

Path Between the Seas: Columbia 1903



**MSUMUN XXII
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MSUMUN Notices

Topic Warning

Please be advised that the contents of this background guide, and subsequently, this committee may discuss/contain references to colonialism.

MSUMUN Statement on Mental Health

Michigan State University Model United Nations (MSUMUN) is committed to fostering a safe and secure environment for all delegates, staff, and advisors. In this, MSUMUN operates with a zero-tolerance policy with regard to any and all instances of harassment and discrimination. Further, MSUMUN is committed to promoting the mental health of its participants and requires all participants to act with compassion, grace, and understanding. MSUMUN encourages participants to step out of their committee room and/or speak with a trusted individual if they are feeling overwhelmed or are otherwise uncomfortable.

Moreover, MSUMUN recognizes that some of its committees may include references to or discussions of sensitive topics. While MSUMUN values the discussion and awareness of these topics and a delegate's obligation to accurately represent their assigned role, all participants who engage in any bigoted, racist, sexist, homophobic, ableist, or other such comments or sentiments will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action at the discretion of MSUMUN's Secretariat. Additionally, in all things, MSUMUN pledges its Secretariat and staff to maintain approachability and inclusivity; if any participant has any questions, comments, or concerns they are encouraged to contact MSUMUN's Secretariat or, in the case of delegates, its staff.

All participants should be aware that MSUMUN's Secretariat and staff are designated mandatory reporters with MSU's Office of Institutional Equity while operating within their roles before and during the conference.

MSU Provisional Land Acknowledgement

“We collectively acknowledge that Michigan State University occupies the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary Lands of the Anishinaabeg – Three Fires Confederacy of Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples. In particular, the University resides on Land ceded in the 1819 Treaty of Saginaw. We recognize, support, and advocate for the sovereignty of Michigan’s twelve federally recognized Indian nations, for historic Indigenous communities in Michigan, for Indigenous individuals and communities who live here now, and for those who were forcibly removed from their Homelands. By offering this Land Acknowledgement, we affirm Indigenous sovereignty and will work to hold Michigan State University more accountable to the needs of American Indian and Indigenous peoples.”



Letter from the Chair

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to Path Between the Seas: Colombia 1903! My name is Kate Loope and as your Chair for this committee, I am more than happy to spend the weekend with you all and watch your genius come to life! I am a senior (very sad) studying Comparative Cultures and Politics and French here in James Madison College at Michigan State. I'm from Mattawan, MI (close to Kalamazoo), but I love to call East Lansing my home. I am the Public Relations Director for the MSU United Nations Association, and an Undergraduate Research Assistant on one of JMC's projects! Last year, I was able to Chair for the Philippine People Power Revolution committee, and I can't wait to close out my MUN career being Chair once again! Additionally, I love baking, hockey, football, basketball, and going out with friends!

I am ecstatic to see how this committee plays out during this year's MSUMUN session, as we will be tackling US imperialism and late stages of colonialism in Colombia and Latin America including rapid industrialization and influence within the Panama Department of Colombia for US gain, and the labor conditions, and more. In this committee, we hope you all learn the history of the Panama Canal from all perspectives and engage with how American actions affected real Colombians and Panamians. As you approach the conference, please keep in mind that although Colombia (and Panama) was not formally colonized, the United States intervened in the country frequently throughout the 20th century onwards. This history may be new for a lot of you, but this committee is here to educate and inform delegates about the events and geopolitical climate of the 1900s. Please be aware of economics, politics, social conditions, and more during your own research and throughout our background guide.

GO GREEN! Good Luck <3

Kate Loope (she/her/hers)

Letter from the Crisis Director

Dear Delegates,

I am so excited to welcome you to the Path Between the Seas: Colombia, 1903 crisis committee! My name is Ethan Biederman and I will be your crisis director during MSUMUN weekend. I am a junior studying International Relations, Comparative Cultures & Politics, and Arabic at James Madison College at MSU. I am originally from Franklin, MI, a suburb of Detroit and about a one-hour drive from campus. In addition to my work with MSUMUN, I am also the Vice President of Finance and Operations for our competitive MUN team, the MSU International Relations Organization. In the past, I have served as an assistant crisis director for the 2036 Social Security crisis and crisis director for the Philippine People Power Revolution crisis. Outside of Model UN, I can usually be found reading a book or practicing violin or piano.

During the early 20th century, the United States became a global superpower, but all of this was enabled by the construction of a canal through the Panamanian isthmus. The shocking story of how the United States acquired the land for the canal is often overlooked in our history books. In this committee, you will explore the dynamics present in Colombia as the United States looked to build its canal and be challenged to think about new perspectives that are commonly excluded from the historical narrative. You will also learn about the kind of neighbor the United States has been to Latin America and think about how that history and power dynamic still impact our countries' relationships today. Becoming a superpower doesn't just happen—that power has to come from somewhere. As you face these issues from the Colombian side, you will need to be creative to preserve your autonomy and achieve your goals.

Best of luck & go green!

Ethan Biederman (he/him/his)

Junior Staff Introductions

Caroline Zackerman (she/her/hers)

Hello delegates! My name is Caroline Zackerman and I am one of the Assistant Crisis Directors. I am a junior from Cincinnati, Ohio, and I'm studying linguistics with minors in Spanish and computer science. I have been staffing MSUMUN crisis committees since my freshman year, and I can't wait for another great year. In my free time, I love to write, cook, and bike - although I'm definitely still mastering the art of biking in snowy Michigan winters. I am so excited to see the collaboration, dedication, and creativity that all of you will bring to this committee!

Minh Pham (Ken) (he/him/his)

Dear delegates, my name is Minh Pham (you can call me Ken for short), an international freshman from Vietnam currently majoring in Computer Science with a minor in Economics, and I am very excited to be an Assistant Crisis Director for this year's MSUMUN. Outside of Model United Nations, you can often see me playing soccer, listening to rap, and (struggling at) cooking. Again, I really look forward to meeting all of you and seeing the creativity you will bring to MSUMUN this year! Go Green & Go White!

Mia Allen (she/her/hers)

My name is Mia Allen and I am a junior staffer for Colombia 1903 MSU Model UN committee. I am currently a freshman in the James Madison College, where I plan to study International Relations and Chinese. Before coming to MSU I lived in Midland, Michigan, which is about an hour and a half drive away from East Lansing. In my freetime I enjoy baking, reading any book I can get my hands on, and playing with my dog Ferguson. Because my previous high school didn't offer Model UN, this will be my first experience with it. I am ecstatic for the MSUMUN year to kick off!

Rules of Procedure

Article I: General Rules

1. Delegates are expected to adhere to all regular MSUMUN rules and standards of decorum.
2. In the event of a dispute over the Rule of Procedure, either those of MSUMUN generally or the Path Between the Seas: Colombia 1903 Committee, the MSUMUN Secretary-General will be the ultimate authority of appeal.

Article II: Meetings

1. All of Path Between the Seas: Colombia 1903 Committee meetings shall be attended by all specified members of the committee, unless otherwise authorized by the MSUMUN Secretariat.
2. Quorum for discussion and voting will always be 50% plus one committee member, unless otherwise authorized by the Secretariat of MSUMUN or at the Chair's discretion.
3. Unless otherwise indicated by the Secretariat or Path Between the Seas: Colombia 1903 Committee, all meetings of the committee will be held in the specified Path Between the Seas: Colombia 1903 Committee room as designated by MSUMUN.

Article III: Agenda

1. Items for debate may be pulled from the background guide but do not need to be limited to what is mentioned. The Democracy or Dictatorship: the Philippine People Power Revolution Crisis Committee staff would like to see well-rounded and well-researched delegates think outside of the box and bring new and relevant topics to the table.
2. Any committee member may make a motion to restrict debate to one topic. If this motion passes, debate shall be limited to the topic specified until such time as another motion is made to either change the topic under consideration or return to general debate.

3. If at any point an imminent crisis should arise, the Chair shall immediately declare it as such and limit all debate to the topic of said crisis, upon conclusion of the crisis, debate may or may not return to the previous topic.

Article IV: Conduct of Business

1. Path Between the Seas: Colombia 1903 Committee proceedings shall be conducted in the form of a permanent moderated caucus until such a time that a delegate makes a motion to change this.
2. Delegates may motion for either a roundtable or a straw poll. A roundtable consists of the Chair recognizing each delegate in turn to speak for a specified amount of time on a specific topic or proposal. A straw poll consists of delegates giving their probable vote on a specific proposal.

