

THE RADICAL LIBERAL TRADITION, SCIENTIFIC RACISM, AND PANAMA'S
CARLOS ANTONIO MENDOZA, 1880–1916

By

WILLIAM PATRICK COHOON

Bachelor of Arts, 2012
Portland State University
Portland, Oregon

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
AddRan College of Liberal Arts
Texas Christian University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of

Masters of Arts

May 2015

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To begin, any mistakes with translations or errors in this work are my own. Next, I want to thank the staff at la Biblioteca Nacional and Archivo Porras in la Biblioteca Simón Bolívar at la Universidad de Panamá. Your help and recommendations aided me tremendously with my project. I conducted my research in Panama due to the generosity of Dr. Paul Boller through the Boller-Worcester Travel Grant from the Department of History, and a Graduate Student Travel Grant from the GSA at Texas Christian University. Thank you! To the staff at Inter Library Loans in the Mary Couets Burnett Library at TCU, your flexibility and aid in finding obscure books always amazes me.

I would like to thank my adviser, Dr. Peter Szok who offered me an opportunity to explore the complicated cultural and social history of Panama during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thank you Professor Szok for your advice, confidence, rigorous attention to detail, and patience working with me on this project. I am a better scholar because of your help. I want to also extend my many thanks to Dr. Susan E. Ramirez and Dr. Jodi Campbell who contributed wonderful recommendations to improve my thesis. Dr. Todd Kerstetter, words cannot express my gratitude for your sympathy and kindness that you showed in February 2013. Your advice made my choice to attend TCU much easier.

To my old, and new friends, thank you for checking on my well-being during my adjustment period in Texas and taking excellent care of me. My folks, Steve and Kathy Cohoon, and family have been nothing short of spectacular in their unwavering support of my outlandish ways, thank you for that. Even though Ray and Jennifer Philips of Longview hid many things about Texas' environment from me, I appreciate everything you two do for me. My dear, sweet Ashley, had you not pestered me to apply to TCU I would not be here. You are sorely missed, but I know that you made every step with me on this journey.

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Introduction: Radical Liberalism, Scientific Racism, and Panama's Carlos A. Mendoza

Radical liberalism's roots lie in Latin America's movement for independence and civil wars.¹ During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Afro-Latin Americans joined the military as it provided a means for social advancement. People of African descent also served in the army due to the independence movement's promotion of citizenship and equality. The concept of citizenship appealed greatly to plebeians when compared to the Spanish Empire's emphasis on a hierarchical society. After independence, civil war erupted throughout the region, and people aligned with either the Conservative or Liberal Parties. Liberalism attracted Afro-Latin Americans as the ideology promoted both citizenship and equality. In 1849, the Liberal Party ascended to power in Colombia. The group rewarded Afro-Colombians and Afro-Panamanians for their support with the Constitution of 1853, which granted them the right to vote and abolished slavery. These two important actions enhanced the prestige of the Liberal Party among the group. The Constitution of 1853 permitted Afro-Latin Americans to participate in politics through suffrage, which led to their eventual election at the municipal level. In 1859, Vizconde Roger de Saint Sauver, a representative of the French consulate, reported that two liberal parties existed in Panama.² The first consisted of the white oligarchy, and the other became known as *el partido negro liberal*, or the "Black Liberal Party."³ The diplomat's political analysis reflected the significant number of Afro-Panamanians who supported liberalism, which encouraged equality and citizenship. As a result, liberal ideology increased opportunities for social advancement. By the 1860s and 1870s, Afro-Latin Americans had ascended to positions

¹ Throughout this thesis I will use black, plebeian, and radical interchangeably to describe this variation of liberalism during the mid-nineteenth and the early-twentieth centuries.

² In 1859, Panama was a province of Colombia.

³ Vizconde Roger de Saint Sauver to Conde de Walewski, April 18, 1859, quoted in Alfredo Figueroa Navarro, *Dominio y sociedad en el Panamá colombiano, 1821-1903* (Panama City: Editorial Universitaria, 1982), 343.

within Panama's state government.⁴

Nevertheless, James Sanders argues in his work *Contentious Republicans* that the Colombian Regeneration of the mid 1880s limited popular political participation and all but ended Afro-Latin Americans involvement in politics by the end of the nineteenth century.⁵ Sanders argues that the Conservative Party and Independents created legislation to restrict the involvement of radical liberals, who were generally Afro-Colombians and Afro-Panamanians. George Reid Andrews furthers the argument in his work *Afro-Latin America*.⁶ Andrews analyzes black liberalism's influence on politicians of African descent during the mid-nineteenth through the twentieth century. The scholar demonstrates that social Darwinism and positivism, also known as scientific racism, restricted the participation of Afro-Latin Americans in the government, and suggests that radical liberalism had lost its influence in the region. In contrast, W. John Green shows in *Gaitanismo* that plebeian liberalism in Colombia continued to influence politics.⁷ Jorge Eliécer Gaitán emerged from the black liberal tradition in 1928, and the author argues that the ideology remained relevant into the 1960s. If radical liberalism had significance in the early part of Gaitán's life, then black liberal ideology must have retained its importance during the 1910s and through the early-1920s. Using Afro-Panamanian Carlos Antonio Mendoza's career and accomplishments between 1880 and 1916 as a case study, it becomes evident that both the radical liberal tradition and the politician remained relevant in Panama during this period.

The Mendoza family lineage best represents the influence and advancement that

⁴ The constitution of 1886 abolished the United States of Colombia, which included modern day Colombia and Panama. As result of the new constitution, states such as Panama reverted to provincial status.

⁵ James E. Sanders, *Contentious Republicans: Popular Politics, Race, and Class in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004). The Regeneration centralized the Colombia government through the constitution of 1886.

⁶ George Reid Andrews, *Afro-Latin America: 1800-2000* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁷ W. John Green, *Gaitanismo, Left Liberalism, and Popular Mobilization in Colombia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003).

Afro-Latin Americans made during the mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth centuries as the result of the “Black Liberal Party” and radical liberalism. Antonio Mendoza, Carlos’s Venezuelan grandfather, served as a captain under Simón Bolívar during the wars of independence and relocated to Panama after his service in the military. Antonio’s son, Juan Mendoza, born in 1829, became a lawyer and joined the Panamanian Liberal Party. Juan had an important role in Panama early in his career when he participated in the investigation of La Tajada de Sandía, or the Watermelon Incident, of 1856.⁸ In 1870, Juan Mendoza also served as a negotiator between Colombia and the U.S. regarding the construction of an interoceanic canal. Mendoza ascended to the presidency of the Panamanian state in 1871 and again in 1872.⁹ In 1876, Mendoza represented Panama in the Colombia senate, a position he held until his death on May 3, 1876 from a heart attack.¹⁰

Born on October 31, 1856, to Juan Mendoza and Josefa de Soto de Mendoza, Carlos quickly followed in his father’s footsteps. In 1869, at the age of thirteen, Mendoza left Panama for the College of the Rosary in Bogotá, Colombia, where he completed his secondary education. Upon finishing his studies, Mendoza attended the National University of Colombia and earned a law degree.¹¹ This experience and travel early on in his life impacted Mendoza’s intellectual development and his perspective on the Colombian government. In 1875, Mendoza returned to Panama and accepted a job working for the

⁸ In 1856, La Tajada de Sandía occurred when a man from the U.S. refused to pay for a slice of watermelon he took from a vendor. The Panamanian merchant ordered the U.S. citizen to pay. This individual responded by pulling a gun and making threats toward the vendor, who responded by brandishing his knife. In the chaos that ensued, Panama City became engulfed in riots, and the U.S. intervened to ensure the safety of American citizens. See Celestino Andrés Araúz and Patricia Pizzurno Gelós, *El Panamá colombiano: 1821-1903*, 159-162; Aims McGuinness’s *Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush*; and Alfredo Figueroa Navarro, *Domínio y sociedad en el Panamá colombiano, 1821-1903*, 339-342.

⁹ When Colombia approved the constitution of 1886 the state system ceased to exist, and former states such as Panama reverted back to the status of province.

¹⁰ Baltasar Isaza Calderón, *Historia de Panamá, 1821-1916: Carlos A. Mendoza y su generación* (Panama: Academia Panameña de la Historia, 1982), 153.

¹¹ Celestino Andrés Araúz, “Carlos A. Mendoza, un prominente liberal istmeño,” introduction to *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza: documentos, escritos, discursos* (Panama: Biblioteca de la Nacionalidad, 1999), x.

Arosemena brothers in their commercial firm. In 1877, he became an archivist in the government, and went on to hold numerous positions including “Treasurer of Public Instruction, Attorney General, Governor of the Capital District, Under-Secretary of Finance,” and “Deputy to the Legislative Assembly.”¹²

Mendoza also proved instrumental in Panama’s independence movement that began to develop during the 1880s when the Colombian Conservative Party and Independents focused their energy on creating a stronger central government that reduced Panama’s autonomy. Furthermore, these two groups also established legislation that restricted voting and enacted harsher penalties for breaking the law. This movement became known as the Regeneration. Mendoza vehemently denounced the concentration of power in Colombia, and voiced his opinion through newspapers such as *La Idea* (1888), *El Deber* (1893), and *El Criterio* (1899), all of which he created or directed. During this period, Mendoza cultivated a relationship with prominent Panamanians, such as Pablo Arosemena, Belisario Porras, Juan B. Sosa, and Colombian Eusebio A. Morales. These individuals, all of whom were liberals, denounced the centralist government of Colombia and its attempt to restrict Panama’s sovereignty.¹³

During the War of a Thousand Days, Mendoza served as Secretary of Government for the rebels, and in 1903 he authored Panama’s Declaration of Independence.¹⁴ In 1904, a constituent assembly elected Mendoza as third vice president. After a falling out with conservative President Amador Guerrero that same year, Mendoza retired from public life. When Guerrero attempted to handpick his successor, politicians and the public urged

¹² George Washington Westerman, *Padre del acta de independencia de Panamá* (Panama: El Departamento de Bellas Artes y Publicaciones del Ministerio de Educación, 1956), 5-7.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁴ The Conservative Party dominated Colombian politics during this period. The civil war that ensued between liberals and conservatives due to the policies of the Regeneration became known as the Thousand Days War, which contributed to Panama’s independence in 1903.

Mendoza to return to politics. He supported the candidacy of José Domingo de Obaldía, a dissident conservative. Mendoza's immense popularity contributed to the election of Obaldía in 1908. Upon Obaldía's death on March 1, 1910, vice president Mendoza became the first and only Afro-Panamanian president of the republic, a position he held for a mere six months.¹⁵

After ascending to the presidency, Mendoza came under constant attack and newspapers debated his legitimacy to become president. The Panamanian Conservative Party and the U.S. doubted Mendoza's right to serve as the head of the republic for several reasons. The conservative tabloids first challenged Mendoza's status as vice president, a position he inherited in 1909 when first vice president José Agustín Arango passed away. After complaints about his rise to the vice presidency fell on deaf ears, Mendoza's opponents shifted their attention to Panama's constitution, which stipulated that if a president died with two or more years remaining in the term, the National Assembly had to elect an interim president.¹⁶ According to Article 83 of the constitution, "a citizen who [served as] president of the Republic for six months cannot be a candidate [for reelection]."¹⁷ Nevertheless, conservatives continued to worry, as a liberal majority existed in the National Assembly, and Mendoza held the leadership of the party. His opponents believed that these two factors would contribute to Mendoza completing the term and lead to his possible reelection in 1912.¹⁸

Richard O. Marsh, the U.S. chargé d'affaires to Panama, further complicated matters for Mendoza. From the time of his appointment in April of 1910, Marsh continually exerted

¹⁵ Ibid. 9-29,

¹⁶ Celestino Andrés Araúz, *El imperialismo y la oligarquía criolla contra Carlos A. Mendoza* (Panama: Organo Judicial, 2009), 138-147.

¹⁷ *La Constitución de Panamá*, title 7, art. 83.

¹⁸ Michael L. Conniff, *Black Labor on a White Canal: Panama, 1904-1981* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), 41.

pressure on Mendoza to resign from the executive office. According to Marsh, the opposition argued about the unconstitutionality of Mendoza's ascent to the presidency and complained about his race. The diplomat believed that foreigners and elite Panamanians would not work with someone who was of African ancestry. Marsh questioned whether a person of African descent could lead a country, and believed that "the election of Mendoza would mean a setback for the progress of Panama."¹⁹ In addition to Marsh's actions, the U.S. government eventually invoked Article 136 of the Panamanian Constitution, which permitted the North American government to intervene in the political affairs of Panama.²⁰ The U.S. concluded that Mendoza's reelection violated Panama's Constitution and advised George W. Goethals, the governor and chief engineer of the Canal Zone, to inform the president of this news. Such pressure and lack of support from the U.S. contributed to Mendoza's resignation from office on October 1, 1910. The National Assembly, with Mendoza's endorsement, elected Pablo Arosemena to complete the presidential term from October 5, 1910 until the next election in 1912. Arosemena recognized Mendoza's political prowess and appointed him as a delegate to Colombia. Mendoza attempted to negotiate a settlement between the two countries over Panama's independence. While Mendoza proved unsuccessful in securing an agreement, the former president created an environment for future discussions.²¹

When Mendoza returned to Panama, the presidential elections had begun with vigor. Mendoza supported his longtime friend and political collaborator Belisario Porras for the executive office. Thanks to Mendoza's advocacy, Porras became president of the republic. This event marked the third time Mendoza's cooperation aided in the election of a politician

¹⁹ Richard O. Marsh to Huntington Wilson, August 15, 1910, quoted in Celestino Andrés Araúz, *Mendoza secretario de hacienda y presidente: obra gobierno, 1908-1910*, vol. 1 (Santafe de Bogotá, Colombia: Stamato Editores, 1999), 199.

²⁰ Araúz, *El imperialismo y la oligarquía*, 244; and Araúz, *Mendoza secretario de hacienda y presidente*, 197-199

²¹ Westerman, *Padre del acta de independencia*, 47-56.

to the presidency. Later in 1912, Mendoza retired from political life once again to pursue his law career. However, in 1914, a dispute between Mendoza and Porras led to the dissolution of their friendship and alliance. When President Porras attempted to choose Ramón M. Valdés as his successor to the presidency in 1916, Mendoza disputed the constitutionality of Porras's move. Mendoza firmly believed that Porras threatened democracy, which echoed the former president's critique of Colombian centralism in the 1880s. Mendoza condemned Porras as an aspiring dictator who would hold back Panama's development.²² As a result of President Porras's effort to select his replacement, the Liberal Party split into two factions. One group adhered to Porras, while the other supported Mendoza and his presidential candidate Rodolfo Chiari. During the heated campaign as to who should represent liberals for the presidency, Mendoza died of a heart attack on February 13, 1916. Over the following days, eulogies from Arosemena, Morales, Porras, and Sosa appeared in Panamanian newspapers. Several periodicals in Latin America also printed memorials to Mendoza.²³

Hagiographic Perspectives on Mendoza's Legacy

Soon after his death Panamanian journalists, historians, and politicians authored articles that paid homage to Mendoza. In 1927, the government erected a bust of him in Santa Ana Park, a regular site for his political speeches.²⁴ Although reports and commemorative works appeared immediately after Mendoza's passing, literature that analyzed his contributions to Panama did not emerge until the 1950s. Since this time, many short pieces and anthologies explore the political contributions of Mendoza. While many of these works offer valuable information about Mendoza's personal and political life prior to 1912, the accounts provide a limited analysis of the fallout between him and Porras. Furthermore, few

²² Calderón, *Historia de Panamá, 1821-1916*, 341-353.

²³ *Ibid.* 354-359.

²⁴ Pablo Arosemena, "En la inauguración del busto del Dr. Mendoza en el parque de Santa Ana," in Ernesto J. Castellero R., *Domingo H. Turner: Carlos A. Mendoza, el hombre y el político* (Panama: La editoria de la Nación, 1976), 13.

scholars address Mendoza's marginalization by the Conservative Party and the U.S. in any great detail. In addition, most of these works superficially examine Mendoza's political career after his ousting from the presidency in 1910. Scholars, reporters, and government officials in Panama typically offer hagiographic accounts about Mendoza without placing him in a broader historical context. Rather, these depictions tend to praise Mendoza for his accomplishments and contributions to the republic.

Not until the 1950s did any real literature appear about Mendoza. Several short pieces were published in 1956 to celebrate the one-hundredth anniversary of Mendoza's birth, highlighting his influential career. The October 1956 issue of *La Lotería* details Mendoza's life and accomplishments.²⁵ The journal emphasizes the politician's important contributions, such as authoring the Declaration of Independence and his contributions to independence. *La Lotería* republished several eulogies, biographies, and laws from the time of Mendoza's passing. To honor Mendoza after his death, the National Assembly passed Ley 9ª de 1916 stipulating, "Doctor Mendoza was a model of loyalty, unselfishness, and selflessness."²⁶ *La Lotería* also published the decrees that commemorated the politician in 1956, which included the appropriation of five thousand balboas for the Department of Education to construct a primary school named after Mendoza.²⁷ The legislation exalted Mendoza's integrity. In addition to the statutes, *La Lotería* reissued Juan Bautista Sosa's biographic account of Mendoza.²⁸ A noted Afro-Panamanian historian and politician, Sosa authored the work in March 1910, approximately two weeks after Mendoza ascended to the presidency. Sosa connected Mendoza to Panama's liberal tradition by establishing the importance of his father

²⁵ *La Lotería* 1, no.11 (Octubre 1956).

²⁶ Ley 9ª de 1916, "Por la cual se honra la memoria del Doctor Carlos A. Mendoza," (October 31, 1916), in *La Lotería* 1, no. 11 (Octubre 1956): 8.

²⁷ Ley N° 15, "Por la cual se honra y conmemora el primer centenario del nacimiento del Dr. Carlos A. Mendoza," (February 9, 1956), *La Lotería* 1, no. 11 (Octubre 1956): 11.

²⁸ Juan B. Sosa, "Doctor Carlos Antonio Mendoza," *La Lotería* 1, no.11 (Octubre 1956): 12-16.

Juan Mendoza. Furthermore, Sosa argues that Carlos's dedication and contributions to the independence movement led to his popularity. Sosa points to the election of conservative José Domingo de Obaldía for the presidency in 1908 as proof of Mendoza's reputation, as he supported Obaldía's candidacy. Sosa extolled the virtues of Mendoza in an attempt to alleviate any concerns about the incoming president.

The journal also published Eusebio A. Morales's 1912 profile and defense of Mendoza after the presidential elections.²⁹ Morales, who served in various political offices, argues that Mendoza did not choose to run for reelection; rather, supporters within the community rallied around their leader and endorsed him as the best candidate. The author states that the movement for Mendoza's candidacy happened spontaneously and it did not arise from his desire to continue as president. Furthermore, Morales contends that the former president demonstrated virtuous qualities and desired to serve the republic in a selfless manner. In conjunction with Sosa and Morales' pieces, *La Lotería* also reissued a section of Samuel Lewis Jr.'s eulogy to honor Mendoza focusing on his character and contributions to the republic.³⁰ Lewis's words similarly emphasize the personal qualities of the deceased politician.

An additional piece that celebrated the one-hundredth birthday of Mendoza appeared in 1956, entitled *Carlos Antonio Mendoza o la lealtad*.³¹ In this short work, one finds the homages of Lewis Jr., Morales, and Sosa. *Carlos Antonio Mendoza o la lealtad* provides Mendoza's speeches, essays, and letters, which compose a third of the text. Besides Mendoza's writings, liberals Pablo Arosemena, Ramón M. Valdés, and conservative Samuel

²⁹ Eusebio A. Morales, "Carlos A. Mendoza," *La Lotería* 1, no.11 (Octubre 1956): 17-23.

³⁰ Samuel Lewis Jr., "Carlos A. Mendoza: líder y caballero," *La Lotería* 1, no.11 (Octubre 1956): 22-23.

