practices. To imagine indigenous identity as a negative racial category (the worst, as far as the Spanish were concerned) is to rely on the fundamentally biased ideologies enforced by the Spanish in their attempt to claim power over the land and the people they stole it from. And yet, these notions surrounding race and the indigenous identity persist in Peruvian society today.

Indigenous communities, when compared to other Peruvian ethnic groups, face the most discrimination for their refusal to assimilate. Around 80% of Peruvians identify as indigenous, or

claim indigenous heritage (“Peru” [*Minority Rights Group*]). However, these numbers are tricky. Peruvians living in metropolitan centers with parents who grew up in the rural sector can identify as indigenous, but do not necessarily face the types of discriminations their ancestors did. Citizens who migrate from Japan, China, and even African slaves receive more governmental assistance than indigenous communities in the highlands as well as the Amazon. This is because, when immigrants arrive in Peru (as with most other immigrants anywhere in the world), they typically flock to the urban regions, or the surrounding areas. Slaves, as well, occupied the same spaces as their Spanish masters, all centrally located in cities. This meant that, when they were assimilated (or freed), their jobs were more likely to contribute to the national economy. Therefore, they are seen as more valuable to the nation. Indigenous communities, however, find themselves to be self-subsisting. They make their own clothes and grow their own food, and do not fund the capitalist system imposed after Spanish arrival.

With 80% of citizen claiming to be indigenous, one might expect to find indigenous representation at every corner. However, this is not the case. The statistical numbers regarding the number of indigenous people in the government, the media, and higher education do not exist. This is either because the number is staggeringly low and would be too discouragingly small to publish, or that researchers do not care enough to do investigation on indigenous Peruvian life. Though it can be assumed there are professionals in these fields who can claim indigenous heritage, it is very likely they’ve abandoned their indigenous traditions in order to advance themselves in the modern-day society. While 80% of nation-wide citizens claim indigenous heritage, it is estimated that only 26% of Peruvian people are actually considered indigenous in the contemporary era (“Perú: Perfil Sociodemográfico”). Beginning after the Second World War, immigration from rural regions to the cities in pursuit of economic opportunities became very

common for those living in the highlands. After the dissolution of the neo-plantation system in the 1960's, which still saw haciendas profiting off of indigenous labor, the natives to the land continued to farm it, but the communities received much less monetarily. The government even tried to push Peruvians into the city by promising better healthcare and education. In this way, indigenous Peruvians were sucked into a vacuum of promise, and were instead swallowed by capitalism. Those who moved to the cities very rarely reverted back to their old ways of life in highland farms. This great migration, taking place between the 1940's and the 1990's, worked to further increase the inequalities between the urban and rural areas of the country. More emphasis was put on city life and contributions to both the national and global economy, and less consideration was given to the communities who, even five hundred years after Spanish arrival, are actively refusing to assimilate to a European system of culture.

In the modern-day dynamics of Peru, indigenous populations are geographically disconnected from their non-indigenous counterparts as a result of multiple historic events. As of 2017, 98% of Peru's indigenous populations exist in either the rural Andean mountains or the dense jungles of the Peruvian Amazon ("Perú: Perfil Sociodemográfico"). The Spanish spent most of their time and resources creating urban epicenters, such as Lima, Arequipa, and Trujillo, which made it incredibly easy for those already living in those metropolitan areas to assimilate. These are the areas where Spanish culture was enforced the harshest, making it more difficult to remain in contact with traditional customs. In addition to making forced (as well as desired) assimilation smoother, the cities were where Spanish soldiers resided, thus making mating between ethnic groups much more rampant as opposed to the more isolated regions of the nation. The Spanish never ventured far from the neo-European cities they recreated on Peruvian land, meaning they did not have children with indigenous people living in rural areas. The number one cause of death

for the Inca and all other native groups in the Americas after the arrival of Europeans were diseases brought by the Spanish (Orlow). These diseases hit those living in the cities the harshest, and slowly spread to the outlying regions. The slow spread meant it was easier for those living outside city parameters to build up an immunity to the diseases, while those in the metropolises died immediately. Because it is nearly impossible to translate the information kept on the quipus of the Inca, it is difficult for historians to know for sure how many lives were lost. Estimated numbers of indigenous Peruvians killed as a result of the Spanish arrival range from 60% to as high as 90% (Lovell). Most of these deaths occurred in Spanish-built cities, and the majority were children, meaning almost an entire generation was wiped out of existence. Their descendants, however, have persisted in the face of the evil persecution of both man and disease that has attacked them, and their cultures, though damaged, still exist today.

31% of Peruvians, three out of every ten, live a classifiable indigenous lifestyle. This number does not even take into consideration the incredible number of uncontacted tribes that live in the Peruvian Amazon. Peru ranks third in the world for the estimated number of uncontacted people living in the depths of the jungle (“Uncontacted Indians of Peru”). Therefore, these people cannot even contribute to a census, and perhaps they are all the better because of it. Existing without contact with the Spanish means that none of the European ideals have been imposed on these communities. Despite not receiving help or recognition from the government, they live in the closest thing to an anarchical society, the only laws being those that they created. They are living in the most pure form of indigenism possible. Free of the restraints of national currency and capitalism, these communities are liberated in their existence to thrive however they desire. However, just because they haven’t been contacted does not mean they cannot be discriminated against. In citations for reasoning behind expanding environmentally dangerous companies in the

Amazon, government officials will claim that they are doing these tribes favors by supplying jobs to 'poor' regions. The word poor, of course, only relates to their ability to turn profits. Their richness is not measured in their cultural wealth, and instead by how much money they can provide for the government. Unfortunately, this is not unique to the Amazon. As mentioned before, many communities who choose not to contribute to the national economy face discrimination from administrative forces for their refusal to adopt capitalist ideologies.