Article V: Types of Proposals

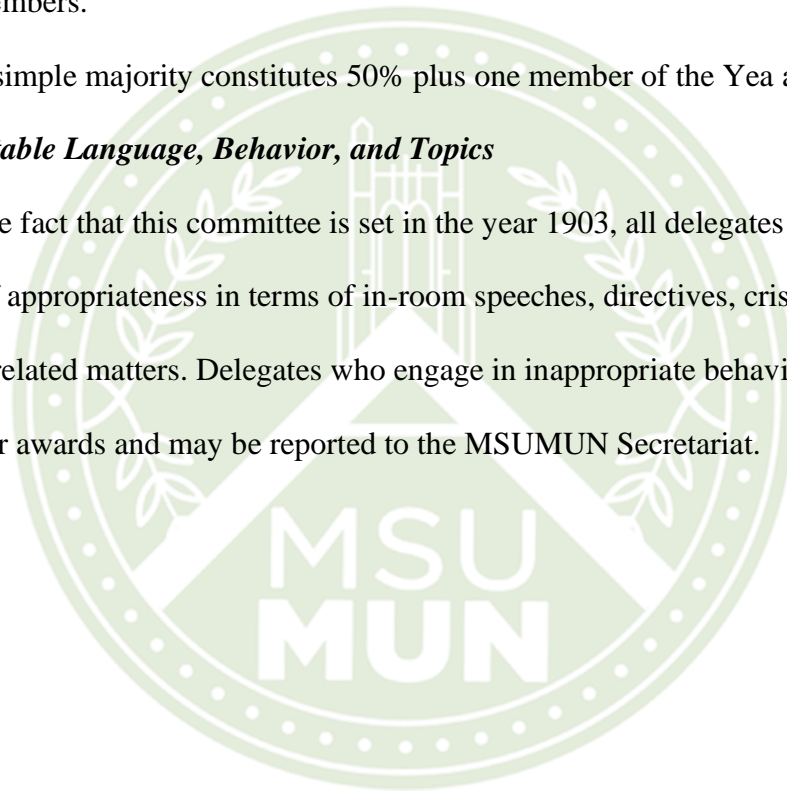
1. Directive: A directive requires only one sponsor, though it may have more. The number of required signatories is up to the discretion of the Chair. A committee member need only move to introduce a directive in order for it to be considered by the entire committee.
2. Press Releases: A press release is usually passed in lieu of a directive if doing so is more likely to make the committee's intentions clear. A press release is written either in the form of a directive or a press release; it requires the same number of sponsors and signatories as a directive.
3. Communiques: A communique is an external communication from the entire committee with a non-committee member. Such a communication can include anything from a request of support to negotiations to even a threat. Passing this type of document can also result in the person being contacted meeting with the committee if requested.

Article VI: Voting

1. Votes may be entered as Yeas, Nays, or Abstentions.
2. Votes on non-substantive proposals or procedural matters will be passed by the affirmative vote of a simple majority of committee members. Abstentions are allowed on non-substantive proposals, but not procedural matters.
3. Votes on substantive matters will be passed by the affirmative vote of a simple majority of committee members.
4. In all cases a simple majority constitutes 50% plus one member of the Yea and Nay votes.

A Note on Acceptable Language, Behavior, and Topics

Despite the fact that this committee is set in the year 1903, all delegates will be held to 2023 standards of appropriateness in terms of in-room speeches, directives, crisis notes, and any other committee-related matters. Delegates who engage in inappropriate behavior will forfeit their eligibility for awards and may be reported to the MSUMUN Secretariat.



Letter from José Manuel Marroquín, President of Colombia

Most honorable delegates,

23 January 1903

Thank you all for assembling to address the most pressing issues that we face as a country today. It is imperative that we work together to secure a bright future for Colombia and all its peoples as we move forward into a modern age. Following the tragedies of our recent civil war, we seek to foster prosperity and unity in our great country despite the new challenges that we face.

The potential for an isthmian canal in our treasured Panama Department is an unprecedented opportunity to increase the wealth and well-being of our nation. For centuries, the isthmus has been the center of trade and commerce and the most significant location for transoceanic travel in the world. It is of the utmost importance that we secure this prominence for the foreseeable future. The current Panama Railroad is vital to our national budget and securing a favorable agreement with the United States for the construction of a canal would ensure our government's ability to pay for services to its citizens.

I have gathered you here this weekend to represent all the diverse perspectives present in our country and develop creative solutions that will benefit all of the peoples of Colombia. I have the utmost trust in your ability to ensure our future success for generations to come.

Sincerely,

José Manuel Marroquín

Map & Demography of Colombia (1903)

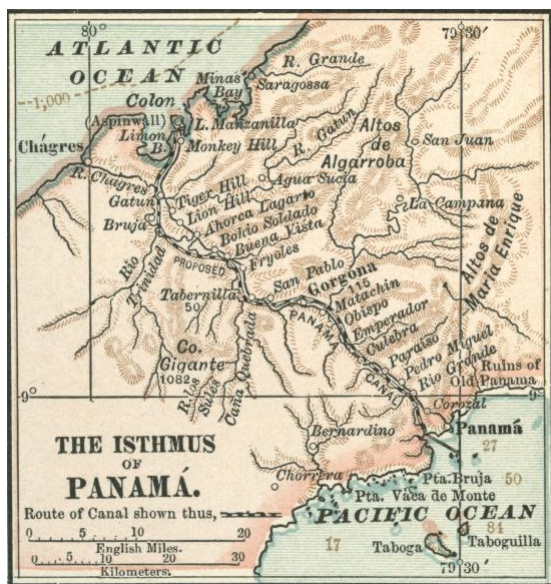


The Republic of Colombia consists of 9 departments: Antioquia, Bolívar, Boyacá, Cauca, Cundinamarca, Magdalena, Panamá, Santander and Tolima. The capital city is Bogotá. The country's population is approximately 4.1 million people of various ethnic groups and social standings. There are over 100 different Indigenous groups throughout the country, each with their own distinct culture.¹ Additionally, there is a significant population of Afro-Colombians, the descendants of African slaves brought to Colombia in the 16th century.² Afro-Colombians were critical in the fight for independence against Spain.

¹ "Indigenous Peoples in Colombia," IWGIA, <https://www.iwgia.org/en/colombia.html>.

² "The Lasting Influence of Colombia's African Heritage," Colombia, <https://www.colombia.co/en/colombia-culture/lasting-influence-colombias-african-heritage/>

The economy of Colombia is undergoing industrialization, expanding into industries such as textiles, pottery, and brewing.³ The agricultural industry remains a backbone of the Colombian economy, despite incursions from Western powers, particularly the United States. The country's climate allows for the cultivation of a wide variety of agricultural products, including sugarcane,



wheat, barley, potatoes, and more.⁴ The most important fruit crops are plantains and bananas; however, coffee production has been the key crop in the Colombian agricultural industry. Corn, or maize, is also highly produced throughout the country as it was the traditional staple of Indigenous Colombians. The growing textile industry is also supported by an increasing number of farms growing cotton.

The canal location proposed by the United States and the French before them runs across the isthmus from Colón on the Atlantic side to Panama City on the Pacific side. This is the route that the Panama Railroad currently follows. There are a number of towns along the route that were constructed by the railroad company that house former workers and other Panamanians.

³ "Period of Reconciliation, 1903-30," Mother Earth Travel, <http://motherearthtravel.com/history/colombia/history-6.htm>

⁴ "Agriculture, forestry, fishing," Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Colombia/Agriculture-forestry-and-fishing>

History of Colombia

Pre-Independence

Thousands of years before any European influence, various indigenous groups resided in Colombia, each with unique customs, cultures, and languages. From these groups, the most prominent ones in the area became known as the Guna in Panama and the Chibcha, a linguistic group composed of the Taironas and Muisca, in Colombia.⁵ The Chibcha were mostly concentrated around present-day Bogotá, Colombia and had a strong economy that was based on agriculture, pottery, and metalworking, especially with gold.⁶ Both the Chibcha and Guna already had a long history invested in agriculture and sustained their lives harvesting crops such as yucca, maize, and potatoes.⁷ Each group had a strong population with estimates around 500,000 people for each by the time of European interference.⁸

The first interaction with European imperialism was from Spain with the exploration of Alonso de Ojeda. Ojeda previously embarked on the second voyage of Columbus to islands in the Caribbean, and in 1499 he organized an expedition to settle forts and take goods from Colombia back to Spain.⁹ He particularly noted the presence of gold, a key detail that would incentivize future colonies to take advantage of the land in the search for the infamous El Dorado. Although Alonso de Ojeda never fully instituted a functioning Spanish fort or colony, due to lack of food, presence of disease, and the strong resistance of the indigenous people, he set the stage for the future establishment of Santa Marta and acquisition of New Granada by

⁵ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Chibcha." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, April 25, 2011. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chibcha>.

⁶ Morales, Juan D. "Archaeoastronomy in Muisca Territory." *Cosmology Across Cultures* 409 (2009).

⁷ Hudson, Rex A. "Colombia: A Country Study." *Library of Congress: Federal Research Division* (2010).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "Alonso de Ojeda." Real Academia De La Historia.

Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada in 1535.¹⁰ This intrusion of land by Spanish conquistadors and explorers would have profound negative impacts on the people living in Central and Southern America. The incessant forced labor, harsh treatment, and acquired diseases that the Spanish imposed led to a decrease of about 80% of the indigenous population from 1535-1635.¹¹

After the establishment of more colonies and the increase of Spanish people moving to the area of Colombia, Spain began institutions to govern the lands from afar. One of these political institutions was the *audiencia* system. The *audiencias* had both legislative and executive function as an appellate court, sometimes with an official assigned viceroy to serve over the court.¹² Another economic institution was the *encomienda* system. *Encomiendas* were a labor system where the monarchy would grant colonizers from Spain forced labor and tributes of gold from an assigned number of indigenous people on the land.¹³ Spain justified this system with an “exchange” of protection and teaching in Christian faith. In actuality, the system upheld ideas of benevolent paternalism and oppression of the indigenous groups. This system eventually lost effectiveness and the Spanish turned to the use of haciendas in the area.¹⁴

Even in the early sixteenth century, the Panamanian isthmus was already an important place of trade due to the many trails used through the isthmus and in 1517, the isthmus became a prominent port when King Charles approved the exportation of 4,000 African people to be used in forced labor, making Central America a key component in the slave trade.¹⁵ Spain even looked

¹⁰ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, February 12, 2022.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Cunningham, Charles H. *The Audiencia in the Spanish Colonies; As Illustrated by the Audiencia of Manila*. N.p.: Project Gutenberg Ebook, 2012.