³¹ *Carlos Antonio Mendoza o la lealtad: tributo que ofrece la Comisión Organizadora con motivo de los 100 años del nacimiento del prócer de la República, 1856-31 de Octubre-1956*, (Panama: La Academia, 1956).

Lewis Sr.'s accounts about the former president appear. These public figures, like Morales and Sosa, exalt the honorable traits of Mendoza. The collection of essays and homages to Mendoza demonstrate his political importance in Panama. These works, however, do not address the connection between Mendoza and radical liberalism, nor do writers examine the reasons for his short-lived presidency. Furthermore, these pieces lack detailed information on the split between Mendoza and Porras.

Not until George Washington Westerman, a noted Afro-Panamanian historian and West Indian leader, published his work *Padre del acta de independencia* in 1956 did a thorough history of Mendoza appear.³² Westerman's interest in Mendoza more than likely had to do with his racial background; however, race does not appear at the forefront of the scholar's examination. Westerman focuses on Mendoza's upbringing and his career as a politician by highlighting the positions in government he held. The historian provides a bibliographical account of the family and argues that the "Mendoza homestead was extremely modest in a material sense."³³ The author maintains that the family's humble background contributed to Mendoza's sense of dedication, honor, and loyalty as a politician. Westerman's emphasis on Mendoza's character is particularly important given the personal attacks from conservatives and the U.S. on the politician during his presidency. In his overview of Mendoza's career, Westerman contends that the former president enhanced the republic's education system and only had the best interest of Panama in mind during his political career. Westerman also discusses Mendoza and Porras's split, but the analysis fails to explain why the factionalism occurred. Not until two decades later did additional works appear about Mendoza, but these materials remained similar to the pieces from 1956.

Ernesto J. Castellero's 1976 *Domingo H. Turner: Carlos A. Mendoza* uses various

³² Westerman, *Padre del acta de independencia*.

³³ *Ibid.*, 7.

eulogies about Mendoza to illustrate his importance and contributions.³⁴ One such tribute came from Pablo Arosemena, who inaugurated the former president's bust at Santa Ana Park in 1927. Arosemena depicts Mendoza as "a man with great heart" and an individual who firmly believed in the liberal tradition.³⁵ Curiously, Castellero includes tributes from those who opposed Mendoza as well. Ramón M. Valdés, the hand-picked successor of Belisario Porras, declared that the former president's death was an "immense loss for the Liberal Party."³⁶ In addition, a clipping from *El Conservador* stated Mendoza possessed superior abilities, which made him an unquestionable leader who always had the people in mind.³⁷ By using statements from the media and people who opposed Mendoza, the publication shows that his influence reached across party lines. Castellero also includes Domingo H. Turner's *Vidas paralelas: Mendoza y Porras* in this collection.³⁸ Turner's analysis in his short piece deviates from prior works on Mendoza in two ways. The author provides the first suggestion that race contributed to Mendoza stepping down from office. Turner states that "the 'negro president' was the supreme leader of the nation," which "was not viewed well in Washington."³⁹ Turner also brings up the topic of Richard O. Marsh for the first time, but merely states that he desired to handpick the next president, conservative Samuel Lewis, and that the diplomat threatened annexation. Turner suggests that Mendoza only stepped down from the presidency to avoid a conflict with the U.S. In another first, Turner brings to light the split between Mendoza and Porras over Valdés, but the scholar merely mentions the factionalism and does not explore the event in greater detail.

³⁴ Ernesto J. Castellero R., *Domingo H. Turner: Carlos A. Mendoza, el hombre y el político* (Panama: La editoria de la Nación, 1976).

³⁵ Pablo Arosemena, "En la inauguración del busto del dr. Mendoza en el parque de Santa Ana," *Domingo H. Turner*, 13.

³⁶ Ramón M. Valdés, "En la inauguración del busto," *Domingo H. Turner*, 15.

³⁷ *El Conservador*, quoted in "En la inauguración del busto," *Domingo H. Turner*, 16.

³⁸ Domingo H. Turner, "Vidas paralelas: Mendoza y Porras," *Domingo H. Turner*, 43-47.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

Castillero once again pays homage to Mendoza in his 1977 *Recuerdos de la vida* and follows the same pattern as the works previously mentioned.⁴⁰ Castillero argues that his collection of documents demonstrates the former president's civic virtue and love for his country. The scholar contends that three distinct periods provide evidence of Mendoza's importance to Panama. Castillero focuses on Mendoza's authoring the Act of Independence and his part in the Conference of Canada, which occurred in 1903 on the U.S. warship *Canada*. Colombia hoped this meeting would contribute to Panama rescinding its newly acquired independence and that the two countries could reunite. Mendoza represented the newly formed government and rejected the proposal. Castillero also includes an analysis of Mendoza's role in the negotiations with Colombia in 1910 to halt the hostilities between the two countries. The academic contributes to the literature on Mendoza by examining the latter's role in the reconciliation between Colombia and Panama, which constitutes the first exploration of this topic. In addition to detailing these three events, Castillero includes the biographical account written by Sosa in 1910, Morales' 1912 work on Mendoza, and Concha Peña's homage *Carlos Antonio Mendoza: procer de la república*.⁴¹

Following his 1977 piece, Castillero published a collection of works entitled *Homenaje al autor del acta de independencia de Panama*.⁴² To honor the Declaration of Independence's seventy-fifth anniversary, Castillero gathered numerous accounts about Mendoza. In his introduction, the noted historian once again emphasizes the importance and influence of the former president. Castillero points to Mendoza's popularity by highlighting

⁴⁰ Ernesto J. Castillero R., *Recuerdos de la vida del doctor Carlos A. Mendoza: 1856–1916* (Panama: Editora de la Nación, 1977).

⁴¹ Concha Peña, "Carlos Antonio Mendoza: procer de la república," in *Recuerdos de la vida del doctor Carlos A. Menodza*, 80-107. Peña's short work resembles previous accounts about Mendoza. The author provides important dates in Mendoza's life, such as his authoring the Act of Independence in 1903, his rise to the presidency, and a brief analysis of the split between him and Porras.

⁴² Ernesto J. Castillero R., *Homenaje al autor del acta de independencia de Panamá, doctor Carlos A. Mendoza* (Panama: Academia Panameña de la Historia, 1978).

how he contributed to Obaldía's election in 1908 and Belisario Porras's selection to office in 1912. Furthermore, the scholar notes that the admiration for Mendoza led to his election as the Liberal Party president from 1912 until 1916. The academic discusses, albeit briefly, the 1914 break between Porras and Mendoza, which led to Liberal Party splitting into two factions in 1915. However, the primary purpose of Castellero's work was to provide a compilation of eulogies and laws to show once again that Mendoza's esteem crossed party lines and international boundaries. To illustrate this prestige, Castellero gathered articles from liberal newspaper *La Prensa* and the conservative periodical *La Palabra*, which paid tribute to the liberal politician. Castellero also compiles telegrams from the British legation in Panama and writings from other Central American papers.

In 1982, Baltasar Isaza Calderón published *Carlos A. Mendoza y su generación*.⁴³ Isaza Calderón's work provided the first extensive examination of Mendoza and the influence of liberalism on his thinking. To demonstrate the liberal tradition in Panama, the author offers a political history of the country, and addresses how Mendoza emerged from the liberal tradition through his family lineage. Isaza Calderón's work presents a more in-depth biography of the Mendoza family and Carlos's rise to prominence by highlighting the various government positions he held. Not only does the author investigate Mendoza, but he also examines other prominent liberal leaders, such as Guillermo Andreve, Eusebio A. Morales, and Belisario Porras.

Isaza Calderón's analysis surpasses prior works, and he argues that Mendoza took a hands-on approach during his time as president. The scholar bases his argument on the president's tour of Panama, which lasted from the end of March through mid-June 1910. Mendoza's expedition through the countryside demonstrated to him the need to expand

⁴³ Baltasar Isaza Calderón, *Historia de Panamá, 1821-1916: Carlos A. Mendoza y su generación* (Panama: Academia Panameña de la Historia, 1982).

infrastructure, such as a railroad to David, and to increase educational opportunities. Mendoza further noted that the sovereignty of the country depended on increasing agricultural output to fulfill the needs of Panamanians. However, Isaza Calderón only briefly discusses Mendoza's ousting from the presidency in 1910 and glosses over the reasons for his stepping down. Isaza Calderón addresses the 1914 split between Mendoza and Porras. The author states Mendoza stopped supporting Porras when he appointed his chosen leaders at the municipal level. In this analysis, Isaza Calderón also discusses Mendoza's denunciation of President Porras's selection of his successor, Ramón M. Valdés. In 1994, a publishing house reissued Isaza Calderón's work under the title *El liberalismo y Carlos A. Mendoza*.⁴⁴

El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza appeared the same year as the reissue of Isaza Calderón's piece, providing a collection of the former president's essays and writings.⁴⁵ Otto Morales Benítez, who authored the prologue to *El pensamiento*, offers the same argument that previous authors had provided about Mendoza's legacy.⁴⁶ The emphasis once again focuses on the important contributions Mendoza made to Panama's independence movement. Mirroring prior historians, Morales Benítez provides the typical background information about Mendoza and his rise to prominence. In addition, the author describes the history of liberalism in Colombia and Panama. Morales Benítez exalts Mendoza as the "notable and meritorious liberal fighter," which follows the hagiographic nature of previous works.⁴⁷ In contrast to Turner, Morales Benítez contends that the U.S. opposed Mendoza's presidency

⁴⁴ Baltasar Isaza Calderón, *El liberalismo y Carlos A. Mendoza: en la historia panameña*. (Colombia: Stamato Editores, 1994).

⁴⁵ *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza: documentos, escritos, discursos* (Panama: Biblioteca Cultural Shell, 1995).

⁴⁶ Otto Morales Benítez, "Colombia, Panamá y el liberalismo en la vida de Carlos A. Mendoza," prologue to *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza: documentos, escritos, discursos* (Panama: Biblioteca Cultural Shell, 1995), 11-66.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

due to “racial prejudice.”⁴⁸ Morales Benítez asserts that the U.S. worried about a country not governed by whites and how such a leader would impact Panama. Similar to Isaza Calderón, Morales Benítez presents the break between Mendoza and Porras but without as much detail.

In 1999, La Biblioteca de la Nacionalidad republished *El pensamiento*.⁴⁹ The Panamanian government reissued the essays to celebrate the U.S relinquishing control of the Panama Canal. President Ernesto Pérez Balladares wrote that to commemorate the historical event, the country should “honor and praise” citizens who contributed to the formation of the republic.⁵⁰ Prominent Panamanian historian Celestino Andrés Araúz authored a new introduction to Mendoza’s writings.⁵¹ Araúz traces the evolution of radical liberalism, or what U.S. and Panamanian historians also refer to as black liberalism. The author contends that Mendoza came from a tradition of plebeian liberal ideology by emphasizing his relationship to his father Juan.

The Panamanian historian provides some of the more typical information about Carlos A. Mendoza by showing his rise through the ranks of the Liberal Party and the role he played as a journalist during the movement for independence from Colombia beginning in the mid-1880s. Araúz argues that Richard O. Marsh opposed the presidency of Mendoza based upon his relationship with the Afro-Panamanian population. The author also presents Marsh’s threat to annex Panama if the National Assembly did not elect conservative Samuel Lewis, the diplomat’s personal choice, to replace Mendoza. The historian briefly addresses the break between Mendoza and Porras in 1914, which as previously discussed, revolved around Porras’s appointment of officials to municipal posts and the hand-picking of his

⁴⁸ Ibid., 53.

⁴⁹ Natalia Ruiz Pino and Juan Torees Mantilla, eds., *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza: documentos, escritos, discursos* (Panama: Biblioteca de la Nacionalidad, 1999).

⁵⁰ Ernesto Pérez Balladares, “Biblioteca de la nacionalidad,” cover page in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*.

⁵¹ Celestino Andrés Araúz, “Carlos A. Mendoza, un prominente liberal istmeño,” introduction to *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, ix-xx.

successor to the presidency.

Araúz followed up his introduction to *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza* with a more thorough analysis of the former president in his 1999 work *Mendoza Secretario de hacienda y presidente*.⁵² In this three-volume set, Araúz provides the most comprehensive examination of Mendoza's career to this point. Araúz included Mendoza's legislation during his time as president and other important documents he authored. Araúz's multi-volume collection primarily focuses on 1908 to 1910, the years of Mendoza's vice presidency and presidency. The first volume offers background about the cooperation between liberals and conservatives to secure independence from Colombia in 1903. In addition to this cooperation among political enemies, the historian focuses on the negotiations between Panama and the U.S. over a treaty to construct the canal. Araúz argues that these factors affected Mendoza's convictions as a politician. Mendoza viewed the agreement with apprehension, as he believed it would threaten the sovereignty of Panama. The historian also describes the multi-ethnic nature of the country to demonstrate the complicated relationship between the oligarchy and plebeians. Araúz emphasizes the relationship between the Afro-Panamanian population and the white elite, who feared a race war. The gold and silver pay standard in the Canal Zone also contributed to conflicts among whites and blacks. Gold status members included all white employees, while people of African descent comprised the silver standard and received lower pay for similar jobs. Araúz contends that this racial prejudice contributed to the heightened tensions between Afro-Panamanians and the elite, which in turn contributed to Mendoza's fall from the presidency.

Furthermore, Araúz argues that the Conservative Party and the United States aided in Mendoza's marginalization. The author contends that U.S. chargé d'affaires Marsh objected

⁵² Celestino Andrés Araúz, *Mendoza secretario de hacienda y presidente: obra de gobierno, 1908-1910* (Bogota: Stamato Editores, 1999).

to Mendoza's presidency due to his African heritage. The diplomat stated that elite Panamanians refused to associate or work with a person of African descent. In addition, Marsh believed if an Afro-Panamanian headed the country it would hinder Panama's advancement. Marsh noted that Mendoza possessed a significant following among the Afro-Latin American population in the city, which the diplomat considered "ignorant, irresponsible and incapable of carrying out the obligations of a citizen."⁵³ In the view of Marsh, the United States needed to end Mendoza's presidency and possible reelection in 1912, as the president threatened the influence of the U.S. in Panama.

In 2009, Araúz released a two volume set on Mendoza, titled *El imperialismo y la oligarquía*.⁵⁴ The collection offers the most extensive analysis of Mendoza and his relationship to liberalism. Araúz published numerous documents on the former president covering the period of 1885 to 1911. The resources collected by the author range from U.S. diplomatic correspondence to letters from President Howard Taft. Araúz also provides articles from conservative newspaper *La Palabra* and liberal periodical *El Diario de Panamá*. Araúz selected these materials to illustrate the complicated relationship between Panama and the U.S., while also demonstrating the sentiment about Mendoza. In addition to these documents, Araúz published Marsh's cables and letters showing his opposition to Mendoza's presidency and the diplomat's racist view of the president. Araúz's collection of works offers a much broader and deeper analysis of the relationship between Mendoza and liberalism than all of the previous works mentioned in this section

In 2009, Carlos H. Cuestas published *Carlos A. Mendoza creador de la organización*

⁵³ Richard O. Marsh quoted in Araúz *Mendoza secretario de hacienda y presidente*, vol. 1, 197.

⁵⁴ Celestino Andrés Araúz, *El imperialismo la oligarquía criolla contra Carlos A. Mendoza* (Panama: Organo Judicial, 2009).

judicial.⁵⁵ Cuestas presents the former president's importance to the Panamanian judicial system, and offers a biography on Mendoza mirroring prior authors' accounts. The author traces Mendoza's career in journalism through the various offices he held. The work serves as a guide to Mendoza's pieces of legislation rather than an analysis of his career. Cuestas does not consider the connection between Mendoza and liberalism, which was not in the scope of his project.

Mendoza and the Late-Liberal Period

The previous section examined the hagiographic works on Mendoza in order to show the importance of this political figure and the dearth of scholarship that places him in a broader historical context. In these historical analyses of Mendoza, most scholars do not provide any real examination of his political career after 1910. Historians primarily explore Mendoza's time in office from 1908 to 1910, and superficially examine his career after the presidency. The authors who do examine Mendoza after 1910, provide little information about his fallout with Porras. Nothing appears in these works about whether racist ideology contributed to the political factionalism. Noted Afro-Panamanian historian George Washington Westerman briefly discusses the rift between these two politicians in *Padre del acto de independencia*, but he provides little information about what contributed to the divide. Rather, Westerman states that situation was "profoundly saddening" to Mendoza.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the author explains that the break resulted from personal rather than political differences. Isaza Calderón provides the first extensive overview of the Mendoza and Porras split by highlighting their differences in personal ideology, but the examination does not address the broader ramifications. Subsequent studies on Mendoza and his relationship with

⁵⁵ Carlos H. Cuestas, *Carlos A. Mendoza creador de la organización judicial y codificador de la república* (Panama: Organo Judicial, 2009).

⁵⁶ Westerman, *Padre del acto de independencia*, 61.

Porras provide similar details. Araúz, Castellero, Morales Benítez and Turner argue that racist ideology impacted Mendoza's presidency. The scholars only emphasize his time as president and vaguely discuss his political career after 1911. After his time as president, Mendoza remained active in politics, but historians have yet to survey this period in depth.

U.S. historians accounts about Mendoz are even more limited. Michael Conniff's *Black Labor on a White Canal* provides the first examination about the role the U.S. had in the marginalization of Panama's only Afro-Panamanian president.⁵⁷ Conniff emphasizes racial attitudes that the U.S. brought to Panama and how elites in the country adopted such convictions as their own. To support his contention, Conniff points to the Panamanian Conservative Party and its request of U.S. diplomat Marsh to stop Mendoza from serving the remainder of the presidential term. The Isthmian Canal Commissioner and chief engineer George W. Goethals supported Marsh in pressuring Mendoza to resign the presidency.

George Reid Andrews also addresses the role of the U.S. in ousting Mendoza from the executive office in his work *Afro-Latin America*.⁵⁸ Andrews provides a detailed analysis of the contributions made by Afro-Latin Americans to nation building. However, unlike Panamanian historians who briefly address black liberalism, Andrews stresses the importance of this tradition and its role in Colombia and Panama. The historian argues that social Darwinism and positivism weakened radical liberalism. By the early twentieth century, the black liberal tradition faded, and scientific racism contributed to the marginalization of Afro-Latin American politicians. Andrews does not discuss Mendoza at length, and only casually mentions the politician's removal from office. The scholar vaguely connects Mendoza to black liberals and quickly explains that the U.S. forced him to step down from the presidency

⁵⁷ Michael L. Conniff, *Black Labor on a White Canal: Panama, 1904-1981* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985).

⁵⁸ George Reid Andrews, *Afro-Latin America: 1800-2000* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

due to his race. The evidence in the secondary literature makes it clear that the Conservative Party used the constitution to pressure Mendoza to resign from office and aligned with Marsh, who expressed racist ideology. Despite this depiction, examinations by authors such as Andrews, Araúz, and Conniff do not demonstrate whether the former president's political split with Belisario Porras in 1914 resulted from the influence of social Darwinism and positivism on liberal thought. The role of these two ideologies in the marginalization of Mendoza is unclear after 1910.

Mendoza and His Continued Importance

This thesis addresses two points. Sanders contends that the Regeneration all but ended the radical liberal tradition, but I argue that black liberalism remained relevant from the 1880s through the early twentieth century. The Regeneration's legislation in the late 1880s restricted the role of Afro-Colombians and Afro-Panamanians; nevertheless in Panama, Mendoza contributed to the independence movement, held positions in the provisional government, and remained firm in his radical liberal ideology. In addition, I examine the role that social Darwinism and positivism had in the marginalization of Afro-Latin American politicians during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries through an analysis of Carlos Antonio Mendoza's career from 1880 until 1916. At the turn of the century, scientific racism had further altered the views of intellectuals about plebeians. The U.S. perception of race contributed to Mendoza's political demise as president, but this does not mean racist doctrine defined his career after 1910.

