

# “ LA ZAMBRA DEL ZORRO ”

## FRAY FELIPÉ'S NARRATIVE

### BEFORE THE PROLOGUE

Dear Guests, Children of all ages, from 2 to 102,

Welcome to La Zambra del Zorro.

You are about to embark on a strange and exciting journey with me. Are you ready?

My name is Padre Felipé, or Fray Felipé. My family name is, well, my secret... after all, we Franciscan Friars let go of our limited biological families and embrace all humanity, the entire world, as our family. I was born a subject of the Spanish Empire, in colonial “New Spain” – now known as Mexico – in the year 1776 – the same year our northern neighbors declared independence from another colonial Empire, the British. As a young man, I studied under the great freedom-fighter Don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, who became my mentor, and I his protégé.

Hidalgo was a secular or parish priest, and a scholar, social reformer and the first leader of the movement for independence from Spain. Back then we called ourselves “Independents” and “Americans”, not yet “Mexicans” – that came later. With Hidalgo, I labored as a young Friar to help the downtrodden Natives and enable them to become self-sufficient in spite of the oppressive caste system that put so-called “pure-blood” white Spaniards in charge, as despotic rulers, over everyone else. Alas, most of the Spanish missionaries, even fellow Franciscans, more or less went along with the system – more or less. In my case, not more but less... Like Miguel Hidalgo, I longed and worked for the system's abolition.

Before I was sent to the northern frontier of Alta California, Hidalgo gave me his precious Medallion, to remember him, and as a symbol of our shared cause. This is the Medallion that I passed on to... oh, forgive me, I'm getting ahead of myself.

Where was I going with this? Ah, yes, ever since Hidalgo was a young student, his wise yet wild ways led his fellow students to call him "El Zorro" – The Fox. This nickname stuck with him all his life, even as he led a rag-tag army of Natives, second and third generation Spanish immigrants, and people of so-called "mixed blood" or "mixed-race", against colonial rule.

Hidalgo – "El Zorro" – issued proclamations abolishing slavery and the heavy taxes and tribute imposed upon dispossessed Natives as well as the landowners – the *Caballeros* or Dons – and restoring land to the Natives. But the Natives had bottled-up three centuries-worth of resentment against the *conquistadores* and colonial rulers, and so they ignored the so called civilized "laws of war". And so, even as he was on the verge of great success, Miguel Hidalgo was reluctant to attack the people of Mexico City itself – not wanting any more blood on his hands. Or so it seemed to me when I first heard the news.

Not that long after, Hidalgo was defeated in battle, captured, and was eventually executed by firing squad in the year 1811. Even though a Roman Catholic priest, he was influenced by enlightenment ideas such separation of church and state, free speech and human rights, even for women, and for "Tierra y Libertad" – restoring "Land & Liberty" to the Natives. And, oh yes, he led his people's army under the banner of Our Lady – *La Virgen de Guadalupe* – the protectress of the Natives. I shared this devotion to Our Lady with Hidalgo, the Natives, and the other oppressed peoples of New Spain including the Roma – the *Gitano* or Gypsies.

Eventually, Hidalgo's movement, under the banner of Our Lady, succeeded in 1821, and slavery in the Republic of Mexico was abolished in 1829 – some three and a half decades before it was abolished north of the border, also at the price of much human

bloodshed. In any case, the Virgin Mother of Guadalupe is to this day venerated as the Patroness of Mexico and Queen of the Americas. And Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla is honored and celebrated as the “Father of Mexican Independence.”

And now, let us see how a new “El Zorro” inherited Hidalgo’s Medallion and took up the cause of liberty and justice, and how this inspired and galvanized an entire community to throw off oppression.

We set our scene in *El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Angeles* – The People or Town of Our Lady the Queen of the Angels – now the great city of Los Angeles. Indeed, by coincidence, or maybe destiny?, our maestro conducting this performance, our Osamu, was born in Queen of Angels hospital, which stood on the very land associated with our story.

The year is 1806, and I have been assigned to manage the Mission of San Gabriel and educate and care for the local children – the children of Native Tongva, Roma/Gypsies, and those of so-called “mixed-blood” as well as those of “pure-blood” – whether “Peninsulares” born in Spain, or Mestizos and Creoles and others born in so-called “New Spain”. We are on the San Gabriel Mission grounds and I am teaching the children how to use the sword to defend themselves, but not to kill. Yes, I am preparing them to defend their freedom. After all, “Freedom. Is. Everything.”

So, as you will see, here I am: With young students of tender age, including Diego de la Vega – son of Native Tongva leader Doña Regina Toypurina, and Don Alejandro. And with Diego’s adopted Native brother Bernardo. With Fiorella the daughter of Doña Isabel and Don Ignacio Torres. And with Victoria, a local Gypsy/Roma girl whose resourceful immigrant parents manage the only decent tavern in town... well, the *only* tavern in town.

\*\*\*

## BEFORE ACT ONE

And so Bernardo lost his power of speech when the soldiers murdered his parents before his very eyes. Diego's father, Don Alejandro adopted him into the de la Vega family, and Bernardo and Diego continued to study under my care, along with Fiorella, Victoria, and the other children. Eventually Alejandro sent Diego and Bernardo to Spain for further education and training in the arts of fencing, horseback riding, and so forth, plus the civil and social skills they would need as adult members of a leading local family. Ah, Diego and Bernardo! They would die for each other... and almost did! And Fiorella and Victoria! Well – girls will be girls – and their loyalty and bravery, like Diego's and Bernardo's, defied the caste hierarchy and broke all the rules.

