

© The Pantheon of National Heroes

These historical figures are mentioned throughout the book. This list does not include all national heroes, only those that have the most resonance in Mexican patriotic discourse.

CUAUHTÉMOC (1502?–1525)

Cuahtémoc was the nephew of Moctezuma II and the last Aztec king and ruler of Tenochtitlán. He tenaciously defended his people and city against the Spanish conquistadors of Hernán Cortés in the summer of 1521. In August of that year he was captured and later tortured but would not reveal the location of the “lost” Aztec treasure. Cortés took Cuahtémoc on his expedition to Honduras in 1524–25 but, out of fear of rebellion, the Spaniards tried and convicted the former ruler of treason and hanged him from a tree. Cuahtémoc, not Cortés, triumphed in death and history as an important symbol of Mexican nationalism. A monument to his honor was raised in Mexico City’s Paseo de la Reforma in 1887.

MIGUEL HIDALGO Y COSTILLA (1753–1811)

The “Father of the Patria,” Miguel Hidalgo, a Catholic priest, was one of a group of Creole conspirators in the Bajío region. The conspirators plotted against the Spaniards, who in 1808 had overthrown Viceroy José de Iturrigaray because of his support for Creole autonomy. When the conspiracy was discovered prematurely, Hidalgo called, from his parish church in the town of Dolores, for a popular revolt to be carried out on September 16, 1810. Hidalgo’s revolt mobilized tens of thousands of Indians and mestizos and seized the great cities of the Bajío. His advance arrived on the outskirts of Mexico City in October and, despite a costly victory against a royalist army, Hidalgo abandoned his plan to occupy the city. From this point, the popular army suffered defeats by the royalist forces. Hidalgo and other in-

urgent leaders retreated north and were captured in Coahuila. They were tried in Chihuahua and executed by firing squad in July 1811. The heads of Hidalgo and his commanders were displayed on the four corners of the *albóndiga* (the city granary) of Guanajuato for the next ten years. The town of his parish was renamed Dolores Hidalgo in his honor and the state of Hidalgo was created in 1869.

JOSÉ MARÍA MORELOS Y PAVÓN (1765–1815)

The “Servant of the Nation,” Morelos was commissioned by Hidalgo to take the revolt to the south. In November 1810, Morelos ordered the end of slavery and the caste system. Upon the execution of Hidalgo, the southern insurgents continued the struggle. Morelos convened the Supreme National American Congress in Chilpancingo in 1813 and that body named him *generalísimo* in charge of the executive power. When the Congress moved to Apatzingán in 1814, it proclaimed a constitution. Morelos was captured in 1815, taken to Mexico City for trial, and executed. In 1823 he was declared *Benemérito de la Patria* and his native city was renamed Morelia in his honor in 1828. The state of Morelos was established in 1869.

BENITO JUÁREZ (1806–1872)

Juárez, a Zapotec Indian from the state of Oaxaca, led the liberals in the Reform, the revolution of the late 1850s that wrote a new constitution, eliminated the judicial privileges of the Catholic church, separated church and state, and expropriated the property of the Church. He became president in 1858 and led the liberal forces in the War of the Reform (1859–61) against conservatives opposed to the anticlerical measures. In 1861 he was elected president but soon faced the intervention of French forces, who invaded Mexico in 1862 and imposed the Austrian archduke Maximilian von Habsburg as emperor in 1864. Juárez led the Republican forces during the War of the French Intervention (1862–67), which eventually led to victory and the execution of Maximilian. Juárez was reelected president in 1867 and again in 1871. He died in 1872 and was transformed into the premier symbol of nationalism. He was proclaimed *Benemérito de la Nación*. His monument, the Hemiciclo de Benito Juárez, was inaugurated in the Alameda Park in Mexico City during the centenary fiestas of 1910.

LOS NIÑOS HÉROES (D. 1847)

These “child heroes” were six cadets of the national military academy who were killed during the assault by the United States army upon Chapultepec Castle in Mexico City on September 13, 1847, during the Mexican–American War. The six ranged in age from 13 to 19 years old. One of the cadets, Fernando Montes de Oca, was found after the battle wrapped in a Mexican flag; he apparently had jumped to his death to avoid capture. There are two monuments to los Niños Héroes in Chapultepec Park, where they are honored by an official ceremony every year on the thirteenth of September.