The investigation of President Mendoza from 1910 to 1916 is an understudied and overlooked subject in Panamanian history. Historians who analyze Mendoza after his presidency demonstrate his continued political importance; however, their works are vague and lack a broad overview of his break with Belasario Porras in 1914. Scholars have yet to

examine if social Darwinism and positivism contributed to the factionalism between these two former collaborators. The evidence presented in the following pages demonstrates that Mendoza led the opposition against Porras for deviating from liberal principles. An examination of Mendoza from October 1, 1910 until his death on February 13, 1916, shows that scientific racism did not impact his role as a politician as much as Andrews suggests. Such a conclusion offers a new perspective on Afro-Latin Americans and their contributions to government.

To demonstrate that the radical liberal tradition remained relevant and Mendoza participated actively in politics as a leader of the Panamanian Liberal Party, the author conducted research at the Biblioteca Nacional de Panamá, the Archivo Porras at the Biblioteca Simón Bolívar at Universidad de Panamá, and at the University of North Texas Library in Denton, Texas. The Biblioteca Nacional possesses the best-preserved collection of Panamanian newspapers, and the author consulted liberal periodicals *La Prensa* and *El Diario de Panama* from 1910 to 1916. These liberal papers help to illustrate the sentiment of Mendoza's peers about the former president. In addition to these newspapers, the author examined the Porras government's records in the Archivo Porras from 1912 to 1916. An analysis of writings in the Archivo Porras offers the view his administration about Mendoza. The Willis Library at University of North Texas holds an extensive collection of microfilm, of which the author examined record group 59 from the U.S. State Department on the political affairs of Panama from 1910 to 1929. To compliment these archival sources, I also analyzed Mendoza's personal writings to show how he evoked radical liberalism.

This thesis is organized into three parts. The introduction provided an overview of scholarship about Mendoza and how scholars tend to emphasize his importance without placing him in a broader historical context. Chapter one examines the literature on liberalism

during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The chapter provides an analysis in three sections about how the scholarship on liberal ideology evolved and how historians changed what they emphasized in their research. Scholars originally focused on elite politicians and their role in the liberal movement. Subsequent studies focused on the influence of social Darwinism and positivism on liberal elites. The final section of the chapter examines the research on plebeians, particularly Afro-Latin Americans, in the formation of nation-states and their eventual marginalization as a group after the adoption of scientific racism.

Following chapter one, *the Evolution of the Study on Liberalism*, an analytical section illustrates Mendoza's continued relevance in Panama's politics. The second chapter consists of original research that presents the trajectory of Mendoza's political career from 1880 to 1916. The author examines primary documents from Panama and the United States to connect Mendoza to his black liberal heritage, to provide a more thorough analysis of his split with Porras in 1914, and to show that the former president continued to flourish as a politician despite being Afro-Panamanian during the early-twentieth century.

More importantly, this thesis applies George Reid Andrews' framework to Panama for the first time. Andrews contends that scientific racism ostracized Afro-Latin Americans during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The historian maintains that social Darwinism and positivism led to Mendoza resigning from the presidency, which Araúz and Coniff both clearly demonstrate. According to Andrews's paradigm, however, Mendoza's career as a politician would have continued to decline after he left the executive office on October 1, 1910 and until his death on February 13, 1916. In spite of Andrews's argument, the Liberal Party and Porras did not marginalize Mendoza based on his race after his time as president. Rather, Mendoza actively participated as a political leader in Panama until his death. In fact, José Domingo de Obaldía and Porras both recognized they needed Mendoza's

support to secure the presidency. The two presidential candidates believed they required Mendoza's connection to the black Liberal Party, as the group greatly admired him and would support whomever he endorsed for president. Furthermore, the sources indicate that the political factionalism within the Liberal Party occurred between Mendoza and Porras, but not based on the former's racial heritage. The split between these two figures happened as a result of political differences. Furthermore, the thesis shows that while social Darwinist and positivist beliefs certainly altered liberalism, the ideologies did not necessarily impact radical elements as much as Andrews suggests.

Chapter 1: The Evolution of the Study on Liberalism

Liberal intellectuals, inspired by the Enlightenment theories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as the revolutions in France and the United States, professed an ideology of legal equality and modernization for the newly independent republics of Latin America. Liberals felt it was necessary for governments of the region to disassociate themselves with Spanish colonialism. Ideologues of liberalism considered Spanish colonial rule antiquated, and they believed that the Spanish Empire relied on centralism and authoritarianism to govern. According to supporters of liberalism, the Spanish encouraged monopolies and religious fanaticism, both of which hindered the advancement of civilization. In the view of liberals, free trade and capitalism offered the means to achieve economic progress.

Promoters of liberalism associated economic prosperity and modernization with Great Britain and the United States. To achieve modernity, liberals also directed their attention to reducing the landholdings of the Catholic Church as large landed estates hindered the growth of the economy and its agricultural sector. Latin America's liberal leaders proposed the separation of church and state, and they emphasized a reduction in the church's influence on society to that of a spiritual institution. As Latin American liberals applied these concepts of modernization to their countries, elites of the region embraced other imported ideologies from Europe and the United States.

In the early-to-mid-nineteenth century, European intellectuals drew upon the latest scientific developments and applied these concepts to people and society. Scholars such as Auguste Comte, Charles Darwin, and Herbert Spencer developed philosophies that emphasized scientific progress and universal natural laws. Darwin's theory of evolution suggested that as a species evolved over time, it adapted to the environment and enhanced its

probability of survival, or natural selection. Furthermore, Darwin's premise suggested that only the strong survived and the weak perished. Spencer applied Darwin's theory of evolution to society and suggested that groups of people, like organisms, developed over time and eventually reached civilization. Similar to Darwin and Spencer, the positivist Comte proposed that if laws govern science, then society also follows rules that contribute to its growth and rise to modernity. These scientific and theoretical principles evolved into the theories of social Darwinism and positivism. Intellectuals in Europe and the United States used these paradigms in order to demonstrate the perceived inferiority and backwardness of non-European peoples. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Latin American liberals used positivist and social Darwinist rhetoric to explain the inferiority of Afro-Latin Americans and Indians.

Similarly, historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries applied positivism and social Darwinism to show the perceived benefits of liberalism and the role of the elite in the formation of Latin America's new nation-states. To evaluate the development of a country, historians compared the progress of these new republics to that of the United States and Europe. Writers used indicators such as port construction, miles of paved roads, and economic growth to illustrate a country's advancement. Authors promoted the notion that a nation's success and prosperity relied on the expansion of infrastructure, and they assumed that modernization benefited all social classes.

Nineteenth-century historian Hubert Bancroft exemplifies this traditional approach in his presentation of historical events.⁵⁹ Bancroft's work focuses on the elite underpinnings of liberalism and how the implementation of this ideology brought the region out of its supposed backwardness. The author highlights the technological advancements of Latin

⁵⁹ Hubert Bancroft, *History of Central America* vol. 8 (New York: New York History Co. in cooperation with McGraw-Hill, 1888).

America, such as the construction of railroads and wire telegraphs, which at the time served as markers of modernity. The emphasis on modernization created tensions between the liberal and conservative parties, as the latter group desired to maintain the colonial order. Thus Bancroft concentrates on the struggles between these two elite political factions and the desire for power.

Bancroft's traditional interpretation of liberalism influenced scholarly works through the 1950s. However, after the United States intervened in Guatemala in 1954, and with the Cuban Revolution in 1959, scholars of Latin American history became more interested in other viewpoints besides elite political leadership, economics, and foreign relations. This new attention by academics contributed to the creation of social history. The new social history of the 1960s and 1970s proved instrumental in the formation of innovative interpretations of gender, race, and the impact of liberal reforms on the lower classes. By studying plebeian groups, scholars provided agency to previously marginalized people. Rather than focusing strictly on macroeconomics, politicians, and diplomacy, academics expanded their research to consider how liberalism affected average people.

The new social history influenced postmodern studies during the 1980s, and especially in the 1990s. Postmodernism questioned the hegemony of the elites and examined the role of previously disregarded communities in the formation of nation-states. These new perspectives altered how researchers presented liberalism and the impact of its reforms on Latin American societies. Scholars questioned whether the perceived improvements, as presented by historians like Bancroft, aided in the well-being of all social classes. Furthermore, academics demonstrated that non-elites had more political awareness and a greater impact on the development of modern-day Latin America than previously acknowledged by scholars.

The subsequent pages demonstrate the influence of social history and postmodern studies on how academics have presented Latin American liberalism. While this chapter provides a general overview of liberalism in the region, it emphasizes the evolution of liberal ideology in Colombia and Panama during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This historiographical chapter traces the trajectory of research on liberalism in Latin America. The opening segment, *Liberalism and the Political Elite*, examines scholarly works that offer a traditional perspective on liberalism. These works range from an examination of elite liberals and their role in the formation of government to the political turmoil between the liberal and conservative parties. The following section, *Liberalism as an Ideology*, highlights studies that focus on the impact of social Darwinism and positivism on liberal theory. The final part of the chapter, *Plebeian Politics in the Age of Liberalism*, discusses scholarly works that call attention to the participation of plebeians in the formation of nation-states. This analysis also demonstrates the need to expand scholarship on Afro-Latin American political leaders, many of whom had a role in the independence movements and later occupied important government positions.

Liberalism and the Political Elite

During the 1980s, and through the early 2000s, many historians continued to emphasize the activities of liberal elites. These academics focused their works on the socioeconomic backgrounds of Liberal Party leaders and provided histories of the impact of liberalism on Latin American republics. Moreover, even as scholars questioned the effect of liberal ideology and modernization on society, they concentrated on the leading politicians of the era. This section traces the growth of research on politicians and their relationship with liberalism.

In the early 1980s, scholars persisted in highlighting the role and importance of elite

government officials, but such scholarly works offered a more comprehensive understanding of the origins of the Liberal Party. Helen Delpar's *Red Against Blue*, published in 1981, traces the evolution of liberals in Colombia from 1863 to 1899 and argues that prior to her research, a void existed in the country's "political history."⁶⁰ Delpar points to two reasons for such a statement. The scholar believes that few comprehensive examinations of political parties in Colombia existed at that time. In addition, historians of nineteenth century Colombia emphasized the individual instead of providing an overall perspective on politics. Despite Delpar's criticism, the author focuses on the elite. The scholar contends that the oligarchy left behind numerous sources for researchers, which provided a valuable opportunity to expand on the literature about the Liberal Party. Delpar reveals that Colombian liberals came from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Furthermore, the author shows the group adjusted its liberal beliefs when necessary. Although the scholar provided a new perspective on the inner workings of the party, the author's emphasis remained on the government leaders and their contributions to the development of Colombia.

Similar to Delpar's analysis of the Liberal Party, David Bushnell's 1989 work, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, provides a broad overview of the political history of Colombia with an emphasis on the role of elite politicians in the formation of the republic.⁶¹ Bushnell argues that the failures of conservative leaders during the 1840s and poor economic conditions in Colombia led to the Liberal Party's rise to power by 1849. During the early 1840s, Colombia experienced a stagnant economy, but toward the end of the decade, the market conditions showed signs of improvement. Politicians promoted liberalism as a means to develop the commercial sector. According to Bushnell, liberalism arose due to the

⁶⁰ Helen Delpar, *Red Against Blue: The Liberal Party in Colombian Politics, 1863–1899* (Alabama: Alabama University Press, 1981), x.

⁶¹ David Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

economic malaise, as it provided a solution due to its emphasis on “free trade” and a “laissez-faire” approach to the economy.⁶²

Published in 1993, *El Panamá colombiano*, by Panamanian historians Celestino Andrés Araúz and Patricia Pizzurno Gelós, presents a comprehensive examination of the political history on Panama from 1821 to 1903.⁶³ Araúz and Pizzurno examine the impact of liberal reforms and the increased presence of the U.S. in the isthmus’ politics, which began in 1846 with the Bidlack-Mallarino Treaty. In this accord, an article existed that allowed the U.S. to intervene in the affairs of Colombia if a threat to transportation across the isthmus arose. The authors emphasize the Colombian political elites’ desire to reestablish Panama as a transoceanic trade route through modernization and foreign investment. Such aspirations led politicians to negotiate with the United States and Western European countries to construct a railroad and later a canal. Talks about building a transoceanic connection increased when miners in California struck gold in 1849. The U.S. quickly realized the need for a transatlantic railroad to support the mass migration of people to California. Soon thereafter, Colombia and the U.S. agreed to terms for the construction of the Panama Railroad. The building of the railroad contributed to the U.S.’s economic and military expansion, while threatening the sovereignty of Colombia and Panama. The U.S. intervened on more than one occasion to ensure the safety of its citizens, such as during the La Tajada de Sandía, or the Watermelon War of 1856, as discussed in the introduction. Araúz and Pizzurno’s work shows the adverse impact of liberal reforms in Panama, as the treaty signed with the U.S. threatened the social order of the country and its sovereignty.

Héctor Lindo-Fuentes and Lowell Gundmundson expand upon liberalism’s impact in

⁶² Ibid., 102-103.

⁶³ Celestino Andrés Araúz, and Patricia Pizzurno Gelós, *El Panamá colombiano: 1821-1903* (Panama: Primer Banco de Ahorros y Diario La Prensa de Panama, 1993.)

their 1995 work *Central America, 1821–1871*.⁶⁴ The authors contend that the region’s liberal evolution actually was a continuation of the Bourbon Reforms. Lindo-Fuentes explores the connection between the Bourbon era and liberal reforms in his essay “The Economy of Central America.”⁶⁵ Lindo-Fuentes shows how the push toward modernization impacted the economy and society. The author states that the Liberal Party’s support of economic growth led to an export-based economy that exacerbated the social disparities between classes, as a result of changes in land tenure. Gundmundson’s piece, “Society and Politics in Central America,” continues the argument about the economic and social disparity between elites and plebeians.⁶⁶ The author concludes that although liberals promoted concepts of modernization, these reforms did not benefit non-elites as intended. Rather, the Liberal Party’s promotion of free trade contributed to the expansion of elite landholders’ estates and to the growth in the gap between the wealthy and poor.

Víctor M. Uribe-Uran’s work *Honorable Lives*, published in 2000, continued the emphasis on elite political figures, this time in Colombia.⁶⁷ The historian shows how the elites’ ideological convictions influenced their children, who later in life adopted these same principles. Uribe-Uran posits that two groups of lawyers existed, those of aristocratic lineage, generally attorneys who had a claim to high status that originated from the colonial period, and the provincial lawyers, who did not possess this trait. Provincial and aristocratic lawyers, as argued by Uribe-Uran, influenced Colombian politics during the late colonial period to the mid-nineteenth century and contributed greatly to the independence movement, as well as to

⁶⁴ Héctor Lindo-Fuentes, and Lowell Gundmundson, *Central-America, 1821-1871: Liberalism Before Liberal Reform* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995).

⁶⁵ Héctor Lindo-Fuentes, “The Economy of Central America: From Bourbon Reforms to Liberal Reforms,” in *Central-America, 1821-1871*, 13-78.

⁶⁶ Lowell Gundmundson, “Society and Politics in Central America, 1821–1871” in *Central-America, 1821-1871*, 79-102.

⁶⁷ Víctor M. Uribe-Uran, *Honorable Lives: Lawyers, Families, and Politics in Colombia, 1780–1850* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000).

the formation of the Colombian government. The author demonstrates that attorneys, even if they did not affiliate themselves with the Liberal Party, often promoted some features of liberalism. These lawyers endorsed principles of free trade to promote the liberalization of the economy for their benefit. A liberal economy necessitated the end of monopolies and the lowering of tariffs. Uribe-Uran does not discuss whether the fostering of such an ideology benefited non-elites; instead he mainly emphasizes how both liberals and conservatives promoted pieces of liberal ideology, which aided both groups economically.

These works on liberalism examine various themes about the Liberal Party and expand upon the historiography of political elites. Furthermore, the authors provide several opportunities for the exploration of future topics. For instance, Delpar suggests her sources indicated that plebeians had a role in politics. However, the author's argument highlights the political elite, as marginalized groups did not fit into her research paradigm. Nevertheless, Delpar demonstrated the heterogeneity of the Liberal Party in Panama and Colombia and provided a valuable foundation for future scholars to investigate mass participation in the political process. While these historians contributed to the literature on the liberal oligarchy, their works did not examine the theory or philosophical content of liberalism, nor did they consider the influence of outside ideologies on liberal intellectuals. Such omissions by scholars more than likely had to do with their framework rather than a lack of sources. An analysis of works that address liberalism as an ideology follows in the subsequent section.

Liberalism as an Ideology

In the 1970s and 1980s, other historians focused on the intellectual history of liberalism. Some scholars emphasized certain themes of liberal ideology, such as freedom of speech, individualism, and suffrage. During the mid-nineteenth century new ideologies emerged that impacted liberalism. Social Darwinism and positivism affected Latin America

intellectuals, who incorporated these two philosophies into their beliefs. As a result, elites considered the indigenous and Afro-Latin American populations as inferior groups and suggested that they held back a nation's progress. Liberals abandoned a vital component of classic liberal theory, the principle of equality. Historians investigated the impact of these two systems of thinking on liberal thinkers and how their perceptions of non-elites evolved. Despite the emphasis by scholars on the trajectory of liberalism, authors continued to emphasize the upper class.

During the 1970s, historians in Latin America wrote extensively about liberal ideology and its progression as a philosophy in the region. Gerardo Molina's 1970 work, *Las ideas liberales en Colombia*, focuses on the concepts of the Liberal Party in Colombia.⁶⁸ Molina discusses the ideological evolution of the Liberal Party and its internal turmoil as a result of the radicalization of liberalism in the 1850s. *Las ideas liberales* argues that in 1853 factionalism occurred within the group due to rise of the Gólgotas, or radical liberals. The Gólgotas supported a decrease in the number of soldiers in the military, universal suffrage, the separation of church and state, as well as the abolition of the death penalty and slavery. The Draconians, the opposition, contested these measures, as they perceived such changes could lead to the demise of society. Molina also presents the influence of social Darwinism and positivism on elite Colombian politicians. According to Molina by 1896, liberals believed they needed to lead the country and had abandoned the concept of equality.⁶⁹ During the 1970s, other works appeared emphasizing the evolution and impact of liberalism on Latin American society.

Leopoldo Zea represents the earliest account of the impact of positivism in Latin America with his seminal work *Positivism in Mexico*, originally published in 1943 but

⁶⁸ Gerardo Molina, *Las ideas liberales en Colombia*, vol. 1 (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo, 1979).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 176-77.

appearing in English for the first time in 1974.⁷⁰ During the Porfiriato, from 1876 to 1911, the author contends that a sense of urgency existed among Mexican liberal leaders to implement positivist ideology to address a variety of issues they believed plagued the country. According to intellectuals of the time, native people threatened the advancement and prosperity of Mexico, and possessed an unruly nature. Zea argues that positivism's appeal resonated amongst politicians due to the perceived chaos that raged through Mexico. As a result of the disorder, the Liberal Party took a scientific approach to control, govern, and stabilize the republic. In the opinion of political leaders, positivist doctrine offered such a methodology to achieve progress. Rather than impose the ideology on citizens, the government believed that through positivist educational reform, students would learn the importance of scientific reasoning.