These communities are, in fact, commonly referred to as 'peasant' communities by government bureaucrats, indicating the lack of both financial wealth and respect they receive from their representatives. The use of the word peasant as synonymous with the word indigenous demonstrates how the vernacular of the government further disadvantages its own people. This term classifies these people based on the monetary value of their communities. This completely disregards their cultural and spiritual prosperity; they are only judged based upon the amount of fiscal growth they contribute to their country. They are seen as the lowest rung on the totem pole, when in fact the land that every other group decided to come to (or was brought to) was theirs all along. These people have had their traditions and cultures ripped out from under their feet, their tongues sliced from their mouths for their refusal to speak the language of those who killed the community of their families years before them. Despite their absolute strength and resilience in the face of oppression, they are still regarded as the lowest and weakest.

Not only have they faced the greatest amount of persecution since the arrival of the Spanish, but additionally, their struggles have not been recognized by the administration of the country. In 2009, the Peruvian government issued an apology to those of African descent for the "abuse, exclusion and discrimination perpetrated against them since the colonial era until the present" ("Peru Apologises for Abuse of African-Origin Citizens"). This apology was made with the hopes

of “true integration of all Peru’s multicultural population.” However, no such apology has been issued to indigenous populations. Despite the fact that Afro-Peruvians make up an estimated 10% of the population, as well as the fact that their suffering in Peru began decades after that of the indigenous people, the government issued an apology to the group of discriminated against citizens because of their ability to add to the national economy (“Peru Apologises for Abuse of African-Origin Citizens”). The capitalist system indoctrinated by Spanish authority views its people as pawns for money, and when one group does not feed into the scheme, they are discriminated against outright. Because they don’t contribute, they are not under the umbrella of “all Peru’s multicultural populations” because they are not truly a population worthy of recognition in the eyes of the government. On the same note, those who claim their indigenous identity while contributing to the national economy do not face the hardships of those in ‘peasant’ communities.

Those who remain on the land that their ancestors inhabited (such as the rural highlands, or in the Amazon basin) without migrating to the cities are far more disadvantaged than those who have made the relocation while still claiming their heritage. Many villages don’t have schools in accessible distances, and those schools are often deprived of the resources available to children in urban educational environments. It is difficult to make education universal in a country that actively discriminates against the estimated 20% of the population cannot speak Spanish (“Perú: Perfil Sociodemográfico”). Major textbook production companies often teach European Spanish, which only adds an increased layer of difficulty for those attempting to learn. With no knowledge of the dominant language and little ability to access education, this often leaves indigenous individuals trapped, more or less. They do not have the income to travel as traditional native earnings may come from farming potatoes, raising guinea pigs, and other less respected sectors of training that do not garner substantial revenue. Additionally, the government does not give

indigenous communities the resources necessary to maintain an indigenous identity while enjoying the benefits of living comfortably in a capitalist society. In the book, *The Politics of Ethnicity: Indigenous Peoples in Latin American States*, edited by David Maybury-Lewis and published in 2002, it states that “poverty tends to disproportionately affect indigenous peoples, especially in rural zones ... where malnutrition and illiteracy, as well as increased health and environmental risks, accompany limited availability of basic social services” (Maybury-Lewis 200). Because they do not contribute in taxes (as entire communities find themselves relatively impoverished), they do not receive adequate support from the government to revive crucial infrastructure in these places. While school is mandatory until a certain age, qualities of schools vary, from the resources to those teaching the classrooms. In recent years, small steps toward total equity have been made, but do not come near close enough to undo the centuries of abuse these people have faced.

Indigenous culture is, at the political level, not regarded with the same respects as urban culture, as can be seen through their erasure and removal from recognition. Despite their independent identity apart from that of mainstream Peruvians, those living in native, rural communities are still “firmly tied to, and greatly affected by, national and international political and economic forces” (Maybury-Lewis 242). Indigenous people have historically had their voices and interests set aside on the political level. On the official Peruvian flag, there are natural elements present, such as the vicuna (the national animal) and cinchona tree (an important element of native fauna), placed on blue and white backgrounds, respectively. However, the largest element on the Coat of Arms is the cornucopia overflowing with coins. This component of the flag represents the wealth gained from the natural resources of the country. Peru’s main exports include natural metals (such as gold and silver), timber (found in the Amazon), and fish (both from the Pacific Coast and Amazon River). Yet nearly all of this wealth was gained at the expense of many indigenous people

who were forced to work in slave like conditions while reaping very little of the benefits. After executing the final Sapa Inca (or emperor of the Inca Empire), the Spanish began taking “Indian” slaves to do excavations in the mines (“Pieces of Eight”). Of the 58,000 workers they had, less than 10% of them were actually paid, and an even smaller percentage ever made it home to their families alive (“Pieces of Eight”). The conditions in the mines (in addition to being at high altitude) often led to pneumonia and mercury poisoning. So many lives were lost that the Spanish Viceroyalty began requesting shipments of African slaves to keep up the labor. When they noticed that their animals were also dying very quickly due to the conditions, they replaced animal labor with slave labor (Andrien). It did not matter where the slaves were from; only that they were brown people who could be forced to sacrifice their lives for a coin with an artificial value.

The presence of the cornucopia of coins with the bloody red backdrop is ironically symbolic of the innocent indigenous lives lost for the sake of economic growth. While Peru does indeed have a plethora of viable natural resources, they were often garnered without the consideration or consent of those who worked so hard for the initial advancement of the Empire. The wealth of the country has been built upon the backs of slaves, both domestic and foreign, but mostly indigenous. Their lungs were inundated with mercury, throats crushed by tumbling rocks, stories all lost in translation, or modified to be less ugly. And yet, the reality is that the cornucopia may represent progress for Spanish Peruvians, who were able to use the labor of others to support their country, but for the indigenous population, it is a cruel reminder that their unnecessary labor and senseless deaths will continue to be celebrated by the neo-colonial state.