RICARDO FLORES MAGÓN (1874–1922)

The “Precursor of the Revolution,” was, like Juárez, a native of Oaxaca. Flores Magón began the newspaper *Regeneración* in 1900 to oppose the dictatorial regime of Porfirio Díaz. He was arrested in 1901 and the newspaper was suppressed. In 1904 he and his brother Enrique settled in San Antonio, Texas, and continued to publish *Regeneración* in the face of local harassment. They settled in St. Louis in 1905–06 but persecution there led them to move to Los Angeles, where they began a new publication called *Revolución*. Ricardo Flores Magón was arrested in 1907, tried in 1909, and imprisoned until August 1910. Due to the intolerance in the United States during the First World War and his anarcho-communist ideology, Ricardo Flores Magón was arrested for sedition in 1918 and sentenced to twenty-one years in prison. He died in Leavenworth penitentiary in 1922 and his body was returned to Mexico. Ricardo Flores Magón and the other Magonistas became known during the Mexican revolution as “the Precursors,” the intellectual authors of the movement.

FRANCISCO INDALECIO MADERO (1873–1913)

The “Apostle of Democracy” was the son of one of Mexico’s wealthiest families. Madero was born in Parras, Coahuila, and he studied business at a college near Baltimore, Maryland, at the Liceo de Versailles in Paris, and at the University of California at Berkeley. Upon his return to Mexico he administered a family business and became a spiritualist. A landowner with

a social conscience, he was involved in local politics beginning in 1904 and became a true believer in democracy. He entered national politics in 1908 with the publication of *The Presidential Succession of 1910*, which diagnosed Mexico's problems and offered democratic practices and political liberty as the remedy. In 1909 he organized the Anti-reelection Center and became a candidate for president in the election of 1910.

Madero's campaign sparked considerable support around the country, but he was arrested in June 1910 and remained in jail during the July election in which Díaz was "reelected." He escaped from jail in October and fled to San Antonio, Texas, where he issued the Plan of San Luis Potosí, the city of his imprisonment. The plan called for a revolution to begin on November 20, 1910. The Madero revolt picked up support in 1911, particularly in Chihuahua in the north and Morelos in the south. When Maderista forces in May 1911 took Ciudad Juárez, on the U.S.-Mexican border, the dictator resigned and left the country.

After a conservative interregnum, Madero was elected president in November 1911 in the most free election in Mexican history. His administration was plagued by a highly critical press and numerous revolts. The president, nevertheless, true to his word, governed as a democrat. In early 1913 a revolt in Mexico City became the pretext for a coup d'état by a supposedly loyal general, Victoriano Huerta. Madero and his vice-president, José María Pino Suárez, were forced to resign their offices and were murdered on the night of February 22, 1913. With his death, the Apostle of Democracy was transformed into the greatest martyr of the revolution.

AQUILES SERDÁN (1876-1910)

Termed the "Martyr of the Revolution," Aquiles Serdán was killed by the army of the Porfiriato in 1910. The Serdán brothers, Aquiles and Máximo, were the sons of Manuel Serdán, an anarchist who participated in several revolts and who disappeared without a trace. On November 18, 1910, two days before the official launch of the Madero revolt, an informant told the Puebla city police of Aquiles Serdán's intention to initiate the revolt. Five hundred soldiers and police surrounded the Serdán house and a bloody battle ensued. The brothers' sister Carmen escaped before the fighting began and became a noted revolutionary. The state government raised a monument to their honor in the city of Puebla in 1916, and on the fiftieth an-

niversary of the revolution in 1960 the Serdán house was converted into a regional museum of the Revolution.