¹³ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "encomienda." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, September 5, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/encomienda>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Meditz, Sandra W., and Dennis M. Hanratty. "Panama: A Country Study." *Library of Congress: Federal Research Division* (1989).

to further their reach in the mid-sixteenth century when King Phillip II looked into building a canal through the isthmus. This project was eventually abandoned with the King deciding that if God wanted a canal there, there would already be one.¹⁶

Independence to the Present Day

Colombia gained independence from Spain in 1819. Immediately following its independence, the territory of Colombia was one member of a larger confederation of nations known as Gran Colombia. The confederation also included the territories of Panama, Venezuela, and Ecuador. Gran Colombia was marked by internal political debate, and the member territories soon found these debates irreconcilable. By 1831, the federation had formally dissolved, leaving its members independent.¹⁷ In the decades that followed, Colombia underwent a number of name changes, but its geographic territory remained largely unchanged.

The next decades laid the foundations for political divides continuing to shape Colombia. By the 1840s, distinct liberal and conservative sentiments had arisen, and the Liberal and Conservative parties were formally declared. The Conservatives were mainly wealthy landlords, and the Liberal Party appealed to merchants, artisans, and others involved in business or trade.¹⁸ While the Liberals desired a decentralized, federalist government with powerful departments, or states, the Conservatives called for a strong central state.

The state of the Catholic Church in Colombian society served as a critical point of division for the Conservative and Liberal parties. Conservatives argued that the Church should have a powerful position in politics and society, as well as a number of privileges including

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ "A Guide to the United States' History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, by Country, since 1776: Colombia." Office of the Historian: Department of State.

¹⁸ Diaz Caceres, Margarita J. "Religion, Politics and War In the Creation of an Ethos of Conflict in Colombia; The case of the War of the Thousand Days (1899-1902)." *FIU Electronic Theses and Dissertations* (March 26, 2018).

control over education and welfare, and tithes from the State. The Liberals sought a far more limited role for the Church; they believed that the Church and the State should be completely separate entities, and that the Church should have no control over political decisions.¹⁹

Disagreements regarding the centralization of the State and the role of the Catholic Church fractured the Liberals and Conservatives throughout the 19th century. In 1863, a new, Liberal constitution was adopted, beginning an era of Liberal dominance. The constitution separated the Church from the state and decentralized the central government, placing considerable power in autonomous state governors.²⁰ Under Liberal governance, Colombia also abolished slavery in 1851 and enacted laws granting freedom of the press and universal manhood suffrage.²¹ These reforms had particular impact in Panama, where people of color made up the majority of the population.

The pendulum of political control, however, swung in 1886 with the adoption of a Conservative constitution. The Conservatives felt that the era of Liberal control had been tumultuous and unruly, and so the constitution of 1886 implemented a number of policies intended to restore order to Colombia, undoing the progress of previous Liberal governments. These policies included consolidation of power in the central government and the president, who now appointed all governors. This change was particularly resented in Panama, where people felt that Bogotá was too distant and too different to understand their region's needs.²² The constitution also restored power in the Church, granting it control over many social matters and allowing it to redefine freedom in terms of Christian morals. This new order in Colombia allowed the Conservatives to exclude Liberals and disenfranchise Colombians who weren't

¹⁹ Demarest, G. "War of the Thousand Days." *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 12, no. 1.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Lasso, Marixo. *Erased: the Untold Story of the Panama Canal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), 28.

²² Ibid, 31.

traditionally wealthy, landholding men.²³ During the era of Conservative control, thirteen years passed during which the Liberals had zero seats in the Senate and only two representatives in Congress.²⁴ Stripped of almost all political influence, Liberals grew increasingly discontent.

Political tensions were fueled during this era by economic concerns. The Colombian economy, heavily reliant on the exportation of coffee, was struck by falling coffee prices, resulting in decreased tariff revenues and growing national debt.²⁵ The economic crisis, combined with the Liberals' exclusion from power, caused a radical faction of Liberals to call for a violent uprising. These calls came to fruition in the fall of 1899, when the Liberals began their rebellion by overtaking the department of Santander. Thus began the Thousand Days' War.

The war, lasting roughly three years, proved devastating for the Colombian economy and Colombian lives. Notable battles include the Battle of Peralonso, which resulted in an important and motivating victory for the Liberals, and the brutal Battle of Palonegro, which entailed fifteen days of uninterrupted combat and ended in a Liberal retreat.²⁶ From its start, the war was in the Conservative's favor; they had access to a national army, official infrastructure such as telegraphs, and government funds. Conversely, the Liberals lacked legitimacy, and thus had limited funds, resources, and fractured leadership.²⁷ By the fall of 1902, the Liberals, worn down and seeking an end to the conflict, signed the Treaty of Neerlandia and the Treaty of Wisconsin, laying down their arms.²⁸

²³ Diaz Caceres, Margarita J. "Religion, Politics and War In the Creation of an Ethos of Conflict in Colombia; The case of the War of the Thousand Days (1899-1902)." *FIU Electronic Theses and Dissertations* (March 26, 2018).

²⁴ Mazzuca, Sebastián, and James A. Robinson. "Political Conflict and Power Sharing in the Origins of Modern Colombia." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 89, no. 2 (2009): 285-321.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ De La Pedraja, René. *Wars of Latin America 1899-1941*. n.d.

²⁷ Diaz Caceres, Margarita J. "Religion, Politics and War In the Creation of an Ethos of Conflict in Colombia; The case of the War of the Thousand Days (1899-1902)." *FIU Electronic Theses and Dissertations* (March 26, 2018).

²⁸ Ibid.

Current Issues

Aftermath of the Thousand Days' War

The treaties of Neerlandia and Wisconsin not only declared a ceasefire and Liberal surrender, but also restored Conservative authority. Colombian politics effectively returned to the pre-war era of Conservative dominance and Liberal exclusion. The government remained highly centralized, with weak governors and restricted personal freedoms.²⁹ Despite retaining its political hegemony, the Conservative party did not control a prosperous nation; post-war Colombia, and the Colombia of 1903, is fractured, weak, and uncertain of its future.

The Colombian economy, already weak prior to the war, is virtually left in ruins by the conflict. The over circulation of money has resulted in high inflation, the government has accrued significant national debt, and the physical impact of the war left much of Colombia's infrastructure in shambles, making economic recovery difficult.³⁰ Estimates of the death toll go as high as 100,000, although no Colombian escaped the consequences of the war. For many traditionally wealthy landowners, their property was either seized and redistributed or destroyed through the violence. Businessmen are directly experiencing the consequences of inflation and depleted industry.

In the Panama Department, where the Liberals conducted many of their campaigns, the Thousand Days' War had significant consequences. The war greatly undermined Colombian authority in Panama.³¹ Panamanians, exposed to Liberal political opinions, have adopted many critiques of the Conservative party. Namely, they are growing increasingly critical of the

²⁹ Henderson, James D. *When Colombia Bled*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1985, 45.

³⁰ Diaz Caceres, Margarita J. "Religion, Politics and War In the Creation of an Ethos of Conflict in Colombia; The case of the War of the Thousand Days (1899-1902)." *FIU Electronic Theses and Dissertations* (March 26, 2018), 48-50.

³¹ Henderson, James D. *When Colombia Bled*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1985, 45.

Conservatives' neglectful policies, and they blame Conservative leadership for the economic chaos. Panamanians feel that the capital is too distant and different from Panama to rule it.³²

Much of Panama no longer has faith in Colombia and its ability to competently govern.

Given the current state of the nation, many Colombians, beyond those in Panama, have become disillusioned with Colombia's leadership. In their eyes, the government accomplishes little other than political infighting. For decades, Colombians have witnessed almost constant violence, culminating in the devastating Thousand Days' war. Their properties are destroyed, and they see no opportunities for economic recovery. Many Colombians are calling for major reforms to the government and the economy.

Panamanian Nationalism

In the nineteenth century, a distinct spirit of Panamanian nationalism was prevalent. After the Viceroyalty of New Granada severed its links with Spain in 1821, all of its regions, including Panama, were technically free. Although Panama could not declare herself an independent country at that time as she united with Colombia and became a nation-state, this act still highlighted its unflagging determination to maintain economic autonomy.³³

Incessant conflicts with Bogotá and political unrest during this time also intensified nationalist movements. This instability was obvious at both the national and the local level. At the national level, political disputes converted into multiple constitutional conventions. Military conflicts also manifested into blood-soaked civil wars. To a certain extent, all of the aforementioned events left a huge imprint on Panama's political situation. Panama declared its

³² Lasso, Marixo. *Erased: the Untold Story of the Panama Canal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), 31.