In the 1990’s, Peru experienced a very dramatic military dictatorship. In his time as president, Alberto Fujimori decided to rewrite the laws of the land. While the United States has had the same Constitution since the foundation of the country in 1776, Peru’s Constitution is

relatively new, having been created in 1993, just a quarter of a century ago. In later amendments to the Constitution, indigenous groups are granted a variety of rights. For example, Article 191 states that the government elected representation for a community must mirror the demographics of the minorities of that same community. For example, if a region is 70% indigenous the elected government officials for that region must also be 70% indigenous to provide an adequate representation of that community. They also have minimum numerical requirements for female officials to ensure that women have the propensity to be elected as well. Article 48 also states that when an individual is accused of a crime, they have a right to a trial in their native language, Spanish or otherwise. Official languages vary from region to region, depending on which language is the most popular in any given place. Additionally, Article 89 states that native communities should be treated like corporations, and they have legal rights to their natural homes. The only time the State is allowed to claim legal rights over indigenous land is in the case of abandonment (where it will be sold). Also, Article 149 declares that rural leaders and indigenous superiors on native land have the right to enforce their own specialized sets of laws so long as they abide by the universal laws of the nation of Peru, as well as the Justices of Peace and other divisions of the Judicial branch of government. On paper, indigenous people have not been left out of the Constitution of the country that houses them.

While indigenous Peruvians have rights, according to amendments made to their constitution, they are consistently witnessing infringements made to these civil liberties. According to the New World Bank Organization, “Prior consultation is an internationally recognized right established in ILO Convention 169 and ratified by 15 Latin American countries, including Peru, where it has been a law since 2011” (“Giving Indigenous Peoples a Greater Voice”). This legal agreement is, theoretically, a very effective tool in pacifying the dialogues

between legal systems and indigenous communities. This mechanism for inclusion is designed to allow the interests of those who may have their land, lifestyles, or cultures altered by any new progressions to be voiced successfully. However, Peru has a very long history of putting the prospects of profit before the prosperity of its people. The Peruvian newspaper *Andean Air Mail and Peruvian Times* quoted its then-president, Alan Garcia, in claims that indigenous people create impediments in the face of nationwide progress. He claimed that farmers and fishermen who work but do not contribute to the economic growth of Peru as well as indigenous communities who own land but do not build, cultivate, or profit from the land all add to the lack of financial development in the then-recent years, as these quotes were taken from 2007. Garcia claims that renovations in the Amazon would bring jobs and wealth to some of the “poorest” communities in the country. In this statement, he claims that the remainder of the rainforest should be left untouched, but that the Peruvian government should have the rights to the parts of the jungle it destroyed down to the soil, as if the people lost their connection to their land after the government destroyed it (“President Alan Garcia’s Policy Doctrine: The Dog in the Manger Syndrome”). Rhetoric such as this, when the constitution explicitly states that native communities should be respected as corporate entities with legal rights to their natural homes, is so damaging, especially when these people have had so much stolen from them historically. When a president voices these motives—that they must be profiting off of land, even if it means stealing it away from those who legally own it—the culture around this president listens and learns, and this type of speech becomes acceptable. Though the rights of indigenous people exist on paper, their privileges are consistently being threatened, even by the very man elected to protect his people.

The deceptive part of Garcia’s quote is that he fails to mention the massive amount of relocation already faced by many indigenous Amazonian tribes. In 2010, three years after his

speech, an estimated 50% of native people in the Amazon were no longer living on the lands of their ancestors, “suggesting that Indians were still having serious problems holding on to their territories” (Bodley 106). This does not even take into account the massive amount of Amazonian people who do not participate in the census. Of course, the bombast and mindset of the president has much to do with this. Alan Garcia was only president until 2011, and just one year after his presidency, Amazonian people began to see the tides shifting in their favor. In 2012, Amazonian tribes held rights to nearly one fourth of the land in the Peruvian rainforest: “This was an enormous change in land policies” (Bodley 107). When the president of a nation uses threatening and borderline hateful vernacular, it leads to very dangerous scenarios for the targets, as can be seen by the rights held by indigenous people both during and after Garcia’s presidency. When power is shifted away from those with neocolonial mindsets who desire steps towards equality and rights for all people, true progress towards a universal humanitarian approach toward equity can be obtained.

Garcia’s citation for necessitated revocation of indigenous land in the name of his version “progress” is not unique; it is actually the basis for the entire colonial system on the whole. In the modern day, with extreme capitalist forces across the globe, the definition of progress can be understood as the attempt to compete with these worldwide powerhouses. In 2006, the revenue gained from Peruvian oil was relatively small compared to other countries across the planet (“President Alan Garcia’s Policy Doctrine: The Dog in the Manger Syndrome”). However, the extraction of oil helped to significantly accelerate Peru’s per-capita economic growth as well as assisted the concentrated number of corporations who received the majority of the wealth. As one may imagine, this had very harmful effects on the indigenous people whose homelands were being used as oil mines to fuel capitalist profit while they received very little benefits. Their primary

food sources were contaminated, ritualistic birthplaces destroyed, and their people died all for the sake of modern progress. The word “progress” shouldn’t sit right on the tongue if it’s used to describe the inconsideration and exploitation of native people for the sake of funding corporations worldwide. Peru cannot compare itself with other national powerhouses until it develops an identity that falls outside of the traditional neocolonialist narrative. Until they do, they’ll continue to be a post-colonial nation unable to accept all of the people within its boundaries.