Later in the 1970s, Panamanian historians examined the impact of liberalism and positivism in society. Ricuarte Soler's 1977 *Formas ideológicas* shows the influence of liberal ideology and its contribution to the formation of Panamanian national identity.⁷¹ Soler argues that liberalism contributed to the independence movement from Spain. The struggle centered on ending the mercantile system and the desire to institute free trade principles that maximized the geographical location of Panama. In addition to the impact of liberalism, Soler shows the effect of utilitarianism and positivism on one of the leading intellectuals of Panama in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, Justo Arosemena. His writings demonstrated the influence of the two ideologies when he emphasized the importance of scientific fact rather than abstractions. This elite Panamanian liberal focused on scientific reasoning as the means to bring progress and "civilization" to the country. While Zea published his work in

⁷⁰ Leopoldo Zea, *Positivism in Mexico*, trans. by Josephine H. Schulte (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974).

⁷¹ Ricuarte Soler, *Formas ideológicas de la nación panameña: Panamá y el problema nacional hispanoamericano* (Costa Rica: Editorial Universitaria Centro Americana, 1977).

the early 1940s and Soler's piece appeared in the mid-1970s, it was not until 1980 that a U.S. historian focused more exclusively on the topic.

E. Bradford Burns 1980 work, *The Poverty of Progress*, questions the motives of politicians in promoting the modernization of Latin America during the nineteenth century, and whether this advancement benefited the masses of the region.⁷² One of the most significant contributions of *The Poverty of Progress* was Burn's argument about the impact of positivism and social Darwinism. These ideologies contributed to a sentiment among elite politicians that people who lived in rural areas represented "barbarism," whereas city dwellers signified "civilization." Burns posits that the pursuit of "progress" by liberals did not take into consideration the cultural reality of Latin America. Leaders attempted to implement methods of modernization that worked in the United States and Europe without thinking about the cultural differences of the region. Elites attempted to pattern new institutions after Western models, which purportedly benefited their countries and aligned them with European nations and the U.S. Burns doubts whether this "Europeanization" of the region led to the well-being of all social classes. Instead, the author suggests that elites profited from the advancements, as politicians stressed "material gain over the public interest" in their quest to emulate Europe and the United States.⁷³ Burns demonstrates how the adoption of scientific reasoning adversely affected Latin American society. These studies encouraged future historians to explore the influence of imported ideologies and question the perceived benefits of such philosophies.

Panamanian historian Alfredo Figueroa Navarro published his monograph *Dominio y*

⁷² E. Bradford Burns, *The Poverty of Progress: Latin America in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 8.

sociedad in 1982.⁷⁴ The seminal work challenges the theory held by many historians that Panama's independence resulted simply from the United States' involvement in Colombian affairs. Figueroa Navarro argues that prior to independence from Spain, and during its time as the state of Colombia, Panama sought sovereignty. However, the importance of the scholar's research has to do with his emphasis on liberalism. Figueroa Navarro asserts that the construction of the Panama Railroad in the early 1850s, in response to the California Gold Rush, exacerbated the tensions between the oligarchy and plebeians. The building of the railway contributed to a growth in economic disparity between elites and non-elites. In addition to the growing conflict, leaders demonstrated a xenophile nature that originated not only from their desire to mirror European civilization but also from the group's recognition that it was a minority in Panama. To address the imbalance, politicians encouraged the immigration of Europeans and U.S. citizens to create more favorable conditions for the oligarchy. Such an action shows the influence of positivism and social Darwinism. Elite politicians and intellectuals believed the increase in European and U.S. immigrants encouraged "progress" and development.

Published in 1989, Charles Hale's *The Transformation of Liberalism* presents the impact of positivism on liberal leaders in Mexico, much like Zea's *Positivism in Mexico*.⁷⁵ The author expands on the role of positivism in Mexico from 1867 to 1911, the period known as the Porfiriato. Hale argues that positivist doctrine did not appear in politics until Gabino Barreda's famous speech *Oración cívica* on September 16, 1867 when he emphasized "social reconstruction."⁷⁶ Positivism spread as an ideology as result of the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria and its positivist curriculum. As a result, by the 1880s positivism had greater

⁷⁴ Alfredo Figueroa Navarro, *Dominio y sociedad en el Panamá colombiano, 1821-1903* (Panama: Editorial Universitaria, 1982).

⁷⁵ Charles A. Hale, *Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

⁷⁶ Gabino Barreda quoted in Hale, *Transformation of Liberalism*, 5.

influence on society and in politics. Furthermore, the historian notes that elites used educational reform to address their belief that indigenous people held back the progress of Mexico. Politicians encouraged new policies for education and directed these programs toward natives, who the oligarchy hoped could learn and eventually become “civilized” like whites and mestizos, or people of mixed Spanish and indigenous ancestry. Even with this course of action, Mexican leaders continued to express concern about the significant indigenous population. Like Panamanian elites, politicians in Mexico urged the blending of races and proposed European immigration to accomplish this goal.

For over sixty years, historians have written about the evolution of liberal ideology during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some pieces highlight classical tenets of the ideology, such as the endorsement of suffrage and the abolition of slavery, while others focus on social Darwinism and especially positivism’s influence on intellectuals. For instance, Hale and Zea both demonstrate that elite thinkers perceived scientific reasoning as the best approach to achieve progress. Furthermore, the authors illustrate the oligarchy’s changing perceptions about non-elites. Intellectuals during the liberal era questioned the extension of voting rights to plebeians and believed this group did not possess the intelligence to make political decisions. Politicians felt that elites should govern and dictate policy. The actions of government leaders shows the influence of positivism and their break with the classic tenets of liberalism. Despite this emphasis, historians continued to emphasize a top-down approach in analyzing the impact of imported ideologies on politics. The subsequent segment of the chapter examines works written from 1982 to 2012, and presents the role of plebeians in the formation of nation-states and their participation in government.

Plebeian Politics in the Age of Liberalism

As the two previous sections demonstrated, scholars of Latin American history during

the 1970s through the late 1980s continued to emphasize the role of political leaders in the region. Research included examinations of the socioeconomic background of the elites and the formation of the Liberal Party. Additional works highlighted how positivist and social Darwinist principles altered Latin American politicians' views. Leaders believed that Afro-Latin Americans and the indigenous populations held back the advancement of the region due to these groups' perceived backwardness. Elite leaders no longer focused on democratic changes but concentrated on the importance of scientific reasoning which, according to politicians, would eventually bring "progress" to Latin America.

Some of these works allude to the impact of liberal reforms on society; however, academics generally did not provide an analysis of the plebeian response to the measures or their participation in politics and government. In 1982, Figueroa Navarro addressed the role of the group by offering a brief but highly influential analysis of Afro-Panamanians, making him one of the few historians to examine the role of non-elites in the political process.

Dominio y sociedad offered a foundation for future scholars to take a bottom-up approach to historical events with his presentation of the "Black Liberal Party," a term coined by Vizconde Roger de Saint Sauver, a representative in the French consul in Panama, about a faction within the Liberal Party during the mid-nineteenth century.⁷⁷ Figueroa Navarro's work demonstrates the role of marginalized people in Panamanian politics and provides a rare account about Afro-Latin Americans' political awareness. Afro-Panamanians became supporters of liberalism with the abolition of slavery in 1852 and gaining the right to vote in 1853. Such political awareness permitted members of the group to fill many government positions and even the state's presidency illustrating "the transformation within the popular

⁷⁷ Vizconde Roger de Saint Sauver to Conde de Walewski, April 18, 1859, quoted in Figueroa Navarro, *Dominio y sociedad*, 343.

masses who were . . . aware of their political force.”⁷⁸

The 1990s provided a new approach toward examining the role of marginalized people with the use of the postmodern paradigm. Postmodernism contributed a more nuanced method to researching underrepresented persons and their influence in political affairs, which scholars continue to investigate. Although Figueroa Navarro’s history of Panama provided an early example of how non-elites participated in politics, it was not until 1995 that a historian in the U.S. examined the subject in greater detail. In *Peasant and Nation*, Florencia Mallon argues that plebeians of mid-nineteenth-century Mexico and Peru contributed to the formation of national identities, although with greater success in the former country due to a stronger liberal tradition.⁷⁹ Mallon reasons that nationalism not only came from the top down but also from the bottom up. The author demonstrates that the popular masses exercised a high degree of political awareness and joined, or formed, militias during foreign invasions. Through the formation of provincial militias individuals demonstrated “communal responsibility and accountability.”⁸⁰ Thus Mallon shows the political awareness of non-elites, which previous scholars did not take into consideration.

Published in 2003, Nancy Applebaum’s *Muddied Waters* also questions the perspective that non-elites passively participated in politics.⁸¹ The scholar examines regional identity in Riosucio, located in the state of Cauca in the Western Andes of Colombia. Applebaum explores the social constructs that prevailed during the mid-nineteenth century and argues that Cauca elites placed Afro-Colombians and the native population in the lower echelon of the community. Applebaum argues that the indigenous population, despite being

⁷⁸ Figueroa Navarro, *Dominio y sociedad*, 344.

⁷⁹ Florencia Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁸¹ Nancy P. Applebaum, *Muddied Waters: Race, Region, and Local History in Colombia, 1846-1948* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

identified as “merely ignorant pawns of educated lawyers,” petitioned to defend its rights to communal lands.⁸² Leaders protested to liberal Tomás Cipriano de Mosquero in 1863, when the liberal leader sought to end communal land holdings. The native people stated that the measure would alter their way of life and noted that Mosquero had signed a law in 1859 protecting indigenous land. While not always successful, such petitions demonstrate that the native population participated in the political process.

W. John Green’s 2003 publication of *Gaitanismo* expands the understanding of plebeian participation in Colombian politics.⁸³ Green challenges the historiography about Jorge Eliécer Gaitán by examining his rise to popularity in 1928 and assassination in 1948. Prior to Green’s research, scholars had only emphasized Gaitán and his life but not his influence on society. Such a perspective reflects the earlier traditional histories that often emphasized individuals. Later historians argued Gaitán represented an alternative choice to the two dominant parties in Colombia. Other academics viewed Gaitán as exploiting plebeians for political power. Green challenges these notions and argues that Gaitán appealed to non-elites as he represented the radical liberal tradition. The author contends that the rise of Gaitanismo found its origins in the nineteenth century. During the mid-nineteenth century, the Colombian Liberal Party transformed itself into a more “inclusive, and more popular version of liberalism” through the abolition of slavery and the granting of suffrage to Afro-Colombians.⁸⁴ Gaitán reflected this movement of the 1850s as he represented an opportunity for political and societal change that previous liberals and conservatives had failed to achieve.

Brooke Larson, in her 2004 *Trials of Nation Making*, expands upon the role of

⁸² Ibid., 95.

⁸³ W. John Green, *Gaitanismo, Left Liberalism, and Popular Mobilization in Colombia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003).

⁸⁴ Ibid., 10.

marginalized peoples in the formation of the nation-state and their responses to liberal reforms in the Andes.⁸⁵ The historian examines indigenous responses to independence and to liberal reforms from 1810 to 1910. According to Larson, historians had viewed natives as non-participants in the political process. However, Larson argues that Andean people “engaged [in] their wider political world” and responded to liberalism in numerous ways.⁸⁶ The author states that liberals believed that by ending tributary payments and slavery, they could usher in modernity. Despite this sentiment, liberalism threatened the livelihood of indigenous communities through the promotion of private landholding. Plebeians challenged measures that attempted to end communal property, which served as a cultural and economic base for native peoples. In the Colombian towns of Pitayó and Jambaló, the townspeople used their *cabildos*, or local councils, to “litigate and negotiate deals to shield themselves against threatening land claims” from large landholders and to retain what community-owned property remained.⁸⁷ *Trials of Nation Making* contends that native people utilized their available resources to challenge the liberal reforms that adversely impacted their livelihood.

Similar to Applebaum’s *Muddied Waters*, James E. Sanders’s 2004 publication *Contentious Republicans* furthers the argument that plebeians were not simply pawns of the political elite.⁸⁸ Sanders’s work focuses on the state of Cauca, where he examines the involvement of the indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations in politics. The author shows that people of African descent held government offices at the local and national levels. In the 1860s, David Peña became one of the most powerful generals in the Liberal Party and served in the national legislature. In addition, Sanders demonstrates that indigenous people

⁸⁵ Brooke Larson, *Trials of Nation Making: Liberalism, Race, and Ethnicity in the Andes, 1810-1910* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁸⁸ James E. Sanders, *Contentious Republicans: Popular Politics, Race, and Class in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004).

participated in politics. When community properties were threatened by legislation to break up land holdings, members of the group attended town hall meetings to voice their grievances, illustrating their political agency. However, Sanders notes that the Regeneration of the late 1880s restricted non-elites from holding political office. The Regeneration sought to create a stronger central government, improve the economy, and to establish order. Politicians directed the reforms of the Regeneration toward plebeians, as leaders believed this group threatened the stability of the country. The elite felt that marginalized people held back the development of Colombia by attempting to secure communal rights to land, which politicians believed violated individual property entitlements.

In addition to Sanders work, Aline Helg's 2004 book, *Liberty and Equality*, examines the role of the popular masses in Colombia during late-colonial period to 1835.⁸⁹ The author focuses on the Caribbean coast of the country, where a substantial Afro-Latin American population resided. Helg argues that politicians promoted the country as a mestizo nation. Such an endorsement of *mestizaje*, or the mixing of races, by elite political leaders marginalized the Afro-Colombians along the Caribbean. The author maintains that although non-elites were ostracized, they "chose various forms of revolt, resistance, and adaptation" to demonstrate their political awareness in Northern Colombia.⁹⁰ Plebeians resisted the rigors of the Catholic Church and opposed religious services in their towns, or skipped mass and then stated to church officials that they had attended religious services in another village. Methods of resistance against the church also included burying the deceased in the jungle rather than in graveyards. Afro-Latin Americans joined militias, or the military, which offered one of the few chances for social advancement. As a result of this opportunity, Afro-Colombians

⁸⁹ Aline Helg, *Liberty and Equality in Caribbean Colombia, 1770-1835* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

participated in large numbers in the wars for independence, and several men ascended to high ranks in the military.

Also published in 2004, George Reid Andrews's *Afro-Latin America* argues that people of African descent contributed in a variety of ways to nation-building.⁹¹ Focusing on the period from 1800 to 2000, Andrews explores how Afro-Latin Americans participated in the military and in government. The historian maintains that the military offered one of the few outlets for social mobility. During Colombia's independence movement and subsequent civil wars between conservatives and liberals, individuals of African heritage composed a large portion of the armed forces. This non-elite group typically aligned itself with the Liberal Party, as the organization originally promoted citizenship and equality. When liberals ascended to power in 1849, they rewarded Afro-Colombians by abolishing slavery in 1851 and granting suffrage in 1853, which conservatives staunchly protested. The condemnation by the Conservative Party further politicized the Afro-Latin American people, who believed that if conservatives returned to power, they would reinstitute slavery. Many people of African descent ascended to government positions in Colón and Panama City, culminating with Carlos Antonio Mendoza's rise to the presidency in 1910.

Marixa Lasso's 2007 *Myths of Harmony* furthers the argument that plebeians actively participated within the government.⁹² The author focuses on Colombia during the late colonial period through the early independence era. *Myths of Harmony* contests the prevailing idea among historians that non-elites merely provided strength in numbers, or "cannon fodder," during the war with Spain. Lasso counters this belief and argues that Afro-Colombians not only contributed to the independence movement but, in fact, led the charge.

⁹¹ George Reid Andrews, *Afro-Latin America 1800-2000* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁹² Marixa Lasso, *Myths of Harmony: Race and Republicanism During the Age of Revolution, Colombia 1795-1831* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007).

During the wars of independence, creoles espoused the concept of citizenship and racial equality, which they utilized to “attract black soldiers.”⁹³ Such rhetoric appealed to Afro-Colombians as an alternative to the hierarchical society that the Spanish crown endorsed. The scholar also addresses how Afro-Colombians sought inclusion in the republic after the war with Spain. The historian shows that people of African heritage contributed to the growth of liberalism by appealing to the judicial system for the citizenship and equality that the oligarchy had promised to the group during the independence movement.⁹⁴

Published in 2008, Aims McGuinness’s work *Path of Empire* examines the response of marginalized groups to liberal reforms in Panama during the mid-nineteenth century.⁹⁵ The author surveys the impact of the 1849 California Gold Rush on Panama. The Gold Rush, or *La California*, expanded infrastructure in the country, as the United States constructed the Panama Railroad. *La California* brought monetary benefits to plebeians who transported passengers from Colón to Panama City, sold goods, and operated hotels. However, McGuinness argues that modernization eventually had an adverse effect on the popular classes. When the United States opened the Panama Railroad in 1855, it diverted the large number of immigrants destined for California from Panamanian-operated businesses to U.S. establishments.

In response to the economic changes, arrabaleños, people from the arrabal neighborhood in Panama City, protested and rebelled against the railroad, as it caused them significant monetary losses. The opposition peaked in 1856 during La Tajada de Sandía, which occurred when a man from the U.S. refused to pay for a slice of watermelon. The vendor demanded his money from the U.S citizen, who rebuffed the request. A confrontation

⁹³ Ibid., 12.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 15.

⁹⁵ Aims McGuinness, *Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2008).

ensued, and arrabaleños rushed to support their countryman. The conflict culminated in riots and the destruction of property in Panama City. The U.S. intervened to protect its interest in the railroad and to halt the disturbance. McGuinness also argues the people from the arrabal demonstrated their political awareness through their voting. In 1851, New Granada liberals abolished slavery and two years later granted universal manhood suffrage to reward the support that Afro-Latin Americans had provided. As result of these two pieces of legislation, Afro-Panamanians backed the Liberal Party. By the early 1860s, many individuals from the marginalized group had ascended to positions in the local and state governments.

Peter Szok's 2012 work *Wolf Tracks* advances the discussion on the role of the Afro-Latin Americans and their relationship to the state. Szok focuses on the "black proletariat and its contribution to the country's sense of identity."⁹⁶ The author traces the evolution of the Panamanian intelligentsia and the desire of this group to modernize and whiten the country. Intellectuals, such as Justo Arosemena, believed that an increase in transoceanic trade would encourage immigration from Europe and the United States; however, the construction of the Panama Railroad and canal enlarged the Afro-Latin American population to the surprise of Panamanian elites. This rise in the number of people of African descent resulted from the mass migration of West Indians to the isthmus. To address this perceived issue, the oligarchy perpetuated the myth of a mestizo nation through the fictionalized accounts of the marriage between Vasco Núñez de Balboa and the indigenous princess Anayansi. Despite this promotion of *mestizaje* by the elites, Afro-Panamanians contributed to the national identity through art, dance and music.

From 1982 to 2012 historians examined in greater detail the role of plebeians in the political formation of Latin America. Figueroa Navarro's 1982 work provided a valuable

⁹⁶ Peter Szok, *Wolf Tracks: Popular Art and Re-Africanization in Twentieth-Century Panama* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 3.

foundation for scholars of Colombia and Panama. By investigating the role of Afro-Panamanians in his influential section on the black Liberal Party, the author showed that elements of the arrabal played a significant role in government. Even with Figueroa Navarro's contribution, academics in the United States did not begin to explore the involvement of marginalized people in nation-building until the 1990s. Mallon's 1995 work provides one of the earliest accounts by a U.S. historian of the influence that non-elites wielded in the region. After 1995, the research on the disregarded group developed rapidly. In the early 2000s scholars utilized Mallon's framework to increase the studies of marginalized groups. Their manuscripts demonstrate that the popular masses were not mere "pawns" or "cannon fodder" used by the oligarchy to achieve its goals. Rather these people played a significant role in the independence movements and the governments that followed.

Conclusion

Over three sections, this chapter demonstrated how historians have interpreted liberalism and the ideology's effects on Latin America. Covering close to seventy years of work, the analysis shows that scholars traditionally focused on political and elite histories, as well as the impact of social Darwinism and positivism on liberal intellectuals. During the mid-1990s, academics shifted their attention to marginalized groups. In their examinations of non-elites, historians argued that plebeians had more influence in government and in the formation of nation-states than scholars had previously thought.