³³ Burns, E. B. 1977. "Panama: A Search for Independence." *Current History* vol 72, no. 424

independence three times - in 1830, 1831, and 1840 - and seriously considered separation on at least two other occasions.

When the centralized Colombian regime gave way to a federal arrangement in 1855, many believed that it was the dawn of a new era for Panama. Justo Arosemena was the trailblazer in expressing Panamanian self-consciousness with his literary works. He accentuated the paramount importance of Panama, a, in his opinion, small but outstanding region of Gran Colombia at that time. In his book *El Estado Federal de Panamá*, published in 1855, Arosemena implied that Panama's future as an independent and separate nation was preordained by her exceptional geographical features: "Another country, another people, another entity, and politics ought not to contradict nature's powerful and inscrutable manifestations." However, not only did this boost in liberalism not solve the inherent problem of political illegitimacy but it also aggravated the situation. Indeed, the 1855-1885 period was arguably the most unstable in Panama's history, partially owing to the fact that Colombia's federal states were allowed to develop their own army.

Unprecedented violence broke out in 1899 as a result of discontent with the lack of legitimacy of the new Colombian constitution. The Thousand Days' War was between the traditional Iberic-American political system and the Northern-Hemisphere-style liberalism. Most of the people in Panama united under the Liberal banner: approximately 80% of Panama's male population abided by the Liberal Party and most Isthmian rural people were harshly oppressed by the government. In the end, the Liberals were defeated by the Conservatives.³⁴

³⁴ Mann, Carlos Guevara. "Panamanian Militarism: A Historical Interpretation", Chapter 3.

American Agricultural Corporations and Labor Conditions

With the importance of agriculture in the history of the Colombian economy, it was no doubt that this tradition would continue long into the 19th century. Although there were large plantation style farms, most of the agriculture through the earlier time period was done by small farmers who would then sell diverse products to companies, like the Frank Brothers and Aspinwall Fruit.³⁵ Because of the difference in climate and terrain that Central America had, many of the farmers used innovative methods to produce their crops. This then led to distorted critiques by many researchers from the United States, who claimed that the unconventional forms of agriculture in the areas were “uncivilized.”³⁶

This style of farming began to change in the late-19th century. Minor C. Keith, a businessman from New York accepted his uncle’s invitation to manage the construction of a railroad spanning across the isthmus in Central America.³⁷ This work on the railroad offered an insight into a potential agricultural business using the large-scale banana exportation from the region. Keith was granted land and purchased plantations to launch the exportation of bananas, creating a fruit company. This practice wasn’t unique to Keith, and in 1899, he engaged in a merger with Boston Fruit Company, creating the United Fruit Company (UFC) and granting wider access to plant in areas such as Magdalena, Colombia, and Bocas del Toro in the Isthmus.³⁸

Even in the early stages of development, one prominent problem with running the large fruit companies was the shortage of attainable labor that could be easily taken advantage of. Hispanics living in Central America refused to work as wage laborers for the companies due to

³⁵ Lasso, Marixo. *Erased: the Untold Story of the Panama Canal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), 80.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 86.

³⁷ "MINOR C. KEITH DIES; UNITED FRUIT'S HEAD." *The New York Times*, June 15, 1929.

³⁸ *Ibid*.

their already successful economic alternatives in communities, so many companies turned to Afro-Caribbean labor. The economy of countries such as Jamaica recently plunged, incentivizing many people to move to these fruit companies and accept any conditions, no matter how poor, in exchange for stable employment. The UFC quickly took advantage of this opportunity. This is clearly seen in the Limón Division where out of 5,600 workers, around 4,000 were Jamaican.³⁹ UFC and others also exploited the local people for land unfairly taken. Because UFC produced a market that local farmers couldn't keep up with, the farmers turned to loans granted by the company. These loans were given on the condition that the laborers would sell their produce exclusively to UFC, and if the loans were due when the agricultural laborers couldn't pay them off, they were forced to sell their land at a price previously set in the pact.⁴⁰

There were many additional inequalities of labor under UFC. One such inequity is seen in the descriptions of housing provided for the different jobs. Overseers and foreman lived apart from the laborer housing in spacious one to two-family homes located near prestigious and managerial houses in the "White Zones;" however, housing for the laborers was often meant to provide only for single men, but instead would grow overcrowded and unsanitary when multiple families were forced to live together.⁴¹ Not only were the living conditions unbearable, the labor required for the banana plantations was extremely strenuous and physically demanding. Harvesters reported having to carry 80 to 100 pound stems of bananas in rough terrain for around ten hours in a day.⁴² Even if these laborers wanted to escape the rough work, UFC kept it extremely difficult to do so. The company gave extremely low wages and provided their own

³⁹ Bourgois, Philippe. *Ethnicity at Work*. 1989, 49.

⁴⁰ Bucheli, Marcelo. "Enforcing Business Contracts in South America: The United Fruit Company and Colombian Banana Planters in the Twentieth Century." *The Business History Review* 78, no. 2 (2004): 181–212.

⁴¹ Bourgois, Philippe. *Ethnicity at Work*. 1989, 4.

⁴² *Ibid*, 6.

store and merchandise with low prices to justify this standard of living. Sometimes the workers were even paid in credit that could only be used at the company stores.⁴³

Although these agricultural corporations did provide several public services such as stores, transportation, and health facilities, the opportunities granted by these institutions were extremely limited. Overall, companies like the United Fruit Company displayed an oppressive nature that justified exploitative measures in the land and people they encountered. As one UFC consultant said, a banana plantation “is a poor place to live if you’re not a banana.”⁴⁴

Indigenous Groups and Issues

Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, Panama was mainly home to the Guaymí, Chocó, and Guna peoples, among whom the largest group was Guna. The indigenous population size back in those days cannot be accurately determined, but there were around 750,000 people. They lived in modest palm-leaf huts, growing corn, cacao, root crops and collecting plants and fruits.⁴⁵

When Panama bore the brunt of the Spanish conquest in 1513 and became a province of the Viceroyalty of New Granada, many natives were either slain or enslaved; the rest who survived eventually fled to nearby forests and islands. In 1821, New Granada was liberated from Spain, thus rendering Panama, along with other regions, free.⁴⁶ However, this freedom was only a cover; after a chain of changes in government, Panama was in complete subservience to the new Colombian Republic and suffered from blatant subjugation by the Conservatives. The indigenous inhabitants were no exception - they succumbed to the central government.⁴⁷

⁴³ Caro, Jorge Enrique E., and Antonino V. Ortega. "The worker's massacre of 1928 in the Magdalena Zona Bananera - Colombia. An unfinished story." *Memorias: Revista Digital de Historia y Arqueología desde el Caribe* (2012).

⁴⁴ Bourgois, Philippe. *Ethnicity at Work*. 1989, 3.

⁴⁵ "History of Panama." *Britannica Encyclopedia*.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ O'Laughlin, Peyton. "panamanian independence & political intervention by the united states." *College of Wooster Lating American Voices*. Last modified May 4, 2020.

Their frustration ultimately reached its pinnacle during the Thousand Days' War between the Colombian Liberal Party and the government. The indigenous people often sided with Panamanian rebels and the Liberals. Victoriano Lorenzo, an indigenous chief, was a prominent figure during this war and inspired many of his compatriots with his fighting spirit.⁴⁸ The purpose of Victoriano's and other natives' collaboration with the nationalists should not be mistaken for supporting a self-governing Panama; they just wanted to emancipate their people from the post-colonial government, to which they likened those of the colonial era. Their fight against the central government arose from a plethora of issues, namely land rights, abuse of natural resources, and systematic oppression against indigenous Panamanians. Unfortunately, the result of the war was not conducive to the indigenous population. Their hero Victoriano was executed by the Conservatives, which induced massive dismay among the Panamanian public.

Relationships with Neighboring Countries

Venezuela

Following the dissolution of Gran Colombia in 1830, relations were unstable and strained between the two countries.⁴⁹ Debt controversies, unsettled boundaries, and smuggling across borders caused negative sentiments between the countries. Venezuela denied Colombian access to Lake Maracaibo and the Atlantic Ocean through the many rivers, worsening tensions.

In 1900, following conflict between Colombia and Venezuela, the new Venezuelan dictator assisted the Liberal rebellion of Colombia through providing weapon shipments to liberal strongholds in multiple Colombian cities.⁵⁰ Additionally, Venezuelan warships were

⁴⁸ "Victoriano Lorenzo." Britannica Encyclopedia.