For communities in these vulnerable Peruvian regions, such as the Amazon and the Andean highlands, the Peruvian government has developed habits of giving the legally required bare minimum, and even threatening to take that away, as seen by Garcia’s earlier quote. This is most obvious in the disputes over rights to land, but can be seen in other sectors of Peruvian society as well. In the 1980’s, Peru faced an intense wave of terrorism and country-wide violence leading to an extreme economic crash. Before the 1990’s, standardized education had not been a requirement throughout the Peru, and therefore was not provided by the government. This was in part because many rural regions did not have schools nearby, as the previous governmental forces were not focused on developments of infrastructure. In this time, roads crumbled, terrorist organizations controlled rural villages, and the value of the dollar decreased by 1,772% at its peak (“Peru’s Inflation Put at 1,722%”). During these times, milk and bread were in short supply, and even in the city centers, lengthy lines formed outside of food banks to receive rations. Groceries were paid for with crates full of dollars, as their values had decreased so extremely. The schools that remained open in the 1980’s, even in the urban sector, were very often cancelled due to terrorist activity or government strikes. Despite the dead bodies of dogs hanging from lampposts in busy city streets, those in the rural communities had it much worse. Terrorist organizations, such as the *Sendero Luminoso* (inspired by the ideologies of communism), would often garner significant popularity

in the rural regions that the government did not pay as much mind to. In these communities that lacked schooling and government protection, the *Sendero Luminoso* soldiers were often seen as knights in glimmering armor. In exchange for loyalty, the *Sendero Luminoso* would educate, protect, and provide for these highland villages. The education received by young children was, quite obviously, very biased to the belief systems of the *Sendero Luminoso* movement (Del Pino 179).

Despite the fact that they advertised assistance to the highland communities, the political and cultural ideologies of the *Sendero Luminoso* were extremely contradictory to that of the indigenous people. The alliances formed between the terrorist group and rural villages almost always ended in extreme acts of violence. All of the major recorded Peruvian massacres in the modern era take place between the years of 1983-1992, when the *Sendero Luminoso* and other breeds of terrorism were capable of reaching their peaks (Del Pino 179). These organizations deeply divided communities and their members, some of whom desired the protection of the terrorists, while others remained loyal to the official (albeit, painfully corrupt) Peruvian government. Indigenous communities turned on each other in their disunion, and this made taking advantage of these people all the more easy. These highland communities waged war on every possible side: with the *Sendero Luminoso*, with the Peruvian government, and with each other. The first major massacre was committed by the terrorist group as a retaliation against a village for cooperating with the Peruvian government, in which one-fifth of the deaths were children, targeted in their school. All of the later massacres were enacted by the Peruvian militia themselves, or the official death squad (*Grupo Colina*) that they had created. Again, schools were a major target for these attacks. Sometimes, entire villages were wiped out, making living and going to school in these highly indigenous regions extremely dangerous, and sometimes impossible. In citations for

their reasoning behind carrying out such brutal acts of violence towards peasant villages, the terrorist organizations and Peruvian militia claim they needed to “put [the communities] in check” (Guzman). While, of course, major accounts of death occurred on both the side of terrorist and Peruvian soldiers, the indigenous highland communities found themselves in the intense crosshairs of the Peruvian War on Terror. They had their vulnerabilities exploited by two militias that held an incredible amount of power over them due to the relative lack of education and governmental protection they received, compared to other places in Peru. In 2008, nearly thirty years after the massacres, the families of some of the victims were awarded nearly \$37 million in a settlement case after a former Peruvian officer illegally immigrated to the United States to avoid charges regarding his involvement in one of the massacres (“Telmo Ricardo Hurtado”). However, as beneficial as \$37 million may seem the use of a monetary value in the compensation for loss of human life and communal spirit demonstrates an incredibly neocolonial response to these tragedies. Human spirits cannot be bought back to life, and to issue an apology in the form of a dollar sign instead of actual progressive change further validates the deep-rooted colonial state embedded in the Peruvian government.

Because of the dramatic series of events that took place between the years of 1985-1992, many Peruvians elected to migrate out of the country they were born in to find safety in other parts of the globe. However, this did not apply to indigenous people. As Garcia stated, the most vulnerable regions of Peru are also “some of the poorest” (“President Alan Garcia’s Policy Doctrine: The Dog in the Manger Syndrome”). Though the definition of wealth is subjective, as these communities were rich in the cultural knowledge and indigenous heritage that has been lost and erased in the urban regions, they did not have the same level of financial support. Therefore, while so many other Peruvians were fortunate enough to be able to leave the country to flee the

dangers, those who did not have financial independence were trapped. Of course, the majority of these people were indigenous. This is just another example on the long list of how the capitalist-driven market of Peru further disadvantaged native people who did not contribute to the national economy: they could not afford to escape the terrors that reigned over their vulnerable homelands.

The fall of infrastructure, increase in terrorism, and risk to indigenous communities in the 1980's can be directly related back to Alan Garcia's presidency. Yes, the same Alan Garcia that was president in 2007. In Peru, presidential elections work in a similar fashion as the United States: a president holds the office for five years, and then can be reelected for a second term. Alan Garcia was president from 1985-1990, where he inherited a poor economy that he let spiral down the drain. It is no surprise that he was not reelected in 1990. However, in 2005, twenty years later, an entirely new generation of Peruvians were participating in elections. Teenagers in 2005 had not lived through the chaos that consumed Peru, and they had not reaped the benefits of later presidents; education reform was not complete until the late 1990's, after many of these children had been grandfathered into the useless system developed in the 1980's. Their uneducated majority assisted Garcia in taking the Peruvian office back in 2006. Alan Garcia cared so little about his country and the vulnerable populations within it, and yet his reelection was handed to him by some of the very people that were the most affected by his presidency in the 1980's due to their lack of education. The dangers of not teaching citizens is painfully clear: when students do not learn about hazardous political histories, they do not understand the severity of the consequences, and history becomes destined to repeat itself. This time was with the same exact man, twenty years apart.