Scholarly works on the popular masses often highlight the role of Afro-Latin Americans in politics. Government offices and the military offered a rare opportunity for social mobility to people of African descent, which the group actively pursued. Panamanian historian Figueroa Navarro provides an analysis of the black Liberal Party in his 1982 work

and shows that Afro-Panamanians participated widely in government. Figueroa Navarro's examination of the group prompted some scholars to expand the research on Afro-Latin Americans during the mid-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The authors maintain that non-elites contributed to local and state governments far more than previously believed. Applebaum in *Muddied Waters* discusses Afro-Latin Americans in Cauca politics. Helg also addresses this participation briefly in *Liberty and Equality* and sheds light on Afro-Colombian politicians Juan José Nieto and Luis A. Robles during the 1860s.

In Panama, historians emphasized the arrabal, a section of Panama City largely composed of Afro-Latin Americans. After the Liberal Party's reforms in the early 1850s, abolishing slavery and granting universal suffrage, these previously marginalized peoples voted in large numbers and elected their own officials. Aims McGuinness's 2008 *Path of Empire* demonstrates that Afro-Panamanians held positions in the local government, such as alcalde, secretary, or seats on the cabildo. McGuinness points to the careers of Buenaventura Correoso and Juan Mendoza as evidence. Juan Mendoza, the father of Carlos Antonio Mendoza, emerged as a political leader during the mid-1850s. Juan eventually rose to the presidency in the sovereign state of Panama in 1871 and 1872. Sanders similarly shows that non-elites in Colombia figured prominently in politics prior to the 1880s. However, Sanders contends that the legislation created during the Regeneration severely limited plebeian participation in government. Despite Sanders argument, Mendoza at this time held several government positions during the late-1880s and until the end of the nineteenth century.

Andrews's *Afro-Latin America* offers a broader explanation and analysis as to why people of African descent became marginalized in Latin America during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The scholar posits that social Darwinism and positivism led to the marginalization of Afro-Latin American politicians, which the author argues contributed

to the demise of Mendoza. Celestino Andrés Araúz similarly shows that U.S. concepts of race led to the ousting of Mendoza from the presidency. Each author focuses on how racist ideology influenced the former president's political decline in 1910. These two historians only emphasize this point in Mendoza's life, and both overlook his career after stepping down from the presidency. After 1910, Mendoza continued to influence Panamanian politics through such positions as president of the Liberal Party in 1912, and as the leader of the opposition against Belisario Porras in 1914. Roles such as these illustrate Mendoza's continued relevance.

In the following chapter, I connect a case study on Carlos Antonio Mendoza to the historiography on liberalism with several important findings. First and foremost, the thesis illustrates that the Afro-Panamanian leader continued to possess influence in society. An examination of Mendoza's career reveals that radical liberals continued to impact politics from the late nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries. Although Sanders and Andrews suggest that radical liberalism waned, W. John Green argues that plebeian liberal ideology led to the emergence of Colombian politician Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in the late-1920s. If black liberalism thrived in Colombia through the 1920s, as Green suggests, then it probably maintained some sort of relevancy after the Regeneration of the late-1880s. This thesis fills an important gap between Sanders, Andrews and Green's time periods. The research illustrates that in spite of the Regeneration and scientific racism, Mendoza's career was not defined by his ousting from the presidency, but rather he remained an important leader until his death in 1916.

Chapter 2: The Radical Liberal Tradition and Mendoza's Continued Relevance

In his work *Contentious Republicans*, James E. Sanders argues that prior to the Regeneration of 1886, non-elites actively participated in politics alongside the Colombian oligarchy.⁹⁷ The Conservative Party and Conservative Liberals, also known as Independents, frowned upon the involvement of plebeians in political affairs and felt that such participation did not benefit the country. Those who supported the Regeneration perceived the lower class as backward and as limiting Colombia's progress. As a result of this view, these two political groups led the Regeneration movement to address this perceived threat to society.

Independents and Conservatives desired a stronger central government to bring order to the country. Therefore, this political alliance created a constitution that possessed strict penalties for breaking the law. The Constitution of 1886 also redefined citizenship as "males over the age of twenty-one, who have means of support or gainful employment," banned "popular political organizations," and reintroduced the death penalty.⁹⁸ The new constitution also required voters to be literate.⁹⁹ Sanders contends that elites implemented the reforms to marginalize plebeians, particularly Afro-Colombians who embraced and supported liberals due to their promotion of citizenship, equality, and suffrage. Conservatives and Independents viewed people of African descent as unruly and the reason for civil strife.

While Sanders shows that the Regeneration ostracized plebeians, George Reid Andrews argues that scientific racism diminished the role of Afro-Latin American politicians well into the twentieth century.¹⁰⁰ Liberals, who had once emphasized citizenship and equality, declared that science provided the best opportunity to construct a civilized republic. Influenced by social Darwinism and positivism, elites came to perceive Afro-Latin

⁹⁷ Sanders, *Contentious Republicans*.

⁹⁸ *La Constitución de Colombia* 1886, title 2, art. 15; title 3, art. 47; title 11, art. 119.

⁹⁹ *La Constitución de Colombia* 1886, title 18, art. 173

¹⁰⁰ Andrews, *Afro-Latin America*.

Americans as a group that hindered advancement. To ensure proper development of a nation, Andrews states, “Latin America would have to become white.”¹⁰¹ Whitening required Latin America to emulate the countries of Western Europe and the United States, which possessed the most technological advancements of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Government leaders whitened their republics in several ways. Politicians focused on changing the landscape of their cities. Urban areas during the colonial era had small streets and buildings that reached no more than two stories tall. Leaders emphasized larger structures and sprawling avenues and boulevards that reflected the metropolises of Western Europe. Officials endorsed the construction of electric railways in cities and promoted vaccination programs, as these medical breakthroughs signified progress as well.¹⁰²

The oligarchy also emphasized changing the population’s composition to achieve “whiteness.” Politicians encouraged the immigration of Europeans to their countries, and hoped that a greater population of whites would lead to the blending of races. In addition, government officials focused on changing the mentality of Afro-Latin Americans. The suppression of black culture ensued through attacks on religious practices and social organizations. According to the leading intellectuals, community groups provided a forum for people of African descent to practice old rituals. In the view of liberals, Afro-Latin American spiritual beliefs included vivacious dancing and speaking in tongues, all signs of a backward civilization.¹⁰³ Andrews includes an examination of scientific racism’s impact on elite thinking in Colombia and Panama. The historian briefly discusses the repercussions of such beliefs and laws, which originated during the Regeneration, and their eventual affect on

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 118.

¹⁰² Ibid., 123.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 119-123.

Mendoza's presidency.¹⁰⁴ Conservatives, such as Santiago de la Guardia, sought an alliance with U.S. chargé d'affaires Richard O. Marsh, who refused to cooperate with Mendoza due to his African ancestry.¹⁰⁵ Mendoza resigned as president on October 1, 1910, in part due to the pressure from Marsh and the Conservative Party.

Andrews and Sanders demonstrate that the political climate of Colombia, and later Panama, changed after the adoption of scientific racism. As both authors show, the Regeneration of 1886 significantly reduced non-elite participation in politics. Sanders examines the Constitution of 1886 and its influence through the end of the nineteenth century, whereas Andrews traces the marginalization of Afro-Colombians and Afro-Panamanians into twentieth century. Each author argues that politicians directed legislation at plebeians, particularly supporters of radical liberalism, in order to prevent them from participating in the government. These two scholars contend that social Darwinism and positivism changed the beliefs of the oligarchy. In their analysis, the historians do not examine in detail the impact of these two ideologies on Afro-Latin American political leaders. Andrews briefly highlights the U.S. role in ousting Mendoza from the presidency in 1910, but does not thoroughly examine the event. Andrews's primary concern was not Mendoza but rather to provide a broad overview of social Darwinism and positivism and their influence on the region.

In works highlighting Mendoza, authors do not investigate the role that scientific racism had on him after his time as president. Celestino Andrés Araúz focuses primarily on the factors leading to Mendoza's resignation from office in 1910.¹⁰⁶ The Panamanian historian lacks an analysis on whether social Darwinism and positivism continued to impact

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 98-99.

¹⁰⁵ Araúz, *Mendoza secretario de hacienda y presidente*, vol. 1, 198.

¹⁰⁶ Araúz, *Mendoza secretario de hacienda y presidente*; Araúz, *El imperialismo y la oligarquía*.

Mendoza as a leader after 1910. Andrews, Araúz, and Michael Conniff all establish that the Conservative Party aligned with Marsh, who exhibited a racist ideology. This pressure from conservatives and Marsh contributed to Mendoza relinquishing control of the executive office.¹⁰⁷ However, Andrews and Conniff overlook other factors that led to Mendoza stepping down as president, and neither examines the details of his career after 1910. Araúz provides a more extensive examination on Mendoza during 1910, but the author hastily describes the former president's life after this point. George Westerman and Araúz both point to Pablo Arosemena's request that Mendoza travel to Colombia for negotiations about a peace settlement in December 1910.¹⁰⁸ Other scholars, such as Ernesto J. Castellero R. and Baltasar Isaza Calderón, similarly describe this event. Calderón illustrates Mendoza's involvement in the Liberal Party and his break with Porras in 1914.¹⁰⁹ The historiography about Mendoza details some of his accomplishments and his participation in politics after 1910; however, such works remain hagiographic. While these historians show Mendoza's continued importance, they do so without placing him in a broader historical context. After leaving the executive office, Mendoza remained widely popular, which contrasts with Andrews and Sanders's arguments that Afro-Colombian and Afro-Panamanian officials became irrelevant during this time.

Expanding upon the literature on Afro-Latin American politicians, this chapter tests Andrews's paradigm for the first time on Panama by analyzing the political career of Mendoza from 1880 until his death in 1916. Contributing to the scholarship on Afro-Latin Americans in government, I argue that despite Andrews's paradigm, Mendoza remained politically relevant. To demonstrate the continued importance of Mendoza, the chapter first

¹⁰⁷ Araúz, *El imperialismo y la oligarquía*; Conniff, *Black Labor on a White Canal*.

¹⁰⁸ Westerman, *Padre del acta de independencia*, 53-55; Araúz, *El imperialismo y la oligarquía*, 300-301.

¹⁰⁹ Castellero, *Recuerdos de la vida del doctor Carlos A. Mendoza*, 51-65; Isaza Calderón, *Historia de Panamá*, 340-341; Isaza Calderón, *El liberalismo*, 461-463.

links the former president to the radical liberal tradition by examining his familial connection to black liberalism. An analysis of Mendoza's writings from the period 1880 to 1916 further demonstrates his adherence to the radical liberal tradition. During this time, Mendoza penned numerous articles that contested the centralist government of Colombia and the threat that the Regeneration posed to democracy. Mendoza continually challenged the restrictions limiting freedom of speech and the press. The section takes into consideration Mendoza's 1892 defense of Native American Victoriano Lorenzo, which further illustrates his perception about the Regeneration and its violation of civil liberties. Through the exploration of Mendoza's works, it becomes clear that he emerged from and remained loyal to the radical liberal tradition. Even with the Regeneration's attempt to limit free speech and suffrage, black liberalism continued to influence Panamanians.

After ascending to the presidency in 1910, Mendoza continued to promote liberal ideology as the way for Panama to solidify itself as a sovereign nation. However, President Mendoza experienced overt racism from Marsh and pressure from the Conservative Party. Despite this opposition, Panamanians supported Mendoza's attempts to continue as president. More importantly, Mendoza's popularity did not end after he stepped down from the executive office. After 1910, Mendoza remained widely influential, even among his adversaries, until his death in February 1916. While racist ideology from U.S. diplomats and legal constraints in Panama's constitution limited Mendoza's time in the executive office, he retained enough power to split the Liberal Party in 1914. During this period, Belisario Porras and Mendoza openly broke due to ideological and personal differences. The research shows that Mendoza believed Porras had overstepped his powers as president by controlling the 1914 elections and by hand-picking his own successor. Contrary to Andrews's argument, Mendoza initiated the division of the party on his own terms.

These findings enhance our understanding about liberalism and Mendoza's relevance after 1910. Andrews demonstrates the importance of black liberalism during the mid-nineteenth century. Furthermore, Andrews argues that scientific racism all but ended Afro-Latin American political participation and black liberal ideology by the early-twentieth century. This chapter argues that the ideology maintained its significance during Andrews's timeframe. W. John Green's work, *Gaitanismo*, offers an example of the continued importance of plebeian liberalism in Colombia from the late-1920s to the early-1960s.¹¹⁰ The goal of this section is to provide a connection to Green's work by demonstrating that the radical liberal tradition continued during and after the Regeneration. My analysis demonstrates that Mendoza actively participated in politics after 1910. What is more, the chapter shows that Panamanians revered Mendoza during the first part of the twentieth century. An examination of Mendoza's career from 1910 to 1916 shows that despite the influence of scientific racism in the early-twentieth century, some Afro-Latin American politicians did not experience marginalization, but instead retained a high measure of importance in public life.

The Radical Liberal Tradition and Carlos A. Mendoza, 1880-1910

Carlos Antonio Mendoza emerged from the radical liberal tradition that arose during the wars of independence. The Mendoza family provides an example of how Afro-Latin Americans utilized the opportunities offered under Spanish rule and during the wars of independence to climb up the social hierarchy. Araúz offers the most comprehensive examination of Mendoza and his relationship to black liberal ideology. Although Mendoza's family provides one link to black liberalism, Araúz does not present an analysis of the former

¹¹⁰ Green, *Gaitanismo*.

president's writings.¹¹¹ Mendoza's works from 1880 to 1910 demonstrate his adherence to black liberalism and his belief that it provided the best way to govern society. Mendoza's devotion to radical liberal ideology became more ardent as Colombia enforced the Regeneration's legislation restricting freedom of speech and suffrage in Panama. At this time Mendoza began to oppose the Colombian government through his articles denouncing the Regeneration for restraining voters' rights and limiting free speech. During the Thousand Days War, from 1899 to 1902, Mendoza continued to evoke the black liberal tradition and maintained this stance after Panama's independence in 1903. Despite James Sanders' contention that the Regeneration all but stopped radical liberalism's influence in society, and George Reid Andrews's theory that scientific racism marginalized Afro-Latin American politicians, Mendoza and his liberalism remained relevant in Panama from the 1880s until his death.

Prior to the emergence of the radical liberal tradition, Afro-Panamanians began to work in government positions, which Spaniards had once occupied during the colonial era. As Alfredo Castellero Calvo notes in his work *Los negros y mulatos libres*, the caste system slowly began to change at the start of the seventeenth century in Panama.¹¹² During this period, Castellero Calvo shows that Afro-Panamanians numerically outnumbered Spaniards. As a result, individuals of African ancestry began to fill important jobs, such as notaries, at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Furthermore, Castellero Calvo demonstrates that during the eighteenth century people of African descent joined the military as a way to enhance their prestige in society. Marixa Lasso's *Myths of Harmony* similarly argues that the wars of independence offered Afro-Colombians the chance to serve in the army, as it

¹¹¹ Araúz, *El imperialismo y la oligarquía*.

¹¹² Alfredo Castellero Calvo, *Los negros y mulatos libres en la historia social panameña* (Panama: Impresora Panama, 1969).

provided another means to improve their social status.¹¹³ Andrews argues that because of such opportunities, Afro-Latin Americans embraced liberalism and eventually black liberal ideology as it “invoked concepts of civic equality, political democracy, and the rights of citizenship.”¹¹⁴ Radical liberals embraced the right to vote, which they believed expressed citizenship.

Antonio Mendoza, Carlos’ grandfather, served under Simón Bolívar as a captain in the army during the wars of independence.¹¹⁵ As an Afro-Venezuelan, Antonio more than likely supported Bolívar due to his liberal ideology, and eventually relocated to Panama to start a family in 1821. On September 4, 1829, Antonio’s wife gave birth to Juan Mendoza. Juan eventually became a lawyer and entered public service for the first time in 1852.¹¹⁶ During La Tajada de Sandía investigation in 1856, Mendoza increased his visibility in politics, serving as secretary to liberal judge Buenaventura Correoso, a prominent leader among radical liberals.¹¹⁷ As a result of his participation in the inquiry, Mendoza rose in the Liberal Party, leading him to become a magistrate of the Superior Court. In 1871, Mendoza became president of the sovereign state of Panama, a position he retained the following year. At the time of his death on May 3, 1876, Mendoza represented Panama as a senator in the Colombian Congress.¹¹⁸

Several scholars note the Mendoza family’s link to the radical liberal tradition and how Carlos Mendoza’s political career mirrors that of his father. For instance, George

¹¹³ Lasso, *Myths of Harmony*.

¹¹⁴ Andrews, *Afro-Latin America*, 92.

¹¹⁵ Westerman, *Padre del acta de independencia*, 5.

¹¹⁶ Leyes de honores: Ley 41 de 1883, Por la cual se dispone la traslación de los restos del señor doctor Juan Mendoza, de Bogotá a Panama (Diciembre 3, 1883), in *La Lotería* 1, no. 11 (Octubre 1956): 7.

¹¹⁷ Baltasar Isaza Calderón, *El liberalismo y Carlos A. Mendoza: en la historia panameña*. (Colombia: Stamato Editores, 1994), 213. Correoso served as the president of the Sovereign State of Panama on several occasions. In 1872, Juan Mendoza replaced Correoso in the presidency.

¹¹⁸ Leyes de honores: Ley 41 de 1883, Por la cual se dispone la traslación de los restos del señor doctor Juan Mendoza, de Bogotá a Panama (Diciembre 3, 1883), in *La Lotería* 1, no. 11 (Octubre 1956): 7.

Westerman highlights each position that Carlos Antonio Mendoza held in Panama, both before and after independence. The historian includes an examination of Mendoza's beliefs about liberalism. However, Westerman's analysis glosses over Mendoza's radical convictions. The author merely discusses how Mendoza supported liberty and equality. Araúz similarly details the positions that Mendoza held, and shows how he emerged from the radical liberal tradition by exploring his connection to his father. These two scholars' analysis lacks a comprehensive overview of black liberalism. According to Andrews, radical liberal ideology embraced the right to suffrage that "was carried out in part through party and electoral politics."¹¹⁹ After the granting of universal manhood suffrage in 1853, Aims McGuinness shows that Afro-Panamanians quickly became a political force. As a result, Afro-Latin Americans in Panama started to fill municipal government positions, such as alcalde, secretary, and seats in the cabildo. By the 1860s, people of African descent ascended to various provincial level offices.¹²⁰ Sanders argues that Colombian radicals also used their right to vote to strike down municipal legislation which restricted freedom of speech. In another display of political conviction, black liberals ended the death penalty in the Rionegro Constitution of 1863 and limited prison sentences to a maximum of ten years. Not only did plebeian liberals embrace these views, but they also considered economic sovereignty as an important component of liberty. According to supporters of radical liberal ideology, only through financial independence could they achieve equality.¹²¹ An exploration of Carlos Antonio Mendoza's writings demonstrates his adherence to these radical liberal concepts.

Despite the Regeneration's impact on Panama, Mendoza frequently challenged the Colombian government's centralization of power and infringement upon civil liberties, such

¹¹⁹ Andrews, *Afro-Latin America*, 93.

¹²⁰ McGuinness, *Path of Empire*, 95.