⁴⁹ Sullivan, William M. "Colombian-Venezuelan Relations, 1900-1902." *Caribbean Studies* 15, no. 3 (October 1975): 78-97.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

commonly seen off the coasts of Colombia as well. This prompted Colombia to negotiate with Washington to purchase the infamous warship *Detroit*. Following Conservative victories in the eastern departments, Venezuela began to grow wary of Colombia. Liberal rebellions in Colombia were fueled by Venezuelan aid, and Colombia responses included reciprocated violence. Venezuela also envisioned a recreation of Gran Colombia, where Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, and Nicaragua would be united into a Liberal superstate against US imperialism. Venezuela, Ecuador, and Nicaragua communicated constantly about invasion plans towards this vision.⁵¹

Costa Rica

Colombia-Costa Rica relations can be linked back to the 1846 Bidlack treaty, guaranteeing the United States right-of-way across Panama in exchange for neutrality for the isthmus and sovereignty of New Granada (Colombia).⁵² Following the Bidlack treaty, Colombia and Costa Rica began to face growing conflict on their borders beginning in 1880. With Costa Rica being directly connected to the Colombian department of Panama, the two have continued conflicts over borders, resulting in tension between the two countries growing strained. Legal disputes between the two countries over disputed areas resulted in Colombian refusal to cooperate with Costa Rica under previous border agreements.⁵³ Certain arbitration agreements between Costa Rica and Colombia led to consistent conflict between the two countries over their disputed boundaries close to the Panama department.

Ecuador

⁵¹ Sullivan, William M. "Colombian-Venezuelan Relations, 1900-1902." *Caribbean Studies* 15, no. 3 (October 1975): 78-97.

⁵² Sensabaugh, Leon F. "The Attitude of the United States toward the Colombia-Costa Rica Arbitral Proceedings." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 19, no. 1 (February 1939): 16-30.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Colombia-Ecuador relations can be traced back to 1832, with the Treaty of Pasto, where both countries recognized each other as sovereign states following the dissolution of Gran Colombia in the 1830s. The Ecuadorian diplomatic mission did not begin until 1837. Ecuador did not receive an embassy in Colombia until the late 1930s.⁵⁴

Peru

Both Colombia and Peru share a colonial past, with the Spanish creation of Gran Colombia and Peru, but in the mid 1800s, both countries took part in a violent and bloody war over a territorial dispute, which ended in no territorial change. The dissolution of Gran Colombia in 1831 led to the legacies of this war shifting to Peru-Ecuador relations deteriorating.⁵⁵

Brazil

The relationship between Colombia and Brazil has not been prominent, but land disputes over the Amazon region of both countries have led to up and down relations for the past couple decades. Both Colombia and Brazil do not have any current official agreements with one another, and interactions are solely economic at most. Unlike Venezuela, land disputes did not occur over decades, rather occurred in small arbitrary instances.⁵⁶

Influence of the United States

The relationship between the United States and Colombia has existed since the latter's independence, which was recognized by President Monroe in 1822.⁵⁷ The United States takes its relationship with Latin American nations very seriously, pursuant to the Monroe Doctrine, which designated the Western Hemisphere as America's sphere of influence and warned European

⁵⁴ "Colombia-Ecuador Relations." Britannica Encyclopedia.

⁵⁵ "Colombia-Peru Relations." Britannica Encyclopedia.

⁵⁶ "Colombia-Brazil Relations." Britannica Encyclopedia

⁵⁷ "A Guide to the United States' History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, by Country, since 1776: Colombia," Office of the Historian, US Department of State, <https://history.state.gov/countries/colombia>.

nations that the United States would not tolerate further colonization within that sphere.⁵⁸ The doctrine has been interpreted for years as a warning against European influence in Latin America. However, many American politicians, led by President Roosevelt, are wishing to reinterpret the doctrine to justify the potential use of military force as international police power to curb wrongdoings by Latin American states. Of particular note is the President's foreign policy, defined by the phrase: "speak softly, and carry a big stick."⁵⁹ As a result of this policy, the United States engages in negotiations backed up by an unspoken threat of military intervention.

The most recent agreement signed between Colombia and the United States is known as the Mallarino-Bidlack Treaty, signed in 1846.⁶⁰ The pact guarantees the United States an exclusive monopoly over the Isthmus of Panama in exchange for a guarantee of the isthmus's neutrality and the sovereignty of Colombia there. This treaty allowed the United States to intervene during any of Colombia's civil wars to ensure the neutrality of the Panama Department and still permits the United States to send its military in to quell any unrest. This gives the United States significant power to insert itself into Colombian internal affairs. The treaty also granted the United States the exclusive right of transit across the Panamanian isthmus on any current or future modes of transportation.⁶¹ This would be critical as demand for transportation across the isthmus increased throughout the 19th century. In exchange for these concessions, the United States guaranteed Colombian sovereignty over the isthmus as well as its neutrality.

⁵⁸ "Monroe Doctrine (1823)," Milestone Documents, National Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/monroe-doctrine>.

⁵⁹ "Big Stick Diplomacy," National Geographic, <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/big-stick-diplomacy>.

⁶⁰ "Bidlack Treaty," Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Bidlack-Treaty>.

⁶¹ David McCullough, *The Path Between the Seas: the Creation of the Panama Canal 1870-1914* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1977), 32-3.

With the discovery of gold in California in 1848, demand for transportation across the isthmus increased significantly, as it was a shorter journey than around the tip of South America. The Panama Railroad took five years to build at a cost of \$8 million, six times the estimates.⁶² Tickets were \$25 in gold and profits were greater than \$7 million in the first year, bringing the company to be the most expensive stock traded at the New York Stock Exchange. The railroad was largely built by laborers of color, including Afro-Colombians, Jamaicans, Chinese laborers, and other people of color brought to Colombia by the American company.⁶³ They settled in the towns along the railroad, such as Colón and Gatún, and many still reside there.

While the railroad is currently the fastest method of transportation across the isthmus, it still has its problems. The Chagres River is notorious for its seasonal floods, which often disable the railroad.⁶⁴ Because of this, it has been a long-time goal of the United States in particular to construct a canal across the isthmus linking the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. A canal would finally link Atlantic and Pacific global trade, revolutionizing the global economy and shortening transport times.⁶⁵ For the United States in particular, it would be able to more quickly move goods and people between its two coasts, both by private firms and by the American navy.

The most important issue affecting the relationship between the United States and Colombia is the increasing popularity of scientific racism and the rise of the idea of “Western Civilization.” During this time period, the rules of international law divide the world between countries that fulfill the standard of civilization and those that do not.⁶⁶ Generally, Western countries meet the standard to be considered civilized and all others, including the nations of

⁶² Ibid, 34-5.

⁶³ Ibid, 105.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 109.

⁶⁵ “How the Panama Canal helped make the U.S. a world power,” PBS, last modified August 15, 2014, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/panama-canal-helped-make-u-s-world-power>.

⁶⁶ Marixa Lasso, *Erased: the Untold Story of the Panama Canal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), 34.

Latin America, do not. “Civilized” countries can treat “uncivilized” countries however they want because the latter are not subject to international norms.

Throughout the 1800s, the idea of the United States as a force for the spread of civilization and democracy grew significantly.⁶⁷ Many believe that the United States has a responsibility to govern “backward regions” as a part of the supposedly natural role of white people as agents of civilization. This idea was a major motivator behind the American takeover of Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines during the 1898 Spanish-American War and still governs much of American foreign policy today. The war allowed the United States to create intricate legal and political frameworks to transform the former subjects of the Spanish Empire into primitive savages in need of help.⁶⁸ The American government and newspaper media construct citizens of Latin American nations as backwards and stuck in the past in order to further their own political goals of exploitation.

As of right now, the United States retains significant control over the islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico as a result of the 1898 Spanish-American War. The Treaty of Paris ceded control of the islands from Spain to the United States.⁶⁹ In March of 1901, the US Congress approved the Platt Amendment, which allows it to intervene militarily in Cuba to protect American interests. This amendment was incorporated into the Cuban constitution. As for Puerto Rico, the island has been essentially made an American colony. The 1900 Foraker Act established a civilian government and declared Puerto Rico an American “territory.”⁷⁰ However, all executive officials were appointed by the American President. Puerto Ricans do not have citizenship and recent

⁶⁷ Ibid, 35.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 44.

⁶⁹ “Chronology of U.S.-Cuba Relations,” Cuban Research Institute, Florida International University, <https://cri.fiu.edu/us-cuba/chronology-of-us-cuba-relations/>.

⁷⁰ “Puerto Rico: A U.S. Territory in Crisis,” Council on Foreign Relations, last modified September 29, 2022, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/puerto-rico-us-territory-crisis>.

Supreme Court cases, such as *Downes v. Bidwell*, have made the island an “unincorporated territory” with no path to statehood. American actions in both of these cases may foreshadow future American-Colombian relations as the United States strives to build a canal across the Panamanian isthmus and increase its influence throughout the Western hemisphere.

The idea of “Western Civilization” plays a key role in engineering the divide between “civilized” and “uncivilized” nations. Despite Latin American democracies being some of the oldest and most progressive in the world, they are excluded from “Western Civilization.” As a result, these countries are not considered to be on a level playing field with the nations of North America and Western Europe both in terms of international relations and of culture and society.

All of these ideas and policies are based in scientific racism, which is the use of pseudoscientific methods to “prove” the biological superiority of white people.⁷¹ Proponents of scientific racism use methods such as craniometry, the measurement of skulls, and flawed studies to allege that white people are superior. These types of studies were more popular to justify racism because they were supposedly supported by science.

The prominence of all of these ideas in the United States and throughout the West are critical in shaping both public opinion and government policy towards Colombia. Americans are likely to think that the people of Colombia are uncivilized and unable to govern themselves effectively. Because of this, the United States government may approach relations with Colombia with the idea that they should get whatever they want because of their political, cultural, and biological superiority.