Peace was (at least partially) restored by a refreshed government as the decades shifted into the 1990's. After the end of Garcia's first presidency, the country did indeed find itself making substantial strides towards a reestablishment of a developed social order, albeit through a military

dictatorship. The inflation rate necessitated a new form of currency, the *Nuevo Sol*, implemented in 1991. New roads and hospitals were built, Peruvians who moved abroad began returning to their country, and a new emphasis on education was created. In 1996, the Peruvian government made efforts to open a primary school in every recorded village across the country. While having a school and access to basic education in every community is a tremendous stride towards equality, it is more successful theoretically. Outlying regions still find their education systems at risk, even into the modern day. Peruvian youth are only required to complete six years of education, and that is all that is provided for them in their home villages (“Education in Peru”). The configurations of the buildings themselves range from schools with multiple buildings and large yards to small, one-roomed units where all ages are taught together, in the same space, depending on the size of the community that the education system supports. In areas with a very small student population, there is often only one teacher in charge of guiding up to forty students through their primary education.

Because these schools are government funded, all classes are taught in Spanish, with some bilingual exceptions. However, many communities are opposed to the obligatory learning of the language of their colonizers in the classroom. Of all of Peru’s indigenous populations, 85% of native individuals speak Quechua, the language of the Inca, amounting to a quarter of Peru’s entire population (“Perú: Perfil Sociodemográfico”). Initially, when the Spanish arrived in Peru, they learned the language in order to convert the natives to Catholicism, and even produced significant religious texts in Quechua. However, after a failed rebellion against Spanish authority in 1780, half a century before Peruvians received their independence, Quechua and other indigenous aspects of life (such as native religions) were strictly outlawed. An extremely negative stigma grew around the language for centuries to come. Even in 1975, when Quechua was declared an official language of Peru, the use of the language has declined so sharply that its primary existence has

been mainly secluded to the highland regions (“Perú: Perfil Sociodemográfico”). Historically, speaking Spanish has been the only way to advance in the class system in Peru. Though it seems counterproductive, this is the exact reason the opposition to its teachings has become so strong. The very language that was used to isolate, assimilate, and decimate the Inca Empire, the ancestors of these indigenous people, is now being forcibly taught to their children in the classroom. They also protest Spanish in their children’s academic environment as a way to object to the status quo of Spanish being the more professional language. In order to move upwards in the class system, a proficiency in the language must first be obtained. Those who reject Spanish simultaneously reject the European notion that assimilation is necessary for progression and respect. The obligation to receive an education in Spanish is seen as the imposition of the colonizer’s culture in a space dedicated to upholding native traditions.

Despite this, it is undeniable that the government has made recent efforts to make school in these “peasant” regions more accessible. However, the indigenous people of these societies often still struggle with the concept of an institutionalized education for a variety of reasons. These areas exhibit the highest rates of student absentness in the country, which contributes to their receiving very little in governmental funding or supplies. The less students that show up, the lower the quality of the education, and thus, an endless downward spiral of students and government alike neglecting the seriousness of these education issues ensues. Student absentness is also caused by the culture of these regions. Residing miles away from any urban district usually implies a reliance on indigenous traditions as a source of income, which are most often meager at best. This increases the chances that students in rural settings are either impoverished, and therefore do not have the clothes or other means to attend school, or are working with their parents attempting to stay out of poverty, thus greatly inhibiting their ability to set aside time for the classroom. Parents

with these lifestyles in which education has no tangible value are less likely to send their children to school, and there is very little external enforcement of attendance, compared to cities. Not to mention the fact that many parents nowadays lived through the tumultuous 1980's and may still potentially possess a distrust in the education system considering their education experiences under the terrorist regimes. There are also distance and safety concerns, for transportation is mostly on-foot, and the trek may prove to be dangerous. Teachers in these regions often find themselves paid a considerable amount less than those in metropolitan centers, despite the fact that many take on an entire school single-handedly, leading to teachers providing very low quality of education, or perhaps none at all ("Education in Peru"). Many teachers are often assigned to these remote locations after growing up and receiving a formal education in the municipality, leading them to feel disconnected from their students, which returns a low possibility of cultivating a meaningful relationship with the students. Instead, the children see a teacher who does not want to be there even when they don't want to be there themselves. It is no surprise that there are incredibly large gaps between test scores from urban to rural regions.

In addition to the challenges faced by students and teachers alike in the primary education sector, secondary education is not a requirement in Peru, potentially making higher education out of reach, and initial schooling efforts obsolete. Secondary schools are located in established towns, sometimes miles away from remote villages in the highlands or the Amazon ("Education in Peru"). In both scenarios, the walk, which could amount to hours on hours, also has an increased likelihood of being dangerous, given the geographical conditions of these regions. While all indigenous children are affected by the inaccessibility of secondary schools, girls carry the most risk. According to the official Peruvian crime report for 2016, "Peru has one of the highest reported crime rates in Latin America... Kidnapping... is a common fact of life in Peru. Violent crime has

been on the increase over the last few years...” (“Peru 2016 Crime and Safety Report”). There are no official numbers regarding kidnapping rates in Peru, urban or rural, but stating that kidnapping is a ‘common fact of life’ in this country is a large indicator that it happens often. There are some regions with imposed travel restrictions to reduce crime in certain areas, especially after sunset (“Peru 2016 Crime and Safety Report”). For young women, walking alone down these roads for hours may literally mean risking their lives for the sake of their educations. Understandably, some do not find this worth the risk, and opt into remaining in the indigenous communities that raised them. Women who want to integrate into urban society but cannot because of accessibility issues are trapped by forces they cannot control. It is also common for parents to pay money for their sons to live away while attending secondary schools, but daughters very rarely receive this level of freedom (“Amazon Schools”).

