

# **CONVENTION OF** **AGUASCALIENTES**

Note: This lesson plan is based on and adapted from Rethinking Schools’ “The NAFTA Role Play: Mexico-United States Free Trade Conference” in *The Line Between Us*; the biographical photos and descriptions of leaders shared as part of the Aguascalientes handouts on the following pages are reproduced from the PBS interactive website “Faces of the Revolution.”

## **INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVE**

Note: If using the Primary Source activity, you may prefer to incorporate that before this role play, although it can also be used after this activity is completed.

In 1914 after Huerta was forced out of office, it was suggested that the remaining revolutionary leaders convene to discuss who should be the provisional president of Mexico until national elections could be held. The convention took place in the neutral town of Aguascalientes. Carranza, Villa and Zapata did not attend themselves, but sent delegates in their place. Obregón was the only of the major four revolutionary leaders to attend. Ultimately, the convention was not very successful. Eualalio Gutierrez was chosen as the provisional president, which went against Carranza’s wishes. His followers soon withdrew from the convention, with Obregón among them. Villa and