¹²¹ Sanders, *Contentious Republicans*, 148, 161.

as voting and free speech. Mendoza identified early on the problems that the Regeneration posed to these rights. In 1885, Rafael Núñez and his administration sent an intimidating letter to *La Estrella de Panamá* about publishing unflattering articles about the government. Mendoza declared that President Núñez, a liberal who aligned himself with the Conservative Party, threatened free press “through censorship” and “by breaking the pen of the writer.”¹²² In 1886, Núñez and his constituents met to abolish the Constitution of 1863, which granted absolute freedom of the press. The Colombian Congress approved the Constitution of 1886 containing Article 42 that limited what newspapers could write during times of war, and held periodicals “responsible under law for threats to personal honor, the social order, and the public peace.”¹²³ This legislation angered Mendoza, who experienced the impact of the Regeneration’s restrictive laws when the Colombian government suspended his paper *La Idea*. In February 1888, Mendoza published at least four pieces that condemned the Regeneration’s violation of these liberties. Mendoza referred to the press as “the powerful spokesman of civilization,” and he believed Article 42 restricted the power of the written word for the first time in Colombia’s history, “mock[ing] the core principles of this great [Liberal] party.”¹²⁴ Mendoza continued his attacks on Núñez and the Conservative Party for eliminating the Constitution of 1863, which also allowed the Colombian government to intervene in Santander province, a hot bed of radical liberalism. According to Mendoza, the intervention by Núñez into Santander’s affairs violated the sovereignty of that state.¹²⁵ Mendoza’s concern about the Colombian government limiting civil liberties is more apparent in his 1892 defense of indigenous leader Victoriano Lorenzo, who had slain Pedro de Hoyos on June 23, 1891. Hoyos had gathered nine armed men to apprehend Lorenzo for crimes he

¹²² Carlos Antonio Mendoza, “El despotismo en acción y la democracia en campaña,” in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 68.

¹²³ *La Constitución de Colombia* 1886, title 3, art. 42.

¹²⁴ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, “Libertad para ellos,” in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 81.

¹²⁵ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, “1860•1876•1885,” in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 77.

purportedly committed. In the opinion of Mendoza, Lorenzo killed Hoyos in self-defense. Mendoza suggested that Lorenzo had acted to protect his well-being, and that wrongfully placing him in prison violated his individual rights.¹²⁶

An important component of black liberalism centered on universal male suffrage, which the Constitution of 1853 granted in addition to the abolition of slavery. It should come as no surprise that Mendoza vehemently denounced the Constitution of 1886 for restricting the right to vote by redefining citizenship as all “males over the age of twenty-one who have means of support or gainful employment” and earned five hundred pesos a year, or owned property valued at more than 1,500 pesos. The legislation also required voters to be literate.¹²⁷ While ignoring restrictions placed on African-American voters, Mendoza pointed to the United States, England, and France and as countries that guaranteed the right to vote, in contrast to the limitations that Colombia had placed on its citizens. In Mendoza’s view, a government that did not ensure voting and freedom of speech limited the ability of individuals to express themselves democratically.¹²⁸ Once again, Mendoza attacked the Conservative Party for repealing freedom of the press and for not “guaranteeing the purity of suffrage.” Mendoza believed that if Colombia respected one’s right to vote, then the Liberal Party would “triumph,” as liberals constituted the “majority of the country.”¹²⁹

In 1900, at the apex of the Thousand Days War, Mendoza continued his criticism of Colombian laws and how the Regeneration failed to guarantee individual rights, which he believed threatened democratic values.¹³⁰ Mendoza deemed the revolution justified due to

¹²⁶ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, “Defensa de Victoriano Lorenzo,” in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 99-100.

¹²⁷ *La Constitución de Colombia* 1886, title 2, art. 15; title 18, art. 173.

¹²⁸ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, “Editorial de *El Ciudadano*,” in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 113.

¹²⁹ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, “Labor republicana,” in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 109.

¹³⁰

Colombia's infringement on civil liberties.¹³¹ These violations continued to influence Mendoza's writings. Mendoza, and other liberals, issued a manifesto to Panamanians demanding equality that would "free the country from oppression" and ensure a "return [to] justice."¹³² Such concerns stemmed from the repeated breaches of personal rights. When Mendoza wrote the rough draft of Panama's Declaration of Independence in 1903, he declared it essential to ensure these civil liberties. In addition, Mendoza professed that a government must be "democratic, representative and responsible" to guarantee the "prosperity and happiness" of the country's people.¹³³ Mendoza continually challenged infringements upon these personal rights. In 1910, President Mendoza wrote to the governor of Colón and condemned a police chief who had intimidated voters. The officer had threatened those who failed to support his candidate in elections. According to Mendoza, voters had the right to elect the officials they desired, and he believed that the commander had violated this privilege.¹³⁴ What is more, Mendoza did not support excessive penalties for crimes. Radical liberals had abolished the death penalty in the Constitution of Rionegro in 1863. Mendoza reflected this belief while serving as president when he commuted the death sentence of inmate Benidicto Rentería's sentence to twenty years in prison.¹³⁵ Until Mendoza's death in February 1916, he continued to challenge any politician or public servant whom he perceived as having violated any personal freedom.

Linking Mendoza to his writings provides a different perspective on his connection to radical liberalism. Prior historians, such as Araúz and Westerman, demonstrate Mendoza's

¹³¹ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, "Notas a los cónsules extranjeros en Panamá y al superintendente de la compañía del ferrocarril," in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 130-132.

¹³² Carlos Antonio Mendoza, Belisario Porras, and Eusebio A. Morales, "Manifiesto," in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 127.

¹³³ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, "Borrador del acta de independencia de Panamá de Colombia," in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 139.

¹³⁴ "Párrafos de historia," *La Prensa*, November 10, 1911.

¹³⁵ Resolución N° 70 bis, April 27, 1910, in Araúz, *Mendoza secretario de hacienda y presidente*, vol. 3, 200.

association to the black liberal tradition by his familial relationship and subsequent rise through the Liberal Party. As Andrews shows in *Afro-Latin America*, black liberalism endorsed suffrage, equality, and freedom of speech, which Mendoza's articles and criticisms of the Regeneration illustrate. Mendoza ardently condemned Colombia for the Constitution of 1886, which contained several articles restricting voting rights and freedom of the press. According to Sanders, these pieces of legislation were directed toward radical liberalism to prevent its influence in society. However, the Regeneration contributed to Mendoza's convictions that black liberal ideology offered the best method to govern a republic. Rather than limit Mendoza and the Liberal Party's influence in Panama, Colombia only strengthened the determination of Panamanian liberals, which contributed to the independence movement. In 1904, conservatives and liberals created a constituent assembly that elected conservative Manuel Amador Guerreo as Panama's first president. When Amador Guerreo attempted to hand-pick conservative Ricardo Arias as his successor for the presidency in 1908, Mendoza joined the opposition.¹³⁶

Carlos A. Mendoza and His Brief Presidency

During the campaign of 1908 elections, Carlos Antonio Mendoza supported the Conservative Party's dissident presidential nominee José Domingo de Obaldía. As a result of this endorsement, Obaldía became the new president of Panama. Obaldía subsequently appointed Mendoza as second vice president. Less than a year later first vice president José Arango passed away from a heart attack. Due to Arango's death, Mendoza became the new first vice president of the republic. On March 1, 1910, conservative President Obaldía unexpectedly died. Since Mendoza held the first vice presidency, he became Panama's third president.

¹³⁶ Westerman, *Padre del acta de independencia*, 18-19.

The radical liberal Mendoza occupied Panama's presidency from March 1 to October 1, 1910. Araúz, the foremost expert on Mendoza, demonstrates in several of his works that the Conservative Party and U.S. chargé d'affaires Richard O. Marsh collaborated to ostracize the new president. Araúz argues that conservatives attacked Mendoza and declared his time in office as unconstitutional.¹³⁷ Diplomat Marsh, as well as several other U.S. representatives, also focused on the constitutionality of Mendoza's presidency. Besides arguing against the legality of his presidency, U.S. diplomats highlighted Mendoza's race in many of their correspondences with officials in Washington D.C. Although Mendoza served as president for a mere six months, often under frequent attack from his opponents, he solidified his stature in Panama. Mendoza accomplished this feat despite the opposition's efforts to marginalize him due to his race and the supposed unconstitutionality of his presidency. Mendoza enhanced his prestige as he attempted a bi-partisan approach in politics and emphasized a variety of reforms directed toward the betterment of the country. As a result of Mendoza's efforts, Panamanians, and especially the Liberal Party, praised him for his commitment to the republic.

Questions emerged almost immediately about Mendoza's unusual ascent to the presidency. U.S. chargé d'affaires Doyle stated that Mendoza took the oath of office before the five Supreme Court Justices, which the diplomat deemed "irregular."¹³⁸ According to the Panamanian Constitution, Article 71 specified that the incoming president should accept the office before the National Assembly whereas article 72 stipulated that the new president should only take the oath in front of the Supreme Court if he could not do so before the

¹³⁷ See Araúz, *Mendoza secretario de hacienda y presidente*, vol. 1, 196-205; Araúz, *El imperialismo y la oligarquía*, 207-256.

¹³⁸ Doyle to Dawson, memorandum, March 4, 1910, 847/225, roll 3, Records of the Department of State relating to internal affairs of Panama, 1910-1929 (M607), National Archives of the United States (NAUS), Record Group (RG) 59, at University of North Texas Willis Library (UNT).

assembly.¹³⁹ Thus, Mendoza became president under Article 72 rather than 71. Doyle stated that the conservative judges were Mendoza's "enemies." The diplomat suggested that conservatives had Mendoza sworn in as president with Article 72 to challenge his position "in the future."¹⁴⁰ Even though Doyle expressed his concern about the abnormality of Mendoza's oath under Article 72, the new president's opponents overlooked this potential loophole. Instead, Mendoza's opposition focused on Articles 82 and 83 of the Constitution, and on his race.

By the middle of March 1910, several of Mendoza's supporters began to spread word about his possible reelection for the remainder of Obaldía's term, which amounted to two years. The Conservative Party immediately challenged the constitutionality of Mendoza's presidency and sought the aid of the U.S. to prevent his reappointment.¹⁴¹ Conservatives pointed to Article 136 of Panama's Constitution that allowed the U.S. to intervene in Panamanian politics if a threat to the stability of the republic existed, which they argued would occur if Mendoza remained president.¹⁴² Araúz demonstrates that from March to June 1910, the conservative newspaper *La Palabra* increased its pressure on Mendoza and questioned his legitimacy as president. The arrival of Richard O. Marsh in June as the new U.S. chargé d'affaires intensified the criticisms about Mendoza. The diplomat similarly doubted Mendoza's right to serve in the executive office. In his diplomatic correspondences, Marsh frequently pointed to the irregularity of Mendoza's ascent to the presidency. Marsh questioned Mendoza's legitimacy as president. However, Marsh also considered Mendoza's race as a factor. Marsh stated in his July 1910 report that Panama's large Afro-Latin American population would all vote for Mendoza. Furthermore, Marsh believed blacks were

¹³⁹ *La Constitución de Panamá*, title 7, art. 71; art. 72.

¹⁴⁰ Doyle to Dawson, telegram, March 4, 1910, 847/225, roll 3, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT.

¹⁴¹ Araúz, *Mendoza secretario de hacienda y presidente*, vol. 1, 196.

¹⁴² *La Constitución de Panamá*, title 14, art. 136.

“mostly ignorant, and irresponsible, [and] unable to meet the serious obligations or citizenship in a Republic.”¹⁴³ In addition, Marsh argued that if the U.S. supported an Afro-Panamanian as president, the possibility existed that white populations in Central American countries might openly oppose the United States’ influence in the region.¹⁴⁴ U.S. diplomat Reynolds Hitt cited several additional reasons in his June report as to why the Conservative Party opposed Mendoza. According to conservatives, Mendoza wasted expenses on public infrastructure and claimed the president committed “fraud and graft on a considerable scale.” Hitt suggested that Mendoza’s trip through the provinces to determine the needs of his country was a disguised campaign for the presidency. More importantly Hitt pointed out that conservatives did not want a president “of color and . . . this might throw the government of the country into the hands of the negro element.”¹⁴⁵

The opposition’s concern about Mendoza became further inflamed with the election of new delegates for the National Assembly on July 1, 1910. Of the twenty-eight possible seats in the assembly, twenty went to liberals and the remainder to conservatives. Hitt thought that the liberal majority would elect a president from its party for the rest of Obaldía’s term, and that the assembly would choose Mendoza.¹⁴⁶ The diplomat referred to several articles of the Constitution that could prevent Mendoza from continuing as president. The Conservative Party, Hitt, and Marsh’s arguments focused on two distinct provisions that had the most political significance. Article 82 stated that an individual who served as president over the prior year-and-a-half could not run for election.¹⁴⁷ Additionally, Article 83 declared that

¹⁴³ Richard O. Marsh to the Secretary of State, report, July 28, 1910, 819.00-847/240, roll 3, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Reynolds Hitt to the Secretary of State, report, June 11, 1910, 819.00-847/236, roll 3, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT.

¹⁴⁶ Richard O. Marsh to the Secretary of State, report, July 28, 1910, 819.00-847/240, roll 3, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT.

¹⁴⁷ *La Constitución de Panamá*, title 7, art. 82.

anyone who held the presidency over the previous six months could not be the new president.¹⁴⁸

Although Mendoza's critics focused their attention on the constitutionality of his presidency, the president's race also continued to generate interest. U.S. diplomat George T. Weitzel reiterated Mendoza's African ancestry. Weitzel noted in his correspondence to the Secretary of State that conservatives "strongly opposed . . . Dr. Mendoza principally . . . because he [was] a negro."¹⁴⁹ The diplomat pointed to the difficulties that Mendoza posed for U.S. citizens who resided or desired to relocate to Panama. Weitzel believed that many of the Panama Canal workers came from the U.S. South. In his report, Weitzel stated southerners would "not consider for an instant the prospect of living under negro rule."¹⁵⁰ Conservative Santiago de la Guardia, who hoped to become president, believed Mendoza could not continue as the executive leader.¹⁵¹ By August 5, 1910, Marsh declared that, "the political situation [was] becoming critical," and requested that the U.S. government determine Mendoza's legitimacy to hold the executive office under Panama's Constitution.¹⁵² During this time, the conservatives continued to question the validity of Mendoza's candidacy as president and pointed to his personal life. Marsh reported that Mendoza had several mistresses, stole from the public coffers, and owned several homes.¹⁵³ The U.S. government eventually determined that Mendoza's reelection would violate the Constitution and therefore could cause a disruption in the affairs of Panama, all of which threatened the construction of

¹⁴⁸ *La Constitución de Panamá*, title 7, art. 83.

¹⁴⁹ George T. Weitzel to the Secretary of State, "On the Constitutionality of the Election of Dr. Carlos A. Mendoza as President of Panama," August 10, 1910, 819.00/298, roll 3, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Santiago La Guardia quoted in Richard O. Marsh to the Secretary of State, telegram, August 5, 1910, 819.00-847/241, roll 3, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT. Marsh merely states that Guardia deemed Mendoza's reelection would be unconstitutional, which more than likely had to do with Articles 82 and 83.

¹⁵² Richard O. Marsh to the Secretary of State, telegram, August 5, 1910, 819.00-847/241, roll 3, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT.

¹⁵³ Richard O. Marsh to the Secretary of State, report, August 15, 1910, 847/253, roll 3, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT. At the beginning of Marsh's correspondence, he pointed to conservatives Santiago de la Guardia, Samuel Lewis, and Fernando Guardis as people who believed Mendoza's presidency was unconstitutional.

the canal. On August 24, 1910, Secretary of State Huntington Wilson indicated that Article 136 permitted the U.S. to intervene on this matter.¹⁵⁴ On August 27, Mendoza withdrew his candidacy as president and stated he would resign from office on September 30.¹⁵⁵

Despite these personal attacks and questions of legitimacy, Mendoza maintained his popularity and actually increased his stature among Panamanians. Mendoza sought to respect the coalition government composed of conservatives and liberals, as well as Panama's relationship with the U.S. After Obaldía's death, Mendoza addressed Panamanians on March 2, 1910, and stated he planned to "continue the policy of harmony, of moderation and [political] tolerance which he [Obaldía] had begun." Mendoza promised an active administration, which indicated his perception about the lack of involvement by previous presidents. Mendoza also assured diplomat George T. Weitzel that he planned to continue Obaldía's promises and relationship with the U.S.¹⁵⁶ Mendoza demonstrated his bipartisan approach when he kept the same cabinet members as his predecessor, which included conservative Samuel Lewis. The new president offered Obaldía's son, José Domingo de Obaldía J., the position of Secretaría de Hacienda, a position Mendoza once occupied.¹⁵⁷ In a report from an unspecified diplomat to the U.S. Secretary of State, the author noted that Mendoza maintained a cordial relationship with his opponents, and also stated he possessed the most influence in the Liberal Party.¹⁵⁸ Mendoza's efforts to maintain the relationship between liberals and conservatives did not go unnoticed by newspapers. *El Eco*, a liberal periodical, suggested he deserved praise for his actions to honor Obaldía's commitment to

¹⁵⁴ Araúz, *Mendoza secretario de hacienda y presidente*, vol. 1, 200.

¹⁵⁵ "Dr. Mendoza Resigns from Candidacy," *Panama Journal*, August 27, 1910.

¹⁵⁶ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, "Alocución," quoted in George T. Weitzel to the Secretary of State, "President Mendoza," March 3, 1910, 847/230, roll 3, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT.

¹⁵⁷ Araúz, *Mendoza secretario de hacienda y presidente*, vol. 1, 154.

¹⁵⁸ "Informe de la situación política en Panamá," March 19, 1910, in Celestino Andrés Araúz, *El imperialismo y oligarquía criolla contra Carlos A. Mendoza: documentos* (Panama: Organo Judicial, 2009), 51.

bipartisanship.¹⁵⁹

Mendoza's opposition in the U.S. consulate also noticed his political acumen and aptitude. Weitzel highlighted the new president's attributes in his early March 1910 report to Washington D.C. The diplomat acknowledged Mendoza possessed a vigorous work ethic and referred to him "as the boldest and most resourceful party leader in the country."¹⁶⁰ U.S. diplomat Reynolds Hitt noted that Mendoza had "marked ability and a strong following besides being a very skillful politician."¹⁶¹ Richard O. Marsh, one of Mendoza's staunchest critics, declared that the president was one of "ablest lawyers in all of Panama" and a "clever and comparatively high-minded politician."¹⁶² Although these U.S. representatives expressed racist attitudes towards Mendoza in these same correspondences, each individual argued in his own way that the Panamanian president possessed no equal and declared him the most important politician of the republic.

During Mendoza's presidency, the Liberal Party and its papers endorsed him for reelection and defended the president from attacks made by the opposition. Periodicals, such as *El Eco* and *El Diario de Panamá*, argued that President Mendoza deserved to lead the country. Such endorsements made by Mendoza supporters focused on his patriotism and dedication to ensure the betterment of Panama. Three weeks after his inauguration as president, Mendoza announced his government plan in *El Diaro de Panamá*. In his proposal, Mendoza emphasized two points that he believed would contribute to the development of Panama. Mendoza deemed education essential for Panamanians, especially primary

¹⁵⁹ M.S., "Carta al Dr. Mendoza," *El Eco*, April 2, 1910.

¹⁶⁰ George T. Weitzel to the Secretary of State, "President Mendoza," March 3, 1910, 847/230, NAUS, RG59, M607, UNT.

¹⁶¹ Reynolds Hitt to the Secretary of State, report, June 11, 1910, 819.00-847/236, roll 3, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT

¹⁶² Richard O. Marsh to the Secretary of State, report, July 28, 1910, 819.00-847/240, roll 3, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT.

schools.¹⁶³ Mendoza contributed to the increase in schools from 234 to 294 from 1909 to 1911. Enrollment rose by over five thousand students, and the number of teachers employed by over one hundred. The new president also endorsed secular education and limited the Catholic Church's involvement in schooling.¹⁶⁴ According to Mendoza, by expanding education, Panama's culture would flourish.