The education system is proof that implementing European institutions on lands that still immerse themselves in indigenous, native culture is not successful. In order for young people from rural settings to have the same access to opportunities, specialized adjustments to the system must be made. Specific attention to the particular cultures and communities that use the school must all be taken into consideration. This also applies to the way in which elections function. Elections (also an idea introduced to the region by Europeans) require the participation of every registered Peruvian. According to the information collected during the 2016 election, 87% of Peruvians casted a vote for president (“Republic of Peru”). While this number is unexpectedly high, in regions where health centers are used as the backup alternative to native medicinal practices, many babies in highland and jungle regions can be born off the record. Therefore, they do not exist on the census and are not required to vote. While this may be seen as a blessing because it excludes them from the need to participate in voting, this alternatively does not allow them to have a say in

the government that controls their lifestyle. Also, for those residing in the Amazon and highland regions, access to voting centers are scarcer compared to the cities. In the Amazon specifically, many individuals only have the option to travel by boat through the river to voting centers that take them hours to reach (“Peru Poll Goes Down to the Wire as Last Votes are Counted”). The sacrifice of time made by indigenous individuals to vote is much larger compared to those in the urban regions who can simply walk to a voting booth. The disadvantage may discourage those living in isolated regions from participating in the elections and thus putting them in legal danger; Peruvian populations in the city do not need to worry about traveling over days to exercise their rights, while those in isolated regions need to dedicate valuable time and resources to the journeys necessary in order to participate in their public elections.

Because the number of citizens voting as well as accessibility to voting centers is higher in the cities compared to rural regions, the reality is that the indigenous communities are, in a sense, controlled by the values that drive the rest of the country. Therefore, ignoring the way in which urban sectors view their indigenous counterparts makes it nearly impossible to understand how native people fit into their nation. Education in Peruvian cities regarding indigenous knowledge is absolutely crucial because those educated in the metropolitan centers are those same people who grow up to write the laws of the land. According to Peruvians dwelling in the urban regions, while the years of colonization and Spanish rule are taught as a horrible disrespect to the country, indigenous people were not adequately represented in the years they attended school. There was no literature, no main characters, and hardly any history that extended into their era regarding the struggles of native people (Nelson). Unless one were to take history courses specific to indigenous communities, issues concerning native populations would not appear in the curriculums, in the same way minority histories and cultures are taught here in the United States. Peruvians themselves

claimed to be anti-Spanish in their educations while simultaneously ignoring the very people that have struggled the most in the years since Spanish colonization. However, in the years of growth and reforming strides, the education system is facing a great restructuring. Nowadays, many schools even provide classes in Quechua to further spread the knowledge of their underrepresented indigenous communities. While, of course, there are great advances to be made in terms of equal and adequate representation for indigenous Peruvians, many urban education systems are indeed taking steps in the right direction with regards to an honest and ample illustration of their own native populations.

In the same way that access to education is more limited in the rural regions, proper healthcare can be challenging to implement outside of the city sector. The general health of populations becomes worse in the rural regions because of both communal inabilities to fund health centers and hospitals as well as environmental pollution factors that disproportionately affect indigenous people because of their environment. Since the beginning of colonization, indigenous people have faced intense battles concerning their health, as nearly 80% of the deaths within Inca Empire were caused by diseases spread by the Europeans (Orlow). In the modern era, steps are being taken to assist native communities and their fight against poor healthcare. The military dictatorship that rewrote the constitution, reestablished the Peruvian economy, and stomped out terrorism also completely centralized the government, meaning the control of the nation was extremely concentrated to the federal authorities. After democracy had been regenerated in the early 2000's, efforts to decentralize the varying national administrations began, with healthcare returning to a decentralized healthcare system by 2002 ("Peru" [*Country Case Study*]). This means that local government officials were granted the power to make healthcare decisions for people under their jurisdiction. In the years after the collapse of Peruvian

infrastructure, the national government proved to be making positive strides; child mortality rates decreased, government spending on healthcare increased, and healthcare centers saw increased utilization, specifically in the rural regions. By 2009, the Universal Health Insurance Law had been passed, introducing a mandatory health insurance system. Currently, more than 80% of Peruvians are covered by some form of health insurance, and additional steps are being taken to further promote healthcare (“Peru” [*Country Case Study*]). However, some of these healthcare systems only assist those who contribute to the country in the form of taxes, or are officially employed, therefore disqualifying many native Peruvians who do not have certified jobs. Moreover, hospitals are primarily concentrated in the urban sector; for example, 250 hospitals (23% of all Peruvian hospitals) are found in Lima alone (“Peru” [*Country Case Study*]). Another primary problem with health centers in the rural regions was retaining workers in these remote areas. The introduction of a new system, called SERUMS, requires all Peruvian medical students to spend a year in a village that contains a low amount of medical providers. This authorized year allows for students, presumably born and raised in the metropole, to familiarize themselves and gain comfortability in smaller villages in the high or lowlands (“Peru” [*Country Case Study*]). This has led to an increase in retention for health workers in the regions that city citizens did not feel comfortable in before the SERUMS program. The introduction and success of the SERUMS program demonstrates how these incredibly unique regions require a non-traditional approach to the implementation of various institutions. Different places necessitate various accommodations, as should be made for indigenous people who have already suffered through so much. Additionally, global non-governmental organizations such as Doctors Without Borders and UNICEF have assisted the Peruvian government in the battle against serious and preventable illnesses and providing healthcare to remote regions (Young 291).

Despite the incredible steps taken forward in recent years of growth, Peru's vulnerable regions still suffer at incredible rates compared to those in cities. For starters, when compared to other Latin American countries with similar GDPs, Peru allots nearly 50% *less* governmental funding for healthcare (Cotlear). This means that those who opt in to private healthcare systems receive disproportionately better care than those relying on the underfunded public health centers. Of course, when indigenous regions are also some of the 'poorest' in terms of financial flexibility, they are given the less valuable of the options. This explains the absurd increase of maternal mortality rates when comparing the urban and rural regions. In the urban regions, 90% of mothers had access to a trained associate during their labor; the number is less than half of that for the urban regions. Additionally, 98% of Peruvian women in the cities gave birth within a healthcare facility, while 36% of women in urban regions had the same luxury. Infant mortality rates are between three and four times higher outside of city limits and in remote villages (Borja). Healthcare systems, specifically regarding women's healthcare and treatments, still contain extreme equity rifts in the comparison between urban and rural districts.

