From 1500 to 1800, Latin America was colonized by Europe, especially Spain. European nations used mercantilism to gain wealth from their American colonies. Catholic missionaries from Spain & France converted Indians.
One major impact of European colonization was the unequal social hierarchy in Latin America.

White Europeans were at the top of society.

Peninsulares were royal governors sent by the king to enforce mercantilism & maintain order in the colony.
One major impact of European colonization was the unequal social hierarchy in Latin America. White Europeans were at the top of society. Spanish colonists living in America were called creoles; they had land & wealth but had no political power.

**The Divisions in Spanish Colon**

- **Mestizos (7.3%)**: 1,034,000
- **Mulattos (7.6%)**: 1,072,000
- **Peninsulares and Creoles (22.9%)**: 3,223,000
- **Indians (55.8%)**: 7,860,000
The lack of European women in America led to intermarriage & a large mixed-race population that made up the next level of the social hierarchy.

Mestizos were the offspring of Europeans & Indians.

Mulattos were the offspring of Europeans & Africans.
Indians & African slaves made up the bottom of the social hierarchy.

Indians & slaves were used as workers for creoles plantations.

**The Divisions in Spanish Colonial Society, 1789**

- **Indians (55.8%)**
  - 7,860,000

- **Mestizos (7.3%)**
  - 1,034,000

- **Mulattos (7.6%)**
  - 1,072,000

- **Peninsulares and Creoles (22.9%)**
  - 3,223,000

- **Africans (6.4%)**
  - 902,000

**Total** 14,091,000

Source: *Colonial Spanish America*, by Leslie Bethell
From 1800 to 1830, Latin American colonies began declaring independence from European nations & establishing democracies throughout the Americas.
Quick Class Discussion:
(1) Which social group will lead these Latin American Revolutions? Why?
(2) Where did they get the idea to revolt & created democracies?

African slaves in Haiti
Creoles in South America
Indians in Mexico

The Divisions in Spanish Colonies:
- Mestizos (7.3%) 1,034,000
- Mulattos (7.6%) 1,072,000
- Africans (6.4%) 902,000
- Creoles (22.9%) 3,223,000
- Indians (55.8%) 7,860,000

Total 14,091,000

Source: Colonial Spanish America, by Leslie Bethell
By the late 1700s, Latin Americans were inspired to gain independence because of the success of the American & French Revolutions. The ideas of the Enlightenment inspired independence especially among the well-educated creole class.
Haiti was a French colony with 500,000 African slaves working on sugar & coffee plantations. Plantation owners used brutal methods to control slaves.

In 1791, Haitian slaves rose in revolt; Toussaint L’Ouverture became the leader of the slave uprising & helped free all the slaves by 1801.

Haiti was the first Latin American colony to free itself from European rule.
From 1802 to 1804, Haitians fought for their independence against Napoleon’s French army.

In 1804, France granted Haiti its independence & created a republic.
Throughout the Spanish colonies in South America, the creoles had wealth & education but could not participate in government.

Creoles embraced Enlightenment ideas like natural rights & consent of the governed.
In 1810, the demand by creoles for political rights led to revolutions throughout South America. South American nations gained their independence because of the leadership of two creole generals.
From 1811 to 1824, Venezuelan creole Simon Bolivar led an army of revolutionaries against Spain. Bolivar helped create new nations of Grand Colombia, Peru, Bolivia.
Simón Bolívar
1783–1830

Called *Libertador* (Liberator), Bolívar was a brilliant general, a visionary, a writer, and a fighter. He is called the “George Washington of South America.” Bolívar planned to unite the Spanish colonies of South America into a single country called Gran Colombia. The area of upper Peru was renamed Bolivia in his honor.

Discouraged by political disputes that tore the new Latin American nations apart, he is reported to have said, “America is ungovernable. Those who have served the revolution have ploughed the sea.”
Argentinean creole San Martín led the independence movement in southern South America. San Martín helped create new nations of Argentina, Chile, & Peru.
José de San Martín
1778–1850

Unlike the dashing Bolívar, San Martín was a modest man. Though born in Argentina, he spent much of his youth in Spain as a career military officer. He fought with Spanish forces against Napoleon. He returned to Latin America to be a part of its liberation from Spain. Fighting for 10 years, he became the liberator of Argentina, Chile, and Peru. Discouraged by political infighting, San Martín sailed for Europe. He died, almost forgotten, on French soil in 1850.
Unlike the South America creoles, in Mexico the Indians & mestizos played the leading role.

In 1810, a poor but well educated Catholic priest named Miguel Hidalgo used Enlightenment ideals to call for a revolution against Spain.

Hidalgo led an army of 80,000 Indian & mestizos revolutionaries against the Spanish military & creoles who feared losing their wealth.
During the rebellion, Hidalgo was killed but Mexicans found new leaders to continue the fight another 10 years.

The turning point in the war came in 1820 when the creoles switched sides & joined the revolt against Spain.

In 1821, Spain granted Mexico its independence & a republic was formed.
Throughout Latin America, new democratic republics were created.

But, Latin Americans did not have a history of self-government & many of the new gov’ts were unstable.

In many nations, military dictators called caudillos seized power & made few reforms for citizens.

Latin America became dependent on the USA.