Mendoza believed that economic sovereignty was also essential for Panama. The president viewed the reliance on imported goods and materials as detrimental to Panama's economy. To address this issue, Mendoza proposed several solutions. In Mendoza's view, Panama needed to construct a railroad from Panama City to David in the north and to build additional lines off this main railway. In addition, Mendoza suggested building two experimental agricultural stations and to seek a special tariff from the U.S. on sugar exportation in order to expand that sector in Panama. Besides these pledges, Mendoza declared he would ensure fair elections and protect the rights of voters.¹⁶⁵ In response to the elections for the new delegates in the National Assembly on July 1, 1910, Mendoza stated that he would not permit any "restrictions . . . [on] voters."¹⁶⁶ According to Mendoza, achieving his goals would require an honest government and fiscal responsibility.¹⁶⁷

Mendoza's platform helped to endear him to the Liberal Party and Panamanians. However, Mendoza further enhanced his prestige when he became the first president since Panama's independence to travel through the country. After announcing his policies, Mendoza embarked on a tour through the provinces of Coclé, Chiriquí, Veraguas, Los Santos, Bocas del Toro, Colón, and San Blas, lasting from the end of March until mid-June

¹⁶³ Araúz, *Mendoza secretario de hacienda y presidente*, vol. 1, 154-155.

¹⁶⁴ Westerman, *Padre del acta de independencia*, 43-45.

¹⁶⁵ Araúz, *Mendoza secretario de hacienda y presidente*, vol. 1, 154-155. Voting rights changed after independence. According to article 49, citizens had to be twenty-one years of age to exercise the right to vote.

¹⁶⁶ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, "Declaraciones importantes," *El Diario de Panamá*, March 23, 1910, quoted in Araúz *Mendoza secretario de hacienda y presidente*, vol. 1, 158.

¹⁶⁷ Isaza Calderón, *El liberalismo y Carlos A. Mendoza*, 454.

1910. Mendoza hoped to assess the needs in each province of the republic. To achieve this objective, Mendoza inspected public offices, schools, prisons, and any other state related entity. *El Diario de Panamá* stated that no government authority since independence from Spain had visited so many different parts of the isthmus, and that Mendoza's trip to San Blas, which had a large indigenous population, demonstrated that the president cared about all Panamanians.¹⁶⁸ The Liberal Party and its supporters viewed Mendoza's expedition through Panama, his proposed government policies, and bipartisanship as proof that he could fulfill the remaining two years of Obaldía's term.

As a result of Mendoza's contributions and willingness to embark on reforms, liberals and their newspapers came to Mendoza's aid when conservatives questioned his legitimacy to serve as president. On May 21, 1910, *El Eco* challenged conservative periodical *La Palabra*'s contention of Mendoza's illegibility and use of Article 83, which prohibited the election of an individual who served as president six months prior to the election of a *new* president. Journalist Francisco Vejas determined that this stipulation did not apply to Mendoza since he would only fulfill the final two years of Obaldía's term, which the reporter believed did not constitute a new election period. According to Vejas, when the time came for the National Assembly to elect an interim president to finish Obaldía's term, Mendoza was eligible.¹⁶⁹ A week later *El Eco* challenged once again the opposition group's claim of unconstitutionality based on Articles 82 and 83. According to the essay, Panamanians elected Obaldía and not Mendoza. The periodical declared that as a result of this interpretation, Mendoza could run for office.¹⁷⁰ On June 11, 1910, *El Eco* affirmed Mendoza as its chosen candidate for the presidency. The paper stated that since Mendoza became the executive

¹⁶⁸ Araúz, *Mendoza secretario de hacienda y presidente*, vol. 1, 158-169. In this page range, Araúz provides an examination of each individual province, how long Mendoza spent in each region, and what the president took away from his visits.

¹⁶⁹ Francisco Vejas, "El Dr. Mendoza sí puede ser presidente," *El Eco*, May 21, 1910.

¹⁷⁰ "Por la moral política," *El Eco*, May, 28, 1910.

leader he had improved the government by his respect for freedom of the press and for his platform to ensure Panama's economic independence.¹⁷¹

El Diario de Panamá also expressed its support for Mendoza. On July 15, 1910, the periodical questioned *La Palabra* about its opposition to one of Panama's "eminent citizens." The liberal newspaper doubted the ability of the Conservative Party's candidates, Santiago de la Guardia and Ricardo Arias, both of whom experienced defeat against Obaldía in 1908.¹⁷² About two weeks later, Marsh noted in his July report that arguments made for Mendoza's possible reelection typically followed *El Eco* and *El Diario de Panamá*'s format. These two liberal papers challenged how conservatives interpreted Articles 82 and 83, while also praising Mendoza. In Marsh's correspondence, he provided an article written by Doctor Jerardo Ortega, a prominent lawyer and former president of the Sovereign State of Panama. Ortega had also served on the Constituent Assembly that wrote Panama's constitution. Since Ortega had retired from politics prior to his article, Panamanians viewed him as a worthy judge of Mendoza's situation. According to Ortega, Articles 82 and 83 did not prohibit the National Assembly from electing Mendoza. Ortega stated that since the National Assembly needed to choose new vice presidents, it could appoint Mendoza as first vice president to complete Obaldía's term¹⁷³

Other prominent lawyers in the Liberal Party, such as Pablo Arosemena, Eusebio A. Morales, Francisco Filós and Belisario Porras, came to similar conclusions as that of Ortega.¹⁷⁴ On August 1, 1910, *El Diario de Panamá* reported that "in the national mind palpitates the name of Doctor Mendoza as the indisputable candidate for first designate." The

¹⁷¹ "Nuestro candidato," *El Eco*, June 11, 1910.

¹⁷² "La Palabra y su tema," *El Diario de Panamá*, July 15, 1910, in Araúz, *El imperialismo y oligarquía criolla contra Carlos A. Mendoza: documentos*, 70.

¹⁷³ Jerardo Ortega, "The Constitutional Question," in Richard O. Marsh to the Secretary of State, report, July 28, 1910, 819.00-847/240, roll 3, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT.

¹⁷⁴ C.C. Arosemena to Huntington Wilson, report, August 24, 1910, 819.00/290, NAUS, RG59, M607, UNT.

periodical believed Mendoza would “receive an unanimous vote in the National Assembly,” due to his political acumen and morality.¹⁷⁵ A week later, the Afro-Panamanian-operated paper *El Duende* commended Mendoza for his work and stated he deserved “fair praises.”¹⁷⁶ On August 15, 1910, Mendoza declared his candidacy for the presidency, but withdrew his name less than two weeks later.¹⁷⁷ These papers indicate that Liberal Party backed Mendoza. The periodicals emphasized the support from prominent liberals and other lawyers who believed Mendoza could legally continue as president.

When Mendoza stepped down on August 27, 1910, he did so due to pressure from the U.S., as the country stated his reelection constituted a violation of Panama’s constitution. Mendoza explained that as a “patriot” he resigned his candidacy to “prevent any conflicts which might have brought serious consequences upon the country.” In addition, Mendoza expressed his faith that a new leader would continue to respect Obaldía’s goals.¹⁷⁸ Several days later, *El Diario de Panamá* published telegrams from politicians in David and Santiago declaring their support for the former president.¹⁷⁹ Mendoza’s choice to leave office only enhanced his prestige among liberals. On October 1, 1910, newspapers published homages to Mendoza. The *Panama Journal* declared that his presidency “doubled his value as a public servant,” and urged Mendoza not to consider retirement as, “Panama should enjoy the benefit of this experience.”¹⁸⁰ *El Diario de Panamá* similarly exalted Mendoza for his time in office, and noted he brought order to the government. The periodical praised Mendoza’s attempt to construct the railroad from Panama City to David. The paper referred to the former president

¹⁷⁵ “El doctor Mendoza y la opinión pública,” *El Diario de Panamá*, August 1, 1910, in Araúz, *Mendoza secretario de hacienda y presidente*, vol. 3, 304.

¹⁷⁶ “Los hombres del día: Dr. Carlos A. Mendoza,” *El Duende*, August 7, 1910, in Richard O. Marsh to the Secretary of State, report, August 10, 1910, 847/247, roll 3, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT.

¹⁷⁷ Araúz, *Mendoza secretario de hacienda y presidente*, vol. 1, 198.

¹⁷⁸ Carlos Antonio Mendoza quoted in “Dr. Mendoza Resigns from Candidacy,” *Panama Journal*, August 27, 1910.

¹⁷⁹ “Notas y noticias,” *El Diario de Panamá*, August 30, 1910.

¹⁸⁰ “Dr. Mendoza,” *Panama Journal*, October 1, 1910.

as “one of the country’s best officials” and its “most selfless and generous.”¹⁸¹

In 1912, Eusebio Morales noted that this support for Mendoza’s presidency occurred spontaneously. Morales stated that had Mendoza not resigned from office, his election by the National Assembly was all but guaranteed.¹⁸² Even though the opposition made personal attacks against Mendoza and his possible reelection, liberal newspapers and the Liberal Party supported the president. Important liberals, such as Pablo Arosemena, Eusebio A. Morales, Francisco Filós, and Belisario Porras also endorsed his presidency. These testimonies and support from Mendoza’s allies suggest the accuracy of Morales’s statement. Andrews, Araúz, and Conniff all demonstrate in varying degrees that Mendoza stepped down as a result of U.S. and the Conservative Party’s racism. Andrews’s paradigm suggests that scientific racism influenced liberalism; however, liberals did not express racist ideology toward Mendoza, but rather pushed for his reelection. Indeed, Mendoza’s popularity rose among his constituents even as he stepped down as president, which indicates that social Darwinism and positivism had less of an impact than what Andrews suggests.

Mendoza’s Continued Relevance, 1910-1916

According to Andrews, social Darwinist and positivist ideologies marginalized Afro-Latin American politicians during first part of the twentieth century. Despite Andrews argument, Mendoza remained relevant in Panama prior, during, and after his presidency. The newly-appointed liberal President Pablo Arosemena requested Mendoza to represent Panama in peace negotiations with Colombia. From the time Mendoza stepped down as president until his death in 1916, he received numerous offers to fill positions, either in the government or the Liberal Party. In addition, Mendoza continued to endorse and protect the radical liberal tradition. Mendoza, in fact, held so firmly to his beliefs that he led the Liberal Party

¹⁸¹ “El Dr. Mendoza y su gobierno,” *El Diario de Panamá*, October 1, 1910.

¹⁸² Eusebio A. Morales, “Carlos A. Mendoza,” *La Lotería* 1, no.11 (Octubre 1956): 20.

opposition against his longtime political collaborator and “brother” Belisario Porras.¹⁸³ Mendoza’s split with Porras arose from differences about liberalism and how to govern the country. The 1914 liberal factionalism did not occur as a result of scientific racism, as Andrews’ argument suggests. Rather, Mendoza led the opposition, as the former president believed this provided the only way to protect Panamanians’ civil liberties. Mendoza exerted his influence in Panama’s politics on his own terms and did not become marginalized due to his African heritage.

When Mendoza resigned as president on October 1, 1910, he did so with the intention of retiring from political life to practice law. *El Diario de Panamá* and the *Panama Journal* both determined that Mendoza had increased his value to the republic and urged the former president to continue as a public official. In spite of Mendoza’s retirement, President Pablo Arosemena asked him to negotiate a peace settlement with Colombia. Arosemena also sought reelection as president, which possibly indicates that he viewed Mendoza as a threat. Nevertheless, Arosemena more than likely chose Mendoza due to his knowledge of Colombia. During the late-1860s and early-1870s, Mendoza completed his secondary education and law degree in Colombia. Mendoza had also served in the Panamanian government prior to independence.¹⁸⁴ In 1905, Mendoza expressed his desire for Colombia and Panama to work out their differences and to establish diplomatic ties.¹⁸⁵ These experiences made Mendoza more than qualified for his mission to Bogotá, and probably influenced President Arosemena’s request.

Mendoza left for Colombia on December 2, 1910, to establish a “sincere relationship of friendship” that would lead to the “development of active trade” between the two

¹⁸³ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, “En un gran acto popular en su honor,” in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 297.

¹⁸⁴ Westerman, *Padre del acta de independencia*, 53.

¹⁸⁵ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, “Celebrando el segundo aniversario de la independencia de Panamá,” in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 175.

countries.¹⁸⁶ Although Panama became an independent republic in 1903, tensions in Colombia about the isthmus' separation persisted. When Mendoza and his commission arrived, Colombians expressed their discontent with the Panamanians. This hostility led the Colombian government to send the military to protect the delegation upon its arrival at the Bogotá train station. To ensure the continued safety of Mendoza and his committee, a militia was stationed outside their hotel. President Carlos E. Restrepo further complicated matters when he refused to acknowledge that the delegates represented an independent country. The Liberal Party in Colombia, however, issued a declaration to Colombians stating that Mendoza deserved a fair and impartial meeting. While the two countries did not come to an agreement, Mendoza helped to set the foundation for future negotiations.¹⁸⁷

When Mendoza returned from Colombia in May 1911, the presidential campaign had intensified, and he played an integral part in the election of the new president. Prior to endorsing a candidate, Mendoza went into the opposition against liberal President Arosemena. Mendoza originally supported Arosemena's election in 1910 to fulfill the final two years of Obaldía's term. According to Isaza Calderón, Arosemena had succumbed to the pressures of the Conservative Party and had abandoned the liberal doctrine he purportedly endorsed.¹⁸⁸ Mendoza more than likely saw Arosemena's failure to support the construction of a central railway system to connect the provinces as a deviation from liberalism.¹⁸⁹ The former president believed the railroad signified the economic sovereignty and development of Panama. Besides this divergence, Mendoza perhaps joined the opposition due to Arosemena's desire for reelection as president in 1912. Sources indicate that Arosemena

¹⁸⁶ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, "Mendoza en Bogotá," in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 253.

¹⁸⁷ Westerman, *Padre del acta de independencia*, 55.

¹⁸⁸ Isaza Calderón, *El liberalismo y Carlos A. Mendoza*, 460.

¹⁸⁹ Araúz, *El imperialismo y la oligarquía*, 299. Araúz demonstrates that Arosemena believed he could not justify the expense of the railroad. Since Mendoza viewed the construction of a central railway as a means to achieve Panama's economic independence, he possibly viewed Arosemena's refusal to build a railroad as an abandonment of liberal principles.

suggested leaving the presidency with six months left in his term, which he believed would make him eligible for the executive office again.¹⁹⁰ As result of Arosemena's perceived mistakes, Mendoza supported his longtime friend and political collaborator Belisario Porras for the 1912 presidential elections.

In July 1911, two months after his return from Colombia, Mendoza went before the Liberal Party and gave a speech. *La Prensa* reported that Mendoza received a "storm of applause" from the audience prior to speaking. The paper noted Mendoza's accomplishments and highlighted his contributions to independence and his time served as the executive leader. The periodical declared that Mendoza's "influential words electrified the liberal masses," and the article referred to him as a "popular leader." *La Prensa* reported that even though Mendoza experienced numerous personal attacks as president, he remained firm in his principles and dedication to liberalism.¹⁹¹ In August 1911, Mendoza traveled to David, Chiriquí. Upon his arrival, prominent citizens of the city greeted Mendoza, with many of them meeting with him personally. To show their respect for Mendoza, these important individuals held a "grand rally to honor" the former president.¹⁹² Liberals continued to demonstrate their support for Mendoza in the press as well. *La Prensa* defended Mendoza from attacks by Arosemena. The president had stated that Mendoza's presidency "was a disaster."¹⁹³ The periodical quickly reminded Arosemena that his presidency resulted from Mendoza's support.¹⁹⁴ Despite Andrews's argument that social Darwinism and positivism marginalized Afro-Latin American politicians, even after his presidency Mendoza remained relevant.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 300.

¹⁹¹ "La reunión liberal del sábado," *La Prensa*, July 24, 1911.

¹⁹² "El Dr. Mendoza en Chiriquí," *La Prensa*, August 12, 1911.

¹⁹³ Pablo Arosemena quoted in "Caso edificante," *La Prensa*, November 6, 1911. On November 5, *Los Hechos* published an article by Arosemena, which he wrote under the pseudonym Alberto de Morcef.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

The outcome of the 1912 Liberal Convention in Aguadulce also challenges Andrews' paradigm, when liberals nominated Porras for the presidency and elected Mendoza as president of the party.¹⁹⁵ These individuals entrusted Mendoza with a high degree of responsibility to run their organization, and backed him as he staunchly promoted and protected liberalism. Such support more than likely originated from Mendoza's defense of suffrage and freedom of speech. When threats against these civil liberties arose, Mendoza condemned the violations. During the Regeneration, Mendoza spoke out against infringements of these rights. As president, Mendoza issued a warning to the governor of Colón when the chief of police harassed voters for not supporting the officer's candidate.¹⁹⁶ In January 1912, *Los Hechos* published an article suggesting that President Taft endorsed Porras for the presidency. Mendoza sternly stated that the U.S. government had no right to determine who became president. The former president perhaps feared that Taft's statement might lead to an unfair election. Mendoza specified that both countries desired nothing less than a "free and pure" outcome.¹⁹⁷ On April 13, 1912, U.S. diplomat H. Percival Dodge noted Mendoza's statement about violations made by police officers against voters in Panama City and Colón.¹⁹⁸ In May 1912, similar reports surfaced that Julio Quijano, the Commander and Chief of the National Police, arrested his "political adversaries" during the municipal elections without "just cause." The former president condemned such actions and noted that similar events occurred in Aguadulce, La Chorrera, Dolega, as well as in other cities. Mendoza ordered Arosemena to end the abuses and scandals, and to protect the

¹⁹⁵ Isaza Calderón, *El liberalismo y Carlos A. Mendoza*, 464; Araúz, *El imperialismo y la oligarquía*, 326. Isaza Calderón notes that liberals elected Mendoza at the convention but does not provide a date for the meeting. In Araúz's work, the author notes that the convention occurred in Aguadulce on February 12, 1912, when the Liberal Party also nominated Belisario Porras for the presidency.

¹⁹⁶ "Párrafos de historia," *La Prensa*, November 10, 1911.

¹⁹⁷ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, "Nota política," in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 266-267.

¹⁹⁸ H. Percival Dodge to the Secretary of State, report, April 13, 1912, 819.00/386, roll 4, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT.

individual rights of Panamanians.¹⁹⁹

During this time, Mendoza endorsed Porras for the presidency and campaigned for the nominee. Mendoza's support of Porras contributed to his eventual election in July 1912. Porras subsequently offered Mendoza a position within his administration, which Mendoza declined in favor of retirement.²⁰⁰ Mendoza retired from political life on July 23, 1912 with the intent of returning to his law practice. In an interview with *El Diario de Panamá*, Mendoza stated retirement had eluded him since 1910, when Arosemena asked him to travel to Colombia. The combative lawyer explained to the periodical that upon his return from Bogotá, he attempted to leave public life once more, but due to the political situation, he decided to support Porras for the presidency. Nevertheless, Mendoza promised that if a threat to democratic values arose he would not hesitate for a moment to defend those rights.²⁰¹ U.S. Minister Dodge noted that even though Mendoza retired, "his influence in this administration will still be felt."²⁰² To honor the accomplishments of Mendoza, liberals celebrated the former president at a ceremony in August 1912. Mendoza spoke about his relationship with Porras and referred to him as a brother. The former president highlighted how both he and Porras shared a similar liberal ideology. In Mendoza's speech to his constituents, he pointed out that the new president would fight against nepotism in government and preserve the rights of Panamanians.²⁰³

As Mendoza prepared for his first and only trip to the United States in 1913,

¹⁹⁹ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, "Una queja más: voces que claman en el desierto," in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 283-284.

²⁰⁰ Araúz, "Carlos A. Mendoza, un prominente liberal istmeño," xix. Also see Isaza Calderón's section "Campaña presidencial en favor del doctor Porras" in *El liberalismo y Carlos A. Mendoza*, 463-464.

²⁰¹ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, "Declaraciones al *Diario de Panamá*," in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 293-292.

²⁰² H. Percival Dodge to the Secretary of State, report, July 27, 1912, 819.00/438, roll 4, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT.