EMILIANO ZAPATA (1879-1919)

The "Apostle of Agrarianism," Zapata first defended the pueblo's land by lawsuit and petition while serving as municipal president of his village, Anenecuilco, Morelos. In March 1911 he joined the Madero revolt and organized a guerrilla band that captured the city of Cuautla in May. Zapata became disenchanted with Madero and revolted in November 1911 on behalf of the Plan of Ayala, which called for the redistribution of land, the rule of law, and electoral democracy. Following Madero's downfall, the Zapatistas continued the struggle against the Huerta regime. When Huerta was defeated in the summer of 1914, Zapata took control of Morelos and instituted a thorough land reform.

When civil war broke out between Venustiano Carranza and Francisco Villa, Zapata made an alliance with Villa. In the spring of 1916, Carrancista troops invaded Morelos and the Zapatistas were forced to wage a guerrilla war until 1920. In April 1919 the Carrancistas devised a scheme to lure Zapata to his death. In death, Zapata became a powerful symbol of the agrarian revolution and was appropriated by the postrevolutionary state in the 1920s to bolster its legitimacy.

VENUSTIANO CARRANZA (1859-1920)

Before becoming the "First Chief" of the Constitutionalist movement, Carranza was a successful hacendado from Coahuila. Carranza entered politics in the 1890s. When President Díaz supported another candidate for governor of Coahuila in 1909, however, he joined with Madero. He served as Madero's minister of war and after the triumph finally became governor of his state. When Madero was overthrown and murdered in February 1913, Carranza made history. Following the example of Juárez in 1858, Carranza, at the age of 53 the "old man" of the revolution, rebelled in the name of the Plan of Guadalupe and called for the restoration of constitutional government. He gave himself the title of "First Chief of the Constitutionalist Army" and recruited supporters. From early 1913 until the summer of 1914, Carranza coordinated the armed struggle against the

government of General Huerta. He opposed the United States intervention and occupation of the port of Veracruz in the spring of 1914 despite its anti-Huerta objective to deprive the regime of German armaments.

In the fall of 1914 revolutionary generals organized the Convention of Aguascalientes, which quickly disavowed Carranza's leadership. The split between Villa and Carranza, however, forced Obregón, Carranza's most powerful general, to side with the latter. Again, following the example of Juárez, Carranza retreated to Veracruz (now free of U.S. troops) where he proclaimed the "Additions to the Plan of Guadalupe," the laws of the new reform, providing for land reform, civil marriage, municipal autonomy, and the independence of the judiciary. In the spring of 1915, General Obregón defeated Villa in a series of battles. In late 1916, Carranza convened a constitutional convention in Querétaro. The delegates exceeded his modest reforms and wrote the Constitution of 1917, which included many of the social and economic reforms for which the revolutionaries had fought. The new constitution also established rules of politics and Carranza was elected constitutional president of Mexico in May for the term 1917-1920.

As president Carranza turned more cautious and conservative, refusing to implement in any serious manner the new constitutional reforms regarding land, labor, the Church, and foreign economic holdings. In 1920, near the end of his term, he attempted to impose as his successor the ambassador to the United States, Ignacio Bonillas. A rebellion by the state of Sonora on behalf of Álvaro Obregón developed rapidly in the spring, obtaining support from most of the army. Again Carranza retreated toward Veracruz, but he was stopped in transit. Carranza and his party headed north on horseback. On the night of May 20-21 their camp was discovered and attacked by Obregonistas. The First Chief died in the confusion. His body was returned to Mexico City and buried in the Dolores cemetery. In 1942—on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the promulgation of the Constitution of 1917—a copper urn containing his ashes was deposited in a crypt within the Monument to the Revolution.

FRANCISCO "PANCHO" VILLA (1878-1923)

The "Strong Arm of the Revolution" was born Doroteo Arango in the state of Durango, changing his name to Villa to escape the law. A muleteer and bandit, in 1910 he joined the Madero revolt in Chihuahua. In 1912 he fought the anti-Madero revolt of his former chief, Pascual Orozco. In 1913

he raised a military force to fight the Huerta regime and became one of the most important commanders in the Constitutionalist army. His División del Norte captured Torreón and Zacatecas and paved the way for Huerta's defeat. A growing split between the First Chief and Villa became evident by the spring of 1914 and became definitive in the fall of that year. When Carranza abandoned Mexico City for Veracruz in late 1914, the triumphant forces of Villa and Zapata occupied the city. The two popular caudillos posed for a famous picture in the National Palace, with Villa sitting in the presidential chair. Villa's power would never be greater.