It is now 1820, and after being away more than three years, the two young men return home from Spain, and we await their arrival by coach off the ship docked in San Pedro harbor. Oh yes, while they were away Toypurina returned to her Native people, feeling that her duties as mother were over; and Don Alejandro was forced to step-down or "retire" as Alcalde or Mayor, being replaced by the ruthless and corrupt Don Luis Quintero from Spain. That foul viper! Could I have been alone with him for five minutes, five minutes! I would have snuffed him out like a candle! God forgive me!

And the military attaché, Capitán Rafael Enriqu  Franco, was even more ruthless than his boss. On many occasions he showed no mercy toward the Natives and Gypsies. Franco was an ambitious young Spanish soldier seeking to rise in social rank by any means necessary, trying to infiltrate one or another family of wealth and power – perhaps by marrying Fiorella Torres or, even, Esperanza del la Cruz, the young niece of the Alcalde's wife Inez. Oh, Inez! Inez! She's another one – what a piece of work! – longing for her comfortable and lavish lifestyle back in Spain, she set off a chain of events that led to the return, or rebirth, of "El Zorro". As we shall now see.

\*\*\*

## BEFORE ACT TWO

Welcome back *mi Amigos!* Now where were we? Oh yes ... so as you have seen, I conferred upon my dear protégé – my boy, my Diego! -- Hidalgo's precious Medallion and name of "*El Zorro*". And as *El Zorro*, Diego, with the help of Bernardo, Fiorella and Victoria went on to undermine and oppose the wicked designs of Alcalde Quintero and Capitán Franco. While many stories about Zorro – the man, the myth, the legend – have flourished and multiplied over these many years, the roles played by Zorro's women friends, along with his Roma and Native friends, often went unnoticed, or at least under-reported. As you have seen, it is a story that can be told with music and dance.

My favorite dance was *La Zambra*, the shoeless or barefoot *Flamenco* so popular among the Roma who managed and socialized at the Tavern. Yes, even this aging Friar was known to sneak a peek from time to time and enjoy the local wine at the only worthy hangout in town – well, other than San Gabriel, of course!

As you will see, the Tavern becomes the venue for Esperanza's *debutante* party. Back in the day, this would take place when a girl became 15 years of age. Very young by today's standards. That Diego and Esperanza are smitten with each other becomes obvious. That Capitán Franco regards Diego as a rival also becomes obvious. That Franco and Alcalde Quintero have cooked-up a plot to discredit Zorro, by having Sergeant Gonzales impersonate Zorro and rob the guests, is not obvious – except to Diego, Bernardo, Fiorella, Victoria and the Tavern workers and domestic servants. They have already set in motion their own secret plan to undermine the plot, replacing the real party invitations with counterfeit ones saying that the party will be a Masquerade Ball and, furthermore, all the men should arrive disguised as Zorro. Amusing, don't you think?

Let us now pick-up our story, and add to the legend of *El Zorro* – *¡Con permiso!*

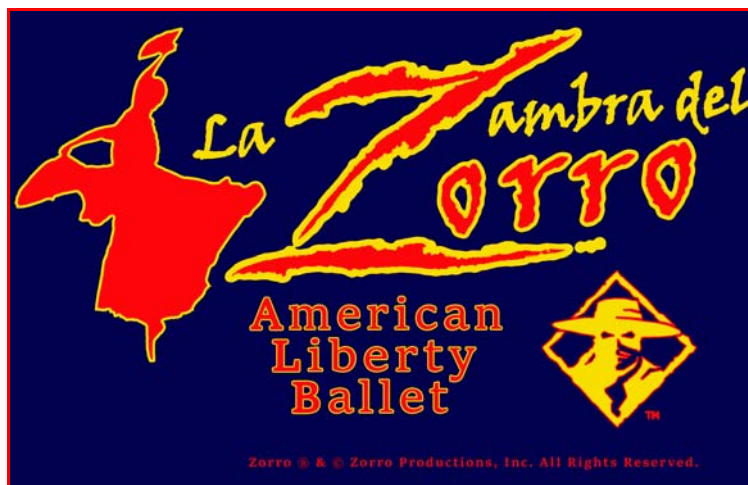
\*\*\*

## BEFORE ACT THREE

My dear friends, what can I say now besides “the Empire strikes back”? You will see how it becomes necessary for everyone of good will to open to a Higher Power – even their “Inner Zorro” – to bring lovers together. To launch a beloved community of diversity and mutuality, instead of tyranny. To share the land, understood by the Natives as our precious Mother Earth. And to bring about truth and reconciliation under the guidance of that mysterious Power of Love that is our Lady of Guadalupe, Queen of the Angels, Queen of the Americas.

After our story has ended, may our Lady always stay with you throughout life and bless your voyage. Peace be with you. *Pax vobiscum*. And now, our third and final act of *La Zambra del Zorro*.

© Mark A. Sullivan  
[MarkAelredCFS@aol.com]



*Design for “La Zambra del Zorro” T-shirt © Osamu Uehara.*

[OsamuUeharaFDT@aol.com]

[www.AmericanLibertyBallet.com](http://www.AmericanLibertyBallet.com)

*Zorro ® & © Zorro Productions, Inc. All Rights Reserved.*