²⁰³ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, "En un gran acto popular en su honor," in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 295-298.

important leaders held a banquet to honor the former president. Conservatives, such as Samuel Lewis and Aristedes Arjona, as well as prominent liberals Francisco Filós and Rodolfo Chiari all attended the event.²⁰⁴ Mendoza's retirement from public life did not last long. In September 1913, Mendoza returned to politics when Porras presented him with an opportunity to preside over the Comisión Codificadora, or a commission to oversee the creation of new civil codes in Panama.²⁰⁵ President Porras created a committee to establish laws for the commercial, financial, judicial, mining, and penal sectors of the country.²⁰⁶ Porras asked for Mendoza's aid since the former president helped to establish the Justice Department after independence in 1904.²⁰⁷ These accolades from the Liberal Party and Belisario Porras' job offer all indicate that Mendoza remained relevant, which again contradicts Andrews' hypothesis.

The 1914 liberal factionalism provides another opportunity to test Andrews' paradigm. In this public event, Mendoza and Porras split over ideological and personal views on governing the republic. U.S Minister William Jennings Price identified Mendoza as the "chief element" in the splintering of the Liberal Party.²⁰⁸ According to Mendoza, Porras violated suffrage, restricted freedom of the press, and attempted to hand-pick his successor for the presidency. On the last Sunday of June 1914, Panama held municipal elections. According to reports that surfaced, police in Panama City had "confined to jail a number" of people who sided with Mendoza and Rodolfo Chiari. The National Police force threatened imprisonment and fines for those who did not vote for candidates who supported the Porras

²⁰⁴ "Fiesta en el honor de Dr. Mendoza," *El Diario de Panamá*, August 25, 1913.

²⁰⁵ Araúz, "Carlos A. Mendoza, un prominente liberal istmeño," in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza* (1999), xix.

²⁰⁶ Carlos H. Cuestas, *Carlos A. Mendoza creador de la organización judicial y codificador de la república* (Panama: Organo Judicial, 2009), 64.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁰⁸ William Jennings Price to the Secretary of State, report, July 29, 1914, 819.00/468, roll 5, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT.

administration. Purportedly, an order came from Porras to prevent members of the liberal opposition, who attended a meeting in the Apolo Theatre, from leaving prior to 4:00 pm, or when the polling stations closed.²⁰⁹

In early June, Porras sent a letter to Commandant Leonidas Pretelt of the National Police. Porras ordered the commander to abide by any directives that came from the president's aide. Pretelt reported the matter to Rodolfo Chiari, the Secretary of State and Justice. According to Chiari and Pretelt, the "police corps was under their sole charge, and it was improper for the President . . . to interfere."²¹⁰ Chiari and Pretelt agreed that Porras' directive demonstrated the president's desire to control the National Police. Both Chiari and Pretelt believed that Porras' attempt to direct the National Police indicated he wanted to influence the municipal elections. Mendoza and his followers declared that Porras' actions contributed to a fraudulent outcome. Soon thereafter, Porras forced the resignation of Commandant Pretelt after he spoke out against the president. In the view of the opposition, President Porras did not tolerate political dissent, which violated freedom of speech.²¹¹ Mendoza and his supporters also pointed to Porras' effort to control the nominees for the new National Assembly. In January 1914, liberals held their convention in Chitré, where members appointed Mendoza with the power to "choose and recommend deputies for the National Assembly."²¹² However, when Mendoza presented Porras with his list of candidates, the president attempted to appoint his loyal supporters. When Mendoza refused Porras' recommendations, the executive leader sent his candidates Ladislao Sosa and Jerónimo

²⁰⁹ "President Belisario Porras Has Dictatorial Tendencies," *Star and Herald*, July 3, 1914, in William Jennings Price to the Secretary of State, report, July 3, 1914, 819.00/466, roll 5, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT.

²¹⁰ Roldolfo Chiari and Leonidas Pretelt quoted in William Jennings Price to the Secretary of State, report, September 24, 1914, 819.00/471, roll 5, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² Carlos Antonio Mendoza, "La verdad acerca de las elecciones para diputados de 1914," in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 301.

García to Veraguas to impose themselves as the representatives of the province. Mendoza considered Porras' action as an infringement upon free elections.²¹³

Mendoza believed that Porras also restricted freedom of the press. When Mendoza complained about how the police violated voters' rights at the Apolo Theatre, the *Panama Morning Journal*, a paper that supported the Porras administration, reported that no disruptions had occurred and that the elections had been free of fraud.²¹⁴ On July 10, Eusebio A. Morales Jr. sent a letter to journalist Sabas A. Villegas. At this time, Morales Jr. operated *El Diario de Panamá* and the *Panama Morning Journal* while his father served as minister in Spain. Morales Jr. ordered Villegas to “defend the government of Doctor Porras with faithfulness and energy” and that he must “communicate daily with the president.”²¹⁵ Mendoza strongly criticized Morales Jr. about his message to Villegas. The former president argued that if Morales Jr. truly desired a “neutral” paper, then he must “revoke the position of Villegas,” and not act as “the unconditional defender of the disastrous politics of Dr. Porras.”²¹⁶ Mendoza denounced Porras for encouraging such antics and controlling the press. The former president declared, “liberal is the government that guarantees individual rights in all of [their] plentitude . . . without impediment or intimidation.”²¹⁷

In addition to attempting to control the press, the president had ambitions to remain in the executive office after his term. In the elections for representatives in the new National Assembly, Porras and his supporters garnered nineteen seats to fourteen for the Mendoza and

²¹³ Ibid., 301-304.

²¹⁴ “The Municipal Election Was Fraud Free,” *Panama Morning Journal*, July 3, 1914, in William Jennings Price to the Secretary of State, report, July 3, 1914, 819.00/466, roll 5, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT. The Panama Morning Journal reported that the people from Tobago had registered in both Taboga and Panama. According to the periodical, the police officers were justified in detaining the group.

²¹⁵ Eusebio A. Morales Jr. to Sabas A. Villegas, July 10, 1914, box 547, serie 12-01, tomo II, Archivo Porras (AP), 187.

²¹⁶ Carlos Antonio Mendoza to Eusebio A. Morales Jr., July 11, 1914, box 547, serie 12-01, tomo II, AP, 184.

²¹⁷ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, “En defensa de la libertad y el sufragio,” in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 315.

Chiari faction.²¹⁸ According to the opposition, Porras had hand-picked Ramón M. Valdés to replace him as president in 1916.²¹⁹ If elected, Valdés would serve only six months as president, and then resign. At this time, the National Assembly also needed to select a new vice president. Since Porras possessed a majority in the assembly, his appointment to the vice presidency seemed all but assured. As the first vice president, Porras would take control of the executive office after Valdés stepped down. In the view of Mendoza, this proved to be a major point of contention. Besides controlling the National Assembly, Porras' followers held all five positions in the commission that oversaw elections in the country. After Commandant Pretelt of the National Police expressed his concern about Porras' letter to him in June 1913, the president dismissed the commander from his position. The opposition believed that President Porras now controlled the National Police.²²⁰ The Mendoza and Chiari faction felt that Porras had accumulated too much power and that he could unfairly influence the outcome of all elections.

The Porras faction criticized Mendoza and his supporters for their accusations against the president. Porristas wondered if Mendoza really protected liberalism, or perhaps his attacks were those of a "desperate politician."²²¹ In the opinion of Porras' supporters, the president did not impose his candidates Sosa and García on Veraguas, but rather Mendoza forced his representatives on the province. Porras allies believed that they possessed substantial evidence that Mendoza only desired his candidates, such as Samuel Lewis, for the National Assembly and that he would not accept the president's nominees. Porras' associates

²¹⁸ Anonymous, "Lucha empañada para el control de la Asamblea de Panamá," 1914, box 548, serie 12-01, tomo II, AP, 277.

²¹⁹ William Jennings Price to the Secretary of State, report, July 29, 1914, 819.00/468, roll 5, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT; Anonymous, "Lucha empañada para el control de la Asamblea de Panamá," 1914, box 548, serie 12-01, tomo II, AP, 277.

²²⁰ William Jennings Price to the Secretary of State, report, September 24, 1914, 819.00/471, roll 5, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT.

²²¹ Anonymous, letter, 1914, box 548, serie 12-01, tomo II, AP, 137.

refuted Mendoza's claim that mass-voting fraud occurred during the municipal elections, and stated that such occurrences only happened in isolated areas. Porras affiliates then declared that inconsistencies existed in Mendoza's election for the presidency of the Liberal Party and that he desired more power through the position of first vice president.²²² Porras collaborators also referred to Mendoza as cowardly, slanderous, hypocritical, and envious.²²³ These criticisms of Mendoza's conduct do not include any mention of his African ancestry, but only attack his political character and views of the Porras administration.

At the beginning of 1915, Mendoza questioned what contributed to Porras' deviation from liberalism. Mendoza emphasized that Porras abandoned radical liberal principles such as suffrage, the separation of powers, and secular education.²²⁴ Not only did Mendoza criticize Porras, but he also focused his attention on Valdés. The former president attacked Valdés for supporting conservatives and referred to him as a "child of the Colombian Regeneration and servant of the doctrines they put into practice to oppress liberalism." According to Mendoza, only after independence in 1903 did Valdés become a liberal.²²⁵ Mendoza and the Chiari faction pressed Porras about the president's lack of adherence to liberalism, and focused on how the president continued to violate civil liberties. In September, Mendoza and Chiari met with U.S. Minister William Jennings Price. According to Mendoza and Chiari, Porras dismissed several members of the police department whom he viewed as supporters of the opposition. Mendoza and Chiari requested U.S. intervention to

²²² Ibid., 145-160.

²²³ Anonymous, "Con motivo de un discurso," box 548, serie 12-01, tomo II, AP, 101-108. The researcher could not find a date for this letter within the text. This anonymous author responded to Mendoza's "Con motivo de un discurso" that *La Estrella* published. See Mendoza's "Con motivo de un discurso," in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 321-327. Mendoza's writing is dated January 27, 1915.

²²⁴ Carlos Antonio Mendoza quoted in Anonymous, "El laicismo del señor doctor Carlos Antonio Mendoza," January 28, 1915, box 548, serie 12-01, tomo II, AP, 302. The author of this memo did not provide a date. However, the writer referred to an article in *La Estrella de Panamá* on January 28 and also refers to legislation approved in November 1914.

²²⁵ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, "Con motivo de un discurso," in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 325. See also Mendoza's "En torno al doctor Ramón M. Valdés," in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 333-345.

ensure no voting violations occurred during the presidential elections and to maintain order on the isthmus. Minister Price believed that Porras' control of various offices and the National Police made him the "most potent political factor in Panama."²²⁶

As the campaign for the next president in 1916 gained momentum, the opposition's concern about electoral fraud increased. On November 3, 1915, the twelfth anniversary of Panama's independence, Mendoza spoke of how the government needed to respect and guarantee individual rights.²²⁷ Despite Mendoza's condemnation of these violations, abuses against the opposition continued. In December 1915, a group of people backed by the local police in David, Chiriquí attacked and arrested several followers of Mendoza and Chiari.²²⁸ By the beginning of January 1916, Mendoza was so disturbed that he met with chargé d'affaires Willing Spencer with sworn affidavits from prominent members of David stating what had occurred that day.²²⁹ Mendoza continued to criticize the Porras administration about violating freedom of speech and the right to vote. On February 9, 1916, about a week prior to Mendoza's death, the former president condemned the use of police violence against supporters of the liberal opposition and Porras' insistence on hand-picking his own candidate for the presidency.²³⁰

Conclusion

On February 13, 1916, Mendoza died unexpectedly from a heart attack, a week before the National Liberal Convention. *La Prensa* stated that individuals from all parts of

²²⁶ William Jennings Price to the Secretary of State, report, September 21, 1915, 819.00/489, roll 6, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT.

²²⁷ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, "Discurso pronunciado en el concejo municipal el 3 de noviembre de 1915," in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 355.

²²⁸ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, "La república sin garantías: grave estado de la situación en Chiriquí," in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 362-363.

²²⁹ Willing Spencer to the Secretary of State, report, January 5, 1916, 819.00/499, roll 7, M607 NAUS, RG59, UNT.

²³⁰ Carlos Antonio Mendoza, "Resolución que nada resuelve," in *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 387-389.

Panamanian society, including many foreigners, came to his funeral. The periodical reported that people filled all the balconies, corners, streets and doorways to witness Mendoza's procession.²³¹ *La Estrella de Panamá* reported little room existed for all the mourners who came to pay tribute to Mendoza at the National Palace. The newspaper also noted the prominent members of the Liberal Party who attended, such as Juan B. Sosa, Francisco Filós, Rodolfo Chiari, as well as conservative Samuel Lewis.²³² *El Conservador* lamented the loss of Mendoza. The conservative newspaper detailed Mendoza's achievements as a public official, and similarly regretted the loss of such a valued citizen.²³³ Foreign papers printed articles about Mendoza's tragic death. The Argentinian paper *La Prensa* published an article detailing the important attributes and positions that Mendoza held during his career. The paper referred to Mendoza as one of the most "prestigious lawyers and politicians in the young republic."²³⁴ In Costa Rica, *La Información* released a substantial expose about Mendoza's life and accomplishments.²³⁵

The British and U.S. embassies issued private statements about the sudden loss of Mendoza. U.S. chargé d'affaires Spencer reported that Mendoza's passing was a "great loss to Chiari's presidential candidacy."²³⁶ British Minister Claude Mallet stated that the opposition had its "head cut off," which the diplomat believed "ended the hopes for

²³¹ "El entierro del Dr. Mendoza," *La Prensa*, February 15, 1916.

²³² *La Estrella de Panamá*, February 15, 1916, in *Homenaje al autor del acta de independencia de Panamá*, 21-23.

²³³ *El Conservador*, February 19, 1916, in *Homenaje al autor del acta de independencia de Panamá*, 25-26.

²³⁴ *La Prensa* (Argentina), February 15, 1916, in *Homenaje al autor del acta de independencia de Panamá*, 54-55.

²³⁵ "A la memoria del doctor don Carlos A. Mendoza," *La Información* (Costa Rica), February 16, 1916, in *Homenaje al autor del acta de independencia de Panamá*, 56-57.

²³⁶ Willing Spencer to the Secretary of State, telegram, February 14, 1916, 819.00/513, roll 7, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT.

[Chiari's] campaign."²³⁷ Spencer also affirmed that Mendoza's passing ended any chance for victory by Chiari in the upcoming elections and that all signs pointed to Valdés' victory in July.²³⁸ Mallet and Spencer's statements indicate the importance that Mendoza had in Panamanian politics. Mendoza had supported three previous candidates for the presidency. Mendoza's endorsement of José Domingo de Obaldía led to his election in 1908. In 1910, Mendoza backed Pablo Arosemena, and Porras in 1912, both of whom became president. Even after his presidency, Mendoza impacted the political affairs of Panama. Mendoza traveled to Colombia as a peace negotiator from December 1910 to May 1911. In 1912, Mendoza became the Liberal Party President, and in 1913 Porras appointed him to oversee the creation of new civil codes. By 1914, Mendoza led the split of the Liberal Party. The factionalism that Mendoza directed further illustrates his continued relevancy. In 1914, the Mendoza-led opposition won fourteen out of thirty-three National Assembly seats, not a majority, but such a feat shows that he wielded enough power for other liberals and conservatives to support his faction. When Mendoza died in February 1916, he held the presidency of the Liberal Party and served as a representative of Panama province in the National Assembly. By electing Mendoza to these two positions, elite liberals and plebeians alike demonstrated that they viewed the former president as an important leader.

This evidence challenges James Sanders' argument that the radical liberal tradition lost its influence in the mid-1880s as a result of the Regeneration limiting popular political participation in Colombia, as well as George Reid Andrews' contention that social Darwinism and positivism marginalized Afro-Latin American politicians in the early-twentieth century. During this period, Mendoza embraced and promoted black liberalism.

²³⁷ Claude Mallet quoted in Willing Spencer to the Secretary of State, report, February 15, 1916, 819.00/516, roll 7, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT. Despite the death of Mendoza, Chiari and the opposition continued their campaign. Panamanians, however, elected Ramón M. Valdés as president in July 1916.

²³⁸ Willing Spencer to the Secretary of State, report, February 15, 1916, 819.00/516, roll 7, M607, NAUS, RG59, UNT.

Mendoza even contributed to the independence movement, helped establish a provisional government, and co-authored the Panama's declaration of independence. The former president helped author the constitution, became the executive leader, represented Panama in peace negotiations with Colombia, and served as the president of the National Assembly and the Liberal Party. Porras at one point even referred to Mendoza as the "Thomas Jefferson of Panama."²³⁹ Andrews' argues that positivism and social Darwinism contributed to Mendoza's resignation from the executive office. Michael Conniff and Celestino Andrés Araúz similarly demonstrate the impact of U.S. concepts of race on Mendoza's presidency. Despite the Regeneration and pressure to resign as president, Mendoza managed to increase his popularity and remain an important political leader from 1880 until 1916.

According to W. John Green's *Gaitanismo*, plebeian liberalism influenced the rise of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in 1928. However, Green does not discuss the continued relevance of black liberalism prior to the 1920s. Green provides an overview of the ideology's importance and how Gaitán reflected these radical beliefs. If Gaitán emerged from this tradition, then plebeian liberalism certainly influenced Colombian and Panamanian society between 1880 and 1920. By examining Carlos Antonio Mendoza's career from 1880 to 1916, this study demonstrates that radical liberalism remained relevant and fills an important gap between the works of Sanders, Andrews and Green. Mendoza's public life also shows that the Regeneration and scientific racism had less of an impact the Afro-Panamanian politician than what both Andrews and Sanders would argue.

²³⁹ Belisario Porras quoted in Morales Benítez, "Colombia, Panamá y el liberalismo en la vida de Carlos A. Mendoza," prologue to *El pensamiento de Carlos A. Mendoza*, 42.

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Vita

William Patrick Cohoon was born on December 25, 1977, in Portland, Oregon to Stephen Allan and Katherine Bernice Cohoon. After graduating in 1996 from Beaverton High School, William worked as a printer before he traveled throughout Asia and Latin America. During the 2008 Olympics, he taught English in Beijing, China. Subsequent teaching experiences led him to South Korea in 2011. In 2012, he earned his Bachelor of Arts and a certificate in Latin American Studies at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon.

In August of 2013, William enrolled at Texas Christian University to earn his Master's Degree with an emphasis on Latin American history. From 2013 to 2015, he served as graduate assistant to Professor Don Coever and Dr. Alexander Hidalgo. In fall 2015, William will begin the doctoral program at Texas Christian University in colonial Latin American History under Professor Susan E. Ramírez. He is a member of Phi Alpha Theta: Beta Chapter at Portland State University, the Conference on Latin American Studies, and the Rocky Mountain Conference on Latin American Studies.

ABSTRACT

THE RADICAL LIBERAL TRADITION, SCIENTIFIC RACISM, AND PANAMA'S
CARLOS ANTONIO MENDOZA, 1880–1916

by William Patrick Cohoon, MA 2015
Department of History and Geography
Texas Christian University

Thesis Adviser: Peter A. Szok, Professor of History

During the mid-1880s, Colombian politicians created legislation that became known as the Regeneration, which restricted the role of Afro-Latin Americans in government. Elites also incorporated social Darwinism and positivism into their beliefs that led the oligarchy to view Afro-Colombians and Afro-Panamanians as the problems to society's civil strife. Historians argue that as a result the Regeneration and scientific racism, people of African descent lost their influence in Latin American politics by the early-twentieth century. This work analyzes the impact of both the Regeneration and scientific racism in relation to the radical liberal tradition and Afro-Panamanian Carlos Antonio Mendoza. Scholars point to Mendoza's ousting from the presidency in 1910 as proof of his marginalization. Despite the Regeneration and social Darwinist and positivist ideologies, Mendoza adhered to radical liberalism and remained relevant in public life until his death in 1916.