

Primary Source

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

Father Miguel Hidalgo of Mexico called for freedom from Spanish rule in 1810. The following decree, also issued in 1810 from Guadalaajara, Jalisco, was an attempt to gain additional support for an uprising from Native Americans, blacks, and mestizos. Famously known as "el Grito de Dolores," the decree called for an end to slavery and to the heavy taxes imposed on the poor in Mexico. Ultimately, Hidalgo's rebellion failed because creoles feared that more rights for Native Americans and an end to slavery would cost them power. In less than one year after the start of the uprising, Hidalgo was captured and executed, and his followers scattered. ♦ As you read, think about what justification a reformer like Hidalgo could give for his demands. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.

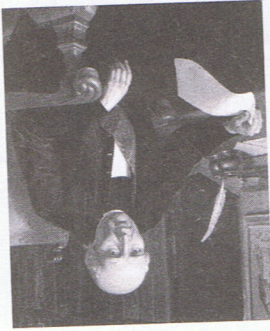
The Decree of Hidalgo

From the happy moment that the valiant American nation took up arms to shake off the heavy yoke that has oppressed it for three centuries, one of the principal objectives has been to extinguish such duties that cannot advance its fortune, especially those which in these critical circumstances do not well serve that end or provide for the real need of the kingdom in meeting the costs of the struggle, so therefore there is now put forward here the most urgent remedy in the following declarations:

1. That all owners of slaves shall give them their freedom before the end of ten days, under penalty of death, which shall be applied to those who violate this article.

2. That from now on the collection of tributes according to [race] shall cease, as shall exactions that are demanded of the Indians.

3. That all legal business, documents, letters and actions can be on common paper, with the requirement of the seal totally abolished.



Miguel Hidalgo

Questions to Think About

1. Item 1 of the Decree of Hidalgo calls for an end to what injustice?
2. What is the seal mentioned in item 3 of the decree? What legal requirement does it remind you of from the history of pre-revolutionary America?
3. Demonstrate Reasoned Judgment Latin American liberation movements were often based on Enlightenment ideas about natural rights. Describe some of the natural rights Hidalgo could have listed in his decree as explanations for why he wished to abolish slavery, taxes based on race, and the requirement of the seal.

4. Activity Use the library or Internet to find out more about Father Hidalgo and the town of Dolores, Mexico, in the 1800s. Write a journal entry describing what it was like to be in Dolores and hear Hidalgo's speech.