⁷¹ “Scientific Racism,” Harvard Library, <https://library.harvard.edu/confronting-anti-black-racism/scientific-racism>.

Isthmian Canal

In the 16th century, the Spanish colonial elite began to recognize the importance of the Panamanian isthmus, and two routes were up for consideration: the first in Nicaragua and the other in Panama. Panama and Colombia were considered one of the most forefront locations of global trade and transportation technology, with Panama City and Colón having active trade with China, Europe and the US; this included telegraph systems between the Americas and Europe as well.⁷² Additionally, Colombia had been central in global political innovation during the 1850s, with newfound freedoms and the abolition of slavery. Although the Colombian federal system allowed Panama funding and department autonomy in trade, many felt that the Colombian government did not recognize the importance of trade in the Panama department. Following the Mallarino-Bidlack Treaty, the US gained neutrality of the isthmus, this allowed for the creation of the Panama Railroad.⁷³

Previous to the canal, transportation between the Atlantic and the Pacific was conducted in Panama by using sailboats, steamships and other marine craft to go upriver on the Gorgona, where travelers would be required to find somewhere to stay the night before taking mules to Panama City. River travel would take around two to four days, requiring travelers to spend nights on small settlements and towns on riverbanks. Travelers going from the Pacific to the Atlantic followed the same process reversed, first traveling on mules and then on marine craft.⁷⁴

The construction of the Panama Railroad resulted in hundreds of surveys of the isthmus, and these surveys were then used as information for the canal. For example, the elevation on one side was equal to sea level, and the other side had an elevation of 275 ft. In 1850, the Clayton-

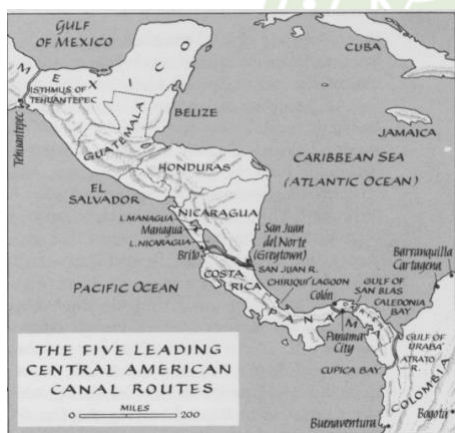
⁷² Worthington, W. E. , Bray, . Wayne D. , Cho, . Aileen , Gordon, . Burton L. and Padelford, . Norman J.. "Panama Canal." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 25, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Panama-Canal>.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Lasso, Marixo. *Erased: the Untold Story of the Panama Canal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019).

Bulwer treaty was signed and gave the US & the UK joint control over any canal built in Nicaragua, with estimates by mid-1850s that a canal in Central America would save millions of dollars for American trade.⁷⁵ These estimates prompted expeditions in the late 1870s, followed by the Wyse Concession, granting 99-year privilege to France for building a canal across Panama isthmus by Colombia. This concession could be transferred but not sold to another government, and it also required an agreement with the Panama Railroad.⁷⁶

Five locations were considered as possible canal routes. The Tehuantepec isthmus in Mexico was considered as a possible location for a massive ship-carrying railway to connect the oceans.⁷⁷ Locations using Colombia's Atrato River and crossing the Darien Wilderness were also



considered but have generally been eliminated due to their difficulty for construction relative to the other options. As of today, the two most prominent potential locations for the construction of a transoceanic canal are in Nicaragua and in Panama, between Panama City and Colón.⁷⁸ Studies have been conducted in both regions, but it is unclear which is the better option in terms of engineering.

In May of 1879, the Congress International d'Études du Canal Interocéanique met in Paris with a Colombian delegation of 4, and a US delegation of 11, the rest being French. This Congress was tasked with choosing canal location, cost, and type. Ferdinand de Lesseps' plan was to build a sea-level canal across the Panamanian isthmus. Contrastingly, the Americans

⁷⁵ McCullough, David. *The Path Between the Seas: the Creation of the Panama Canal 1870-1914* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1977).

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 120.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 28.

preferred the Nicaragua plan, where they would have shared control with the UK over trade. However, the Americans also had a plan for a canal in Panama, which consisted of a locks canal with an artificial lake, costing around \$94.6M. The Congress, dominated by French delegates, approved the French Lesseps plan for a sea-level canal despite engineering concerns.

One of the first attempts to build the Panama Canal was conducted in 1881, following a Colombian concession to the private Compagnie Universelle du Canal Interocéanique, under the leadership of Lesseps. The French construction company, with funding from French capital and investors, believed the Lesseps project in the Panamanian isthmus would be of great success, following the triumphant construction of the Suez Canal under his leadership.⁷⁹ Although Lesseps gained major support from the public and the French government, and projects such as the Suez Canal and the Union Pacific Railroad were significantly different, and other engineers with experience in the Panamanian isthmus contested the Lesseps canal project due to the geographical features that posed challenges to constructing a sea-level canal. Some of these challenges included the Continental Divide 9 miles from the Pacific, the Chagres River that flows into the Atlantic, the Río Grande flowing into the Pacific, and difficult, tropical terrain.

Despite these concerns, the Compagnie moved forward with the sea-level plan. Cities such as Colón, Barbacoas, and Gatún were surveyed, with Colón inhabitants mainly being migrant labor workers on the railroad. Matachín was also surveyed, and it was where Chinese workers committed mass suicide due to melancholia.

French investors supported the Panama company, as France came into processes of venture capitalism, where people could buy shares into the future canal production. These shares were sold double than what was expected, and the French began lobbying in the US to oppose

⁷⁹ Lasso, Marixo. *Erased: the Untold Story of the Panama Canal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019).

the Nicaragua canal project and gain favor for the Panama Canal. Beginning in 1881, the canal line was drawn, with gaps in the middle for machine shops & intermediate towns in the dense tropical landscape.⁸⁰ Black & indigenous workers were transported to the canal zone and worked in horrendous conditions. Tools rusted, mold grew on objects and clothes, nothing could dry, and disease was running rampant.⁸¹ Additionally, in 1882, earthquakes began in the French project zone, allowing no progress on a French canal in Panama. Panama City and Colón, with high levels of trade, lacked sewers, sanitation, and freshwater.⁸² Unlike the previously successful Suez Canal, the French were ill-prepared to handle the tropical conditions of Panama, and the topography of the canal pathway varied greatly, from mountains to marshes.⁸³

In the 1890s, the Panama lobby in the US was able to persuade the government to choose the French Panamanian canal path over Nicaragua, with of the main lobbying points focusing on volcanoes. In 1902, the eruption of Mount Pelée on Martinique & the following environmental disaster gave merit to Panamanian canal lobbyists against the Nicaraguan plan, as Nicaragua was highly volcanic. In the following week, the Momotombo volcano erupted, creating devastating environmental effects. Nicaraguan telegrams to the United States denied the eruption occurring and stated that any news about the eruption was completely false. This then pushed the US to select the Panamanian plan, but construction would be conducted by US workers and efforts. The American canal project was encapsulated in a June 1902 42-34 vote in the US Senate approving the canal project.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Ibid.

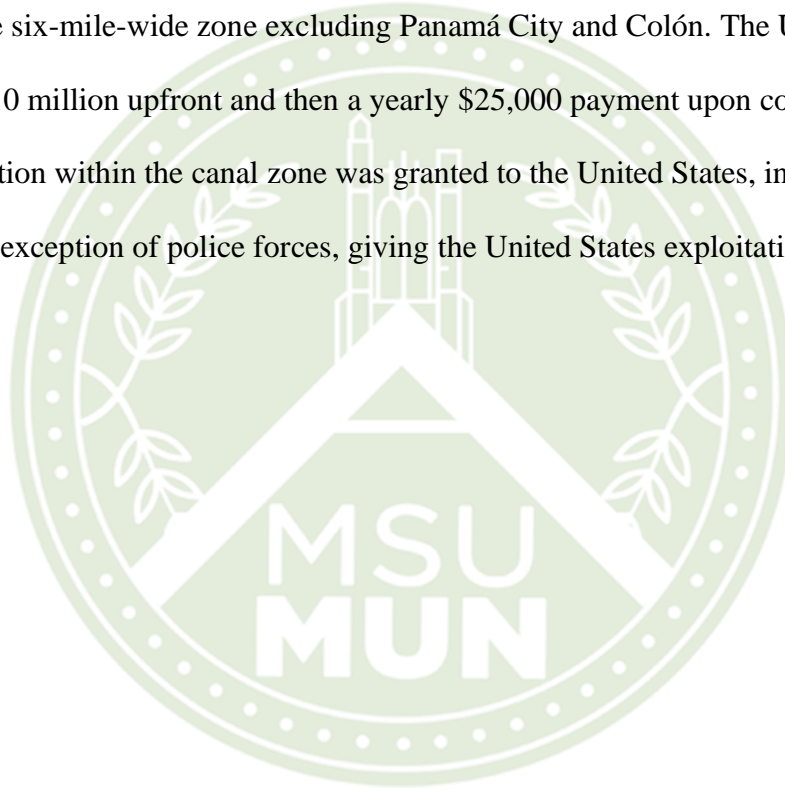
⁸¹ Lasso, Marixo. *Erased: the Untold Story of the Panama Canal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019).