Those dwelling in bucolic sectors, specifically in the Amazon, are much more likely to have environmental pollution affect their health. The majority of illegal gold mining and oil extractions are carried out by the very people that survive off of the lands they are polluting. Because of the struggles that come with implementing an education system in the Peruvian Amazonia, many of the indigenous people that reside there are uninformed of the environmental impacts that come with their operations. Mercury is an important element of gold mining, and is almost never disposed of in an environmentally friendly manner. This leads to rampant levels of mercury poisoning the Rio Madre de Dios, the most significant river of the Peruvian Amazon. Mercury poisoning affects the water quality, aquatic life, and the people who rely on both the river

and the fish it provides. In 2016, an estimated 41% of the population subsisting on the river had been affected by mercury poisoning, an epidemic that caused the then-president to declare a state of emergency (Jamasmie). However, though it has been years, illegal mining remains a large problem facing these communities; the river, the fish, and the peoples themselves are all suffering at once. The damage done to the jungle can even be seen from space, and yet, the government pretends to be blind to a disaster even the stars can see. Illegal oil extraction also has the potential to severely affect the people inhabiting these communities. In order to access oil-rich regions, new roads must be paved to provide easy entrance routes for the equipment. This leads to deforestation, air pollution due to the massive machinery, a disruption of the life in natural ecosystems, and the spread of preventable diseases. The Peruvian government claims these types of illegal activities are difficult to prevent given the size and scope, as well as the lack of provisions, regarding the rainforest. However, as the World Wildlife Federation states, there are countless loopholes in policies concerning oil mining within Peruvian legislation (“Oil and Gas Extraction in the Amazon”). Given the current situation, halting illegal activities in the Amazon seems to be nearly impossible, further disadvantaging the health of the communities who rely on the natural resources of the land to sustain themselves.

Many indigenous communities also have more faith in their ancestral healing traditions than they do in the European institution of medicine. Shamans (practitioners responsible for facilitating interactions between the spirit and physical world) are liable for maintaining the balances between body and soul for their communities. Their treatment styles are non-traditional in that many of the ailments they specialize in are unique maladies (such as evil wind or fright sickness), and their treatments and services are almost always monetarily free (Montenegro). However, as European medicinal habits have permeated some of the more remote regions of Peru,

shamans are discovering their ancestral traditions are slowly being pushed out of these indigenous communities. In an effort to stay relevant and maintain their valuable customs, many shamans now make an effort to appeal to tourists instead of to the communities who revered their ancestors and now reject the modern shaman (Proctor). Nevertheless, as the shaman himself is growing less popular in indigenous regions, many rural households still have a strong grip on the native medicinal traditions passed down to them. Use of natural remedial plants is still preferred by many rural communities over the mainstream pharmaceuticals (Montenegro). Many of these populations even acknowledge that dispensaries may be more effective, but still maintain a preference for their indigenous knowledge. There are many reasons for this, stretching from the pragmatic cost and naturalness of the medicine, to the fact that some pharmaceuticals cannot address the unique ailments mentioned previously, to the rebellious rejection of anything imposed by the Spanish, as is common in indigenous communities. Native Peruvians, who have very little control over anything in their nation, can find control in choosing to snub the institution of medicine introduced the land as a result of colonialism. The altering forces of traditional medicinal knowledge and modern healthcare systems have created a non-mutually exclusive relationship, meaning that indigenous people often combine both native and European aspects of healthcare to cater to their ever-evolving beliefs.

The Peruvian government advocates for indigenous people to move to the city to access better opportunities, mainly regarding education and healthcare. The migration that some native people choose to endure from the rural to the urban regions also has potential to cause damning health issues. These individuals are more prone to increased rates of stress and anxiety, as well as a multitude of other mental health problems, regarding their assimilation. This leads to a higher propensity for alcoholism and illegal drug use (as Peru is the world's second highest cocaine

exporter), which has obvious negative effects on both physical and mental wellbeing. The dietary change, from all natural foods to a more mainstream diet of processed goods, triggers obesity and hypertension (Montenegro). Even when individuals from indigenous communities decide to migrate to the cities for amplified access to opportunities, including healthcare, they are only putting themselves and their bodies at risk in completely new ways.

Despite the inequalities still faced by indigenous Peruvian communities, the times are indeed changing. According to the book, *Resurgent Voices in Latin America: Indigenous Peoples, Political Mobilization, and Religious Change*, published in 2004, Peruvian's native communities "present a new face to Peru's political classes. Increasingly, they no longer accept the subordinate status imposed on them for centuries" (Clearly 43). The reason these efforts for political change took so many to reach the rural communities of Peru is because of how far removed they've been from the politics surrounding their existence, just as they have everything else in their own country. The same way their access to education and healthcare has been limited, so has their ability to retrieve invaluable information. Though assisted by the implementation of a national education system throughout Peru, the increase in demand for indigenous political activism was primarily brought on by another, even more powerful force. This potent institution, more widespread than any other in Peru, was ironically brought to the land by the Spanish. Its omnipotence has affected nearly every citizen in Peru, and though it may be seen as a terror for indigenous communities, the Catholic Church itself is the primary reason for the mobilization of activism for Peru's native people.

The Catholic Church provided a great variety of resources that the government had been denying the indigenous populations of Peru since their colonization. Catholicism had initially been imposed in even the most remote of societies upon the initial Spanish occupation of Peru.

However, after the churches were built and ministers were implemented, the upholding of these remote Catholic centers and the religious values themselves dwindled. By the mid-1900's, the original beliefs and practices of Catholicism had nearly been abandoned overall. By the late 1960's, new missionaries began making the journey to those rural, isolated communities, many of which had forsaken Catholic values and traditions, or the physical churches themselves altogether. It was also around this time that the Vatican began further separating itself from mestizo religions (for example, indigenous communities who incorporated their own values into Christian practices such as Palm Sunday), and further refused to accept them as a part of the church. Many communities were "forbidden" from celebrating a mixture of both indigenous and Catholic traditions as they were viewed as disrespectful to the Church (Clearly 45).

