* In the beginning of the 19th century the Latin American colonies subject to Spanish rule started to successfully gain independence.  In John Charles Chasteen's book, Americanos: Latin America's Struggle for Independence, many references are made to comparisons made between these revolutions and that of the United States, which occurred just prior.

Particularly, Latin American declarations of independence held important stipulations regarding racial categories for who could qualify as a citizen and who could not, as well as maintaining traditional religious truths as the "natural way of the world."1  The Latin American wars for independence, however, still served as an enormously important "contribution" to Western history, because "popular sovereignty in America had made it the first principle of global decolonization by 1945..."2Colonization had come under fire during the Age of Democratic revolutions thanks to the Enlightenment and republicanism.  More colonists were beginning to realize that the best way to move into the future successfully was one that gave them the best representation in politics, economics, and society overall.  Such as in America, colonists learned that being governed by a mother country thousands of miles away across an ocean did not really serve the best interests of the colonies, because the colonizers would always put the needs and desires of the mother country above those of the colonies.  Further, it also meant that the colonists had little to no representation during political proceedings, which meant they had no say in legislation while it was being contested.  They had to wait until after new laws and taxes were passed before staging protests and sending out statements claiming how much they would harm the colonies instead of help them, which they then had to wait months or even years for a response to.

In Latin America there was a particularly significant tension between what Chasteen references as "Americanos" and "europeos."  The Latin American colonists became resentful of Spain, in particular, because Spain continually denied them equal representation in courts on the count of racial inferiority of most of the latin population.  Even when colonists attempted compromises to these racial categories in order to appease both parties, Spain continued to boast superiority because of how much greater their numbers would always be.  "Unlike in the United States, the Sovereign People of America who emerged in the 1820s included a nonwhite majority."3In the nations being formed and proposed by the Latin American colonies, independence revolved around their definition of what a republic entailed: "Republics were supposed to be societies in which the Sovereign People consisted of equal citizens.  Slavery and peonage were fundamentally incompatible with republicanism...the main patriotic movements had committed themselves rhetorically to ending the caste stratification so prevalent in America."4

Spain refused to acknowledge the "Americanos" as anything other than colonial due to their beliefs that "Indians and people of African descent, because of their racial inferiority, could never count as espanoles or be represented in a Spanish court."5A major motivator for the Latin American revolution, therefore, was the drive for racial equality which the "Americanos" believed would produce the best equipped nation to survive in the continually evolving, newly modernizing world.  Some colonies achieved independence through bloody wars, and others through non-violent political strategies.

Today, historians hold the Latin American struggles for independence as highly significant in the historical record of Western society.  The final paragraph of Chasteen's book reads:

**"The strikingly multiracial nations of Latin America rank today among the most durable liberal republics in the world.  Making them socially inclusive republics, winning for everyone the full benefits of citizenship, has been an ongoing battle...their struggles for independence constituted a crucial step in the global expansion of Western political values...the region's constitutional frameworks have been often disrupted but always stubbornly reestablished."6**

In conclusion, the Latin American struggles for independence did much to both instigate and add to sociopolitical discourse over the last 200-plus years regarding the values of liberal Western society and equality/citizenship for all regardless of race or social class.

1. John Charles Chasteen. *Americanos: Latin America's Struggle for Independence.*Oxford University Press, 2008.

2. IBID., 187.

3. IBID., 3.

4. IBID., 5.

5. IBID., 72.

6. IBID., 188.