⁸² McCullough, David. *The Path Between the Seas: the Creation of the Panama Canal 1870-1914* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1977).

⁸³ Worthington, W. E. , Bray, . Wayne D. , Cho, . Aileen , Gordon, . Burton L. and Padelford, . Norman J.. "Panama Canal." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 25, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Panama-Canal>.

⁸⁴ McCullough, David. *The Path Between the Seas: the Creation of the Panama Canal 1870-1914* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1977).

The Hay-Hérran treaty of 1903 authorized the United States to build a canal through the Colombian department of Panamá. The agreement, negotiated by US Secretary of State John Hay, was signed yesterday and empowers the United States to purchase machinery and works off of the previous and failed French project run by Compagnie Nouvelle in the Panamá department to build a canal following the same French canal line drawn decades before. Additionally, the treaty empowered the United States to oversee & enforce construction, operation, maintenance and defense of the six-mile-wide zone excluding Panamá City and Colón. The United States was required to pay \$10 million upfront and then a yearly \$25,000 payment upon completion of the canal. Administration within the canal zone was granted to the United States, including defense services, with the exception of police forces, giving the United States exploitative authority over the zone.⁸⁵



⁸⁵ "Hay-Hérran Treaty (1903)." Encyclopedia.

Character Biographies

Manuel Amador Guerrero, Panamanian Nationalist

Manuel Amador Guerrero was born in Turbaco, Colombia in 1833 and came to Panama during the gold rush in the 1850s.⁸⁶ He studied medicine at the University of Cartagena and is a leading physician in Panama. Amador's medical practice flourished alongside his political career as a member of the Conservative party until 1867, when he was appointed Governor of the Panama Department but never took his position due to a revolution. After being captured by the opposition, he was sent into exile for a year. Most of Amador's influence and prestige comes from his time spent as the chief physician of the Panama Railroad. This experience also piqued his interest in an isthmian canal. He, along with his wife María de la Ossa, are popular figures in Panama City's social life and hold large property interests. Amador's son is currently a physician in the United States Army and is stationed in Massachusetts. The two maintain relatively frequent contact and have a close relationship. Amador takes great pride in his sharp memory - in fact, he knows all of his patients by name. He enjoys hosting parties with his wife at their home in Panama City and is currently experimenting with different tequila-based cocktails.

Arthur M. Beaupre, American Consul to Colombia

Arthur Beaupre is an American diplomat born in Illinois in 1853. At the age of sixteen, Beaupre began his career as a printer at the DeKalb County News. At the printing office, Beaupre established himself as a hard worker and fast learner. In 1874, Beaupre moved to the city of Aurora, Illinois, where he was elected Clerk of the City Court. By 1886, he had ascended to the rank of County Clerk, a position which he held for eight years. During this time, Beaupre

⁸⁶ David McCullough, *The Path Between the Seas: the Creation of the Panama Canal 1870-1914* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1977), 341-3.

earned the reputation of being diligent and effective.⁸⁷ Having impressed many, he was appointed as the Consul-General to Guatemala in 1897. In 1900, he was transferred to Colombia, where he served as Consul for three years. Recently, Beaupre was promoted to Consul to Colombia.⁸⁸ Beaupre is praised for his confidence, poise, and self-respecting pride, and he is generally interested in maintaining diplomacy. Regarding Colombian affairs, Beaupre aligns with the goals of the United States government and believes that Colombia is dependent on the United States. Beaupre pronounces the “s” in Illinois and any j’s in Spanish.

Mitzel Chiari, Guna Salia

Born in 1874 in Tulenega in the Panamá department of Colombia to the Guna Salia (leader), Mitzel grew up participating in ceremonies such as the Onmaked Nega watching her father sing, tell historical accounts, tell of legends and lead the community both socially and politically. As Guna family structures are matrilinear, Mitzel married Aquimín Kantule and rose to Salia position in her own community at the age of 24. Mitzel has four children, three girls and one boy, all under the age of 10 years old. Mitzel, as Salia of the Guna, consistently interacts with Panamanian department officials on a weekly basis, as she is also the head of the Guna resistance and rights movement. Mitzel is heavily passionate about the environment, as she has seen the deterioration of forests and wetlands for the construction of the railroads, she has continued to advocate for Guna representation over industrial decisions in the department of Panamá. Mitzel is extremely allergic to bees but puts honey in all her meals.

⁸⁷ *Record of Kane County, Illinois*. 2nd ed. Chicago: Beers, Leggett & Co., 1888, 657.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 739.

Damerae Chisholm, Jamaican Farmer

Damerae Chisholm was born in 1880 in a poor village in Ocho Rios, Jamaica. His family moved to Alanje, Panama when he was 6 during a massive wave of migration from Jamaica with a view to escaping poverty. His father was able to obtain a job on the Panama Railroad construction, and started a small farm after the railroad's completion, which he shared with Damerae. Damerae grew up as a bright and cheeky boy with his parents' goal of becoming rich deeply entrenched in his impressionable mind. Thus, since the age of 10, he had taken on all sorts of jobs, from being a muleteer and carrying water to singing in public. One time, Damerae managed to capture an exotic bird and brought it with him whenever he went outside. He had the audacity to ask for money from every person who stopped to look at his unique pet. It did work out a few times before Damerae had to give up this crazy entrepreneurial idea after being almost beaten to death by a man twice as big as him. Now, at the age of 23, he is definitely more mature and has found himself a decent job at a banana farm run by Americans. Damerae still carries his dream of growing rich and hopes that one day he can have his own farm just like his white foreign bosses.

Enrique Cortes, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Enrique Cortes was born in 1850 in the department of Boyacá. Cortes was born into a wealthy family of landed gentry. His wealthy upbringing gave him freedom to engage in leisurely pastimes, his favorite of which was *tejo*, a traditional Colombian throwing sport.⁸⁹ Cortes was a very talented tejo thrower, and by the age of fifteen he had gained national attention for his tejo prowess. In 1865, Cortes and his family were forced to relocate to Bogotá when their land was seized under the Liberal reforms of the 1860s. To this day, Cortes not only resents the

⁸⁹ Bravender, Robin. "Tejo: Colombia's most muddy sport." The City Paper. Last modified , 2013.

Liberals for seizing his land, but for disrupting his tejo career. In Bogotá, Cortes began his career as a local bureaucrat. Cortes's diligence and meticulous work ethic - traits which were honed by his tejo training - earned him great praise and allowed him to ascend through the ranks quickly. Last year, Cortes was appointed Colombia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, a position which he still holds today. As Minister, Cortes mainly defers to the United States and aligns with its policies, although his ultimate goal is to maintain Conservative control. Cortes hopes that Colombian affairs remain calm so that he can focus on his adult tejo league, which he recently joined alongside some fellow ministers.

General Benjamín Herrera, Liberal Party leader

Born in Cali, Colombia in 1853, Benjamín Herrera quickly involved himself in the political affairs of Colombia. At the age of 22 he joined the liberal forces to overthrow a conservative government in the Colombian department of Antioquia. His interest in the affairs only increased with the arrival of the Civil War, which he fought in for a decade before the liberal forces were eventually defeated. After this defeat, Herrera attempted life in a different career, and established himself in the Santander Department of Colombia, working in the cattle business.⁹⁰ However, after the implementation of a new conservative governor in Colombia, Herrera quickly returned to the political and military scene. Herrera gathered guerilla forces and helped lead the liberals in the Thousand Days' War as a strategist and general. Known as a formidable leader, Herrera was willing to sacrifice property and life for his cause. In 1902, his troops eventually surrendered to a peace treaty promising free elections and political reform. Although the war is over, Herrera is always looking for ways to further push his liberal agenda

⁹⁰ Bergquist, Charles W. *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886-1910*. N.p.: Duke University Press, 1978, 142.

and succeed as a political leader. After wrangling cattle for so long, Herrera figures wrangling politics with his experience can't be too difficult. Hererra's favorite cow is named "Dulce".

Aldemar Jiménez, Overseer of Vaccaro Brothers & Company in Choco

Born in 1864 in Choco, a district on the northwest side of Colombia, Aldemar Jiménez grew up with independent agricultural laborers as parents. As a child, Jiménez spent many days helping his father and brothers harvest the fruit they grew and sold them at high prices. When Jiménez inherited the farm at the age of 25, the large number of U.S. fruit companies in the area made independent farming almost impossible, leading Jiménez to take loans from the fruit company that he couldn't pay back. When the payment was due, Jiménez was forced to sell his land to Vaccaro Brothers & Company and lost it at an extremely low price. Thankfully the company kept Jiménez working for them as an overseer for their choco fruit production.

Although Jiménez will never forget the way the company cheated him for his land, he believes he will never plan to leave his line of work. With his past experience, Jiménez remembers the strenuous and taxing work required as a laborer on a farm, so working as an overseer is a much better alternative. Having to provide for his large family at home, Jiménez is happy to have a job with relative stability and safety. But with recent news floating around about the interest of a canal through Colombia and the dissatisfaction with these U.S. fruit companies, Jiménez worries about how long his job stability will last for. Jiménez is passionate about baking, and makes his own birthday cake every year. However, because of his treatment by the agricultural industry, he never consumes bananas in any form.