This tense environment surrounding the Vatican in Rome and the isolated indigenous communities put the missionaries, who found themselves to be the only direct line of communication between both of these peoples, in a very crucial position. Some followed the orders of the Vatican, claiming that those who blended traditional customs with Catholic celebrations displayed a gross misunderstanding of the Scriptures. However, there existed a vast majority of missionaries who believed this new imposed order to be a continuation of the suppression of indigenous peoples. Instead of following the orders from the Catholic Church, many of these missionaries "were driven by another impulse, forming an indigenous church" (Clearly 45). This incredible movement, which shifted the relationship between the Church and native populations from one of control to one of understanding, saw most of its progress between the late 1960's and the early 1990's. This redefinition of the Catholic Church in rural villages was led by the most important people in the crusade: the only ones willing to develop relationships with these very communities, the missionaries themselves. It was incredibly easy for the Vatican to bark orders

regarding its people overseas, but the ones who lived their lives with the very people the orders impacted truly had the most power in their hands. Churches flourished once again, this time in native languages, including indigenous people in the sermons. The clergy provided the opportunity for native religious leaders to run the churches themselves, after they had been trained by the missionaries, allowing them the freedom to incorporate their ancestral traditions into their new religion. The missionaries also trained teachers and doctors, and even farmers, providing their modern educations to those who had no access to the information otherwise. All of this happened before the Peruvian government even decided to implement a nation-wide education standard. Therefore, the Church was their first true experience with an institution who valued their culture as well as understood their desire and need for growth, and gave it to them. In order for European institutions to benefit indigenous groups of people, the institution itself must be adaptable. Colonizer strategies have never worked for the descendants of the great Inca people; instead, they flourish in the face of tender understanding.

The gentle hand of the missionaries of the Catholic Church in rural communities provides indigenous peoples with the strength they need to mobilize and advocate for their political equality. The Church bestows these people with not only insightful knowledge but also the fond love and understanding the Peruvian government had been denying them since colonization. These societies found a new sense of kinship, of unity with each other in the name of Catholicism. They also became more familiar and comfortable interacting with outsiders, as they developed strong bonds with the missionaries in their communities. Additionally, the ability to combine their traditional values with Catholic customs gave them a deeper understanding of their unique identity, and the capability to accept every aspect of themselves regardless of the attempts from the rest of the world to invalidate them. The Church members even advocated for political activism within the native

communities and “encouraged the indigenous to organize to struggle for their own rights” (Clearly 46). All of these factors gave communities the confidence they had been robbed of since the Spanish conquest, but desperately needed. The granting of access to knowledge, growth opportunities within the Church, and cultural awareness and understanding to these vulnerable people allows for floods of personal agency to sweep indigenous societies. This provides them with the foundations required for engaging with external political forces and demanding their equality.

Despite all of this, Peru, unlike other Latin American countries, has yet to see a distinct indigenous activism movement. This is because the Peruvian government is incredibly adept at stifling all attempts of rebellion, even going so far as to criminalize social protests. In 2008, the government (while in the midst of the Alan Garcia’s second term) eradicated a law affirming that a state of emergency needed to be declared before the national army could be deployed. Even more horrifying, in 2010, the government (still acting under Alan Garcia’s presidency) enacted a law that states the military can be used against protesters and allows the operation of lethal force against “hostile groups” (“Environmental Rights Defenders at Risk in Peru”). In addition to this, the vernacular surrounding these movements is detrimental to their public support. The Peruvian national government refers to anti-mining organizations as “anti-mining terrorists” to trigger a sense of violence regarding their activities, while they are ironically fighting for peace within their communities. The removal and implementation of crucial laws regarding human rights groups, as well as the harmful language concerning these groups, are arguably the primary causes for the 321 civilian deaths during social conflicts that have taken place since 2006 (“Environmental Rights Defenders at Risk in Peru”). While political mobilization in indigenous communities has increased

in recent years, the Peruvian government has continually made successful attempts to stifle the social progress being demanded by vulnerable peoples and their advocates.

Worldwide, the foundations of colonialism are crumbling. In France just weeks ago, the historic and iconic Notre Dame church found itself engulfed in flames. While people mourned the wreckage, it's nearly impossible for someone educated in indigenous struggles to sympathize. France, a powerful leader in colonization with its claws still dug into possessed countries, has been singlehandedly responsible for the destruction of innumerable communities themselves. While the church burned, many who experienced the colonial hand of France watched in silent half-understanding; they too have watched their history be engulfed by flames, but the difference is, indigenous fires were sparked because of colonial hate, and native people didn't receive helping hands from worldwide billionaires afterwards. Just two days later, former Peruvian president Alan Garcia, mentioned above for his evil acts against his own indigenous people, was caught in a whirlwind of criminal charges, and took his own life. The very man arguably most responsible for the struggles of native communities from the 1980's to the late 2000's could not handle the persecution he implemented on indigenous people, and took his own life because of it.

The foundations of colonialism are fragile, easily burned. And yet, Coricancha, the old center of the Inca Empire, refuses to be torn down. Even when the Spanish tried to dismantle the building upon their initial colonization of Peru, they found that they physically could not destroy the stone base of the temple. Instead, they built their church on top of the Inca groundworks. This symbol of indigenous strength in the face of those trying their absolute hardest to tear them down is so emblematic of how their struggles are the foundations for the institution of colonialism; an institution that is crumbling and scorching before our very eyes, more and more with each passing day. The future is bright, and even if it is a long tunnel, indigenous citizens see the light, and will

not stop pressing until they can bask in equality and absolute freedom from neo-colonialism once more.

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