

# Perceptions of La Malinche in Modern Day Mexico.

By Conor Wilson\* 103152396 c.wilson2@newcastle.ac.uk Supervisor: Claire Brewster

## Introduction

The original aim of the project was to determine whether or not La Malinche is regarded in modern day Mexico as a heroine or traitor. As a translator to the Spaniards, she was undoubtedly an accessory to the mass slaughter of her own race. However, the importance of her role in the conquest is hard to determine. As the mistress of Hernán Cortés, she bore a son and is therefore seen as the symbolic mother of the modern day Mexican mestizo race.



### Traitor?

There is little in modern day Mexico to suggest hatred towards La Malinche judging by the legacy she has left in many Mexican cities. A mountain bears her name in Tlaxcala and a house she is believed to have lived in bears a plaque. If not hated, it is however open to interpretation just how fondly she is remembered by modern day Mexicans.

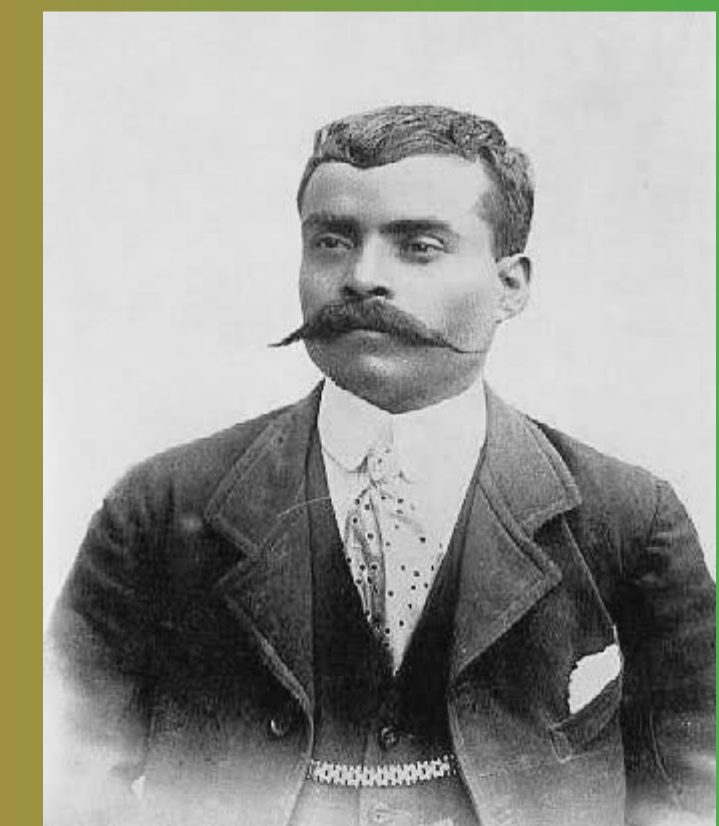
### Heroine?

To describe La Malinche as a heroine however would be slightly inaccurate. She is not held in the same esteem as heroes of the revolution and independence such as Hidalgo and Zapata. Unlike these great Mexican heroes there is little celebration of her life in the names of metro stations or streets named after her or statues erected in her honour.

- This painting by Antonio Ruiz portrays La Malinche as the foundation upon which Mexico is built upon. The unknown community contains a mixture of Spanish buildings such as a church and female earth deities.
- It is also interesting to note the lightning above her head which may suggest a nightmare or guilty conscience but also the precarious position upon which modern day Mexico is built upon. (If she were to move the community would fall.)



- The importance of La Malinche is inferred here in Diego Rivera's mural by the fact it is she and not one of Cortés' soldiers at his side.
- It is also interesting to see that La Malinche is holding a baby who, it may be presumed, is the son of Cortés thus highlighting her status as the symbolic mother of the modern day Mexican race.



- Orozco's mural of Hernán Cortés and La Malinche displayed in the Colegio San Ildefonso is another reminder of La Malinche's legacy in modern day Mexico.
- However is this a positive representation of her? She and Cortés appear to be resting their feet on the body of a dead indigenous man.
- Also it is interesting to notice the body type La Malinche. The artist started with a blank canvas and could have been as flattering as he liked. However, she is unattractive, has drooping breasts and her stomach is not toned. If La Malinche were a national heroine, it would be strange for her to be portrayed in this way.

## Conclusion

- The aim of the project was to ascertain whether La Malinche is loved or hated in modern day Mexico. Surprisingly, the conclusion was that in fact she is neither.
- The part La Malinche played in the genocide of the indigenous is not lost on Mexicans and it is for this reason that she is not thought of as a heroine.
- It is accepted, however, that as horrific as the events of the conquest were, it was these very events which began the process of creating a sense of Mexican national identity. As the mother of Cortés' son, a mestizo child, she is acknowledged to be the mother of the Mexican race.