Minor Cooper Keith, Vice President of the United Fruit Company

Born January 1848 in Brooklyn, NY, Minor Cooper Keith is known as the founder of the United Fruit Company alongside Andrew Preston, Keith is also known for his great success in

building the Costa Rican railroad.⁹¹ Having only received a grade-school education, Keith first began working in the growing cattle business out west, but joined his older brother Henry in building the Costa Rican railroad after Minor's uncle transferred the contract to the two brothers. In 1883, Minor married Cristina Castro Fernández, the daughter of Costa Rica's former president, José María Castro, but the pair did not have children. Keith completed the railroad in 1890, and began producing bananas along the railroads, leading to his current position as Vice President of the United Fruit Company starting in 1899. As a ruthless businessman, Keith is willing to go any distance to create profit. Keith owns a monopoly of banana production and railroads in central America with his grip extending from the US all the way to Colombia, and he is one America's most wealthy businessmen. Minor Keith does not like the texture of bananas and once kicked a child.

Manuel Quintín Lamé, Panama Railroad Employee

Manuel Quintín Lamé was born in 1880 in Gorgona, Panama to Elivardo Miranda and Maria Puchicama. He had three brothers and four sisters. As a member of the Ngäbe community, Lamé grew up getting acquainted with a lot of ceremonies whose meanings he admitted he did not understand fully. He particularly excelled in "*La balseria*", a traditional Ngäbe sport, in which Lamé had such superb athletic gifts that made him one of the best players in the region. When Lamé was 20, he married Bella Membache, and together they had two sons and one daughter. He worked as a muleteer for three years, helping travelers cross the isthmus from Gorgona to Panama City. After the construction of the railroad, demand for his muleteer services declined sharply, and he was forced to take a job with the railroad. While working in the railroad industry, Lamé witnesses with his own eyes how Panamanian workers, especially indigenous

⁹¹ "Keith, Minor Cooper (1848-1929)." Encyclopedia.

people like himself, are mistreated and deprived of basic labor rights. Frustration is fueling up inside him, and he plans to rally other workers to organize a strike. Lamé particularly hates the taste of coffee and American imperialism against the US companies that exploit them.

Carlos Antonio Mendoza, Panamanian lawyer

Carlos Antonio Mendoza was born on October 31, 1856 in Panama City. He was a Panamanian politician and lawyer. At the age of 13, Mendoza went to Bogotá where he completed high school and later studied law at the Universidad del Rosario and the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Inspired by philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon who advocated a social organization based on equal rights, he professed a deep liberal conviction at a time when caste structures still prevailed. He was also the founder and director of several political newspapers and headed the radical wing of the Liberal Party. As a lawyer, Mendzone followed the ideology of the Liberal Party in his practice of law. In 1892, Mendoza was recognized for defending the famous indigenous leader Victoriano Lorenzo in court, who was judged harshly for committing a homicide in self-defense. He publicly blamed the Colombian central government, which allowed such events to happen “for the absolute abandonment in which it kept the most humble Panamanians.” As a liberal, he defended the autonomy of Panama and fought in the Thousand Days’ War.⁹² As Mendoza is inspired by philosophers, he has a growing collection of Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates books. Mendoza eats bananas with a knife and fork, by cutting off both ends and slicing open the skin lengthwise.

Arona Bonilla Miranda, Indigenous Rights Leader

Arona Bonilla Miranda is an indigenous leader born in 1883 in the southern Colombian department of Cauca. Miranda was born to a family of *terrazgueros*, which were indigenous

⁹² "Mendoza, Carlos Antonio (1856-1916)." Encyclopedia.

tenant farmers who worked on the estates of wealthy landowners. Much of Miranda's childhood was marked with conflicts and uprisings in Cauca. It was during his childhood that many of Miranda's political and social views were formed. She began to protest the widespread racism and violence towards indigenous peoples, as well as their lack of political and social representation. During the Thousand Days' War, Miranda traveled to Panama, where she was able to observe and learn from Panamanian indigenous opposition forces.⁹³ Miranda has begun publishing legal theory, critiques of the Colombian government, and pieces on indigenous rights. Miranda has gained authority as an indigenous rights activist and serves as the head of many indigenous councils. Miranda's ultimate goals are for freedom, safety, and prosperity for the indigenous peoples of Colombia. Miranda learned how to play mahjong from Chinese laborers and set up a weekly mahjong group with members of the Chinese and Indigenous communities.

José Domingo de Obaldía, Governor of the Panama Department

José Domingo de Obaldía was born in 1845 in Chiriquí, a town placed along the northern part of the isthmus. Obaldía was practically born into liberal politics because his dad was previously the vice-president of New Granada from 1851 to 1855. As a citizen in a country practically run by United States corporations, Obaldía always had a long vested interest in the relations between Colombia and the United States. Although his father's career in politics ended, Obaldía's was just getting started, and with the connections from his father, Obaldía took on small jobs under various political figures, particularly liberal leaders, and gradually rose the ranks. He now works as the governor of the Panama Department. As a liberal governor, Obaldía emphasizes the protection of the interests of Panama in relations with Colombia and the United States. He aims to rise further in politics, maybe even following in his father's presidential

⁹³ Castro-Gómez, Santiago, Alberto Flórez-Malagón, Guillermo Hoyos-Vásquez, and Carmen M. de Benavides. *Pensamiento Colombiano Del Siglo XX*, 405-408.

footsteps. Obaldía hopes including his middle name will distinguish himself from his father, who is also named José de Obaldía.⁹⁴ Outside of politics, Obaldía has a particular interest in boats and currently maintains a model boat collection that he hopes to expand.

Rafael Reyes Prieto, Conservative Party leader

Rafael Reyes Prieto was born in 1850 in Santa Rosa.⁹⁵ Reyes established a successful commercial business with his brothers. In 1874, he began an exploration of the unknown areas of the Amazon Basin with his brothers, where he survived for ten years. During his time in the Amazon, his business collapsed due to a financial panic and his two brothers were killed, one by fever and the other by cannibals. After returning to civilization, Reyes aligned with the Conservative party in Colombian politics and has served in numerous capacities including Secretary of the Interior, Ambassador to France, and Delegate to the Pan-American Conference in Mexico just last year. This gives him lots of experience and contacts in various domestic industries and in foreign countries as well. As a leader in the Colombian Conservative party, he holds lots of sway with the leaders in Bogotá and has been known to be willing to make tough decisions to secure the future of Colombia. During his time in the Amazon, Reyes discovered cupuaçu, his favorite fruit which he has brought in from the rainforest to his home weekly. Ever since he found the cupuaçu, he has considered bananas an inferior fruit for the masses.

Carlos E. Restrepo, Colombian Lawyer and Politician

Born 12 September 1867 in Medellín; Antioquia Department, to the founder of the Municipality of Andes, Restrepo grew up with two brothers, one becoming a merchant & president of Departamental Assembly of Antioquia and the other becoming a theologian at the

⁹⁴ "Jose Domingo de Obaldia." Biografías y Vidas.

⁹⁵ "Rafael Reyes," Encyclopædia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Rafael-Reyes>.

Holy See service. Married to Isabel Gaviria Duque in 1890, the couple has nine children: Tulia, Carlos Ignacio, Sofía, Margarita, Ana, Adolfo, Isabel, and Vicente. Restrepo attended school in both Medellín and Itagüí, moving on to the Institute of Higher Learning in Medellín studying law, but had to stop due to the 1885 Civil War. He continued his law education through self-teaching, and beginning practice at his father's firm. Restrepo is a highly respected lawyer in Colombia, as he worked as Public Inspector of Education in 1888, then as prosecutor of the Supreme Court of Antioquia in 1898. Following his career in prosecution, he became a professor in the Law Department at University of Antioquia and established the Red Cross in Medellín. Carlos spends most of his weekly income on mustache care.⁹⁶

Sam “the Banana Man” Zemurray, Head of Cuyamel Fruit Company

Sam Zemurray was born in Russia in 1877 and moved to the United States with his family in 1892.⁹⁷ He joined the fruit business in 1899 when he went to Mobile, Alabama and began buying second-hand bananas and selling them to nearby dealers. For his first venture, he purchased about \$150 worth of bananas and sent them inland by railroad, telegraphing grocers along the train's path to come to the tracks for ripe bananas. In 1900, Zemurray joined forces with Ashbell Hubbard, who held the United Fruit Company contract in Mobile. Together, they purchased two steamers and began buying fruit from independent plantations in Honduras and selling them to grocers in Mobile and New Orleans, forming the Cuyamel Fruit Company. Hubbard and Zemurray are currently looking for ways to expand their business and increase its production efficiency to be able to compete with UFC. While Zemurray works with UFC frequently, he ardently defends the autonomy of the Cuyamel Fruit Company, especially as the United States government has stepped up antitrust enforcement that seeks to maintain capitalistic

⁹⁶ “Restrepo, Carlos E.” *Encyclopedia*.

⁹⁷ “Samuel Zemurray,” United Fruit Historical Society, <https://www.unitedfruit.org/zemurray.htm>.

competition and prevent unfair business mergers. Zemurray knows ten words in Spanish and refuses to learn more. He also pronounces the j's.