In the spring of 1915 the armies of Villa and Obregón met in a series of battles that determined the fate of Mexico. Defeated but not destroyed, Villa withdrew to Chihuahua and at the end of 1915 turned his wrath against the forces of General Plutarco Elías Calles in Sonora. Again, Villa was defeated and reduced to a guerrilla. When the United States government recognized Carranza in October 1915, Villa felt betrayed and retaliated with a raid on the New Mexican town of Columbus in March 1916. This outrage led to the "Punitive Expedition," an American intervention led by General John J. Pershing to capture, or at least disperse the forces of, the "bandit." Villa eluded Pershing and the forces of Carranza for the next few years, while still demonstrating his sting. With the downfall of Carranza in 1920, Interim President Adolfo de la Huerta negotiated the retirement of Villa: he and his men laid down their arms and the government awarded them a year's wages and the hacienda of Canutillo. Three years later, on July 20, 1923, Villa was killed while driving through the town of Parral. Some blamed Obregón and Calles, others blamed a private grudge. After three years in the grave, Villa's skull was stolen by grave robbers. Fifty years later, in 1976, the remains of Pancho Villa were deposited within the Monument to the Revolution.

FELIPE CARRILLO PUERTO (1872-1924)

The "Saint of the Proletariat," this future governor of the state of Yucatán was born in the town of Motul. He served as an agronomist with the Zapatistas in Morelos in 1915 and returned to Yucatán that same year when General Salvador Alvarado took control of the state on behalf of the Constitutionalist movement. Under Alvarado's protection, Carrillo Puerto created the Leagues of Resistance, armed agrarian organizations composed of tens of thousands of Indian peasant farmers. He also established the Socialist

Party of the Southeast. When Alvarado left Yucatán in 1918, President Carranza persecuted the socialist party, in 1919 driving Carrillo Puerto into exile for having endorsed Álvaro Obregón's candidacy for the presidency.

Carrillo Puerto returned to Yucatán after Carranza was overthrown, worked to rebuild his leagues and the socialist party during the term of a caretaker socialist government in 1920–22, and was elected governor in his own right in 1922. When the de la Huerta rebellion erupted in late 1923, Governor Carrillo Puerto was captured; he was executed in the state capital on January 3, 1924. The state of Yucatán erected a monument to his honor in January 1926 in Mérida: an inscription on it reads, "His Blood Will Make the People Fruitful."

ÁLVARO OBREGÓN SALIDO (1880–1928)

The "Caudillo of the Revolution," Obregón, a native of the state of Sonora, was a modestly successful farmer during the Porfiriato. He did not take part in the Maderista revolt of 1910–11, an omission he always regretted. In 1912 he fought against the anti-Madero rebellion of Pascual Orozco and in 1913 he joined the Constitutionalist movement led by Venustiano Carranza. He soon became one of the three leading commanders of the Constitutionalist army (as general of the army of the northwest) and was the official who accepted the surrender of the federal army in 1914. When Carranza and Villa split in the fall of 1914, Obregón remained loyal to the First Chief. During a series of battles in the Bajío in the spring of 1915, Obregón decisively defeated Villa, although in the course of one engagement he was wounded by an artillery shell and lost his right arm.

Obregón played an important role in support of the radical delegates during the constitutional convention of 1917. In 1919–20 he became a candidate for president, and when it became clear that Carranza intended to impose his own candidate upon the country, Obregón and his fellow Sonorans Adolfo de la Huerta and Plutarco Elías Calles launched a revolt that overthrew Carranza and led to the First Chief's death. Obregón was elected president in 1920 (serving 1920–1924), and his imposition of Calles as his successor led to the unsuccessful de la Huerta rebellion in 1923–24. Obregón turned over power to Calles in 1924 and engineered a reform of the electoral laws that would permit non-consecutive reelection. He was re-elected president in 1928 and shortly thereafter was assassinated by a Catholic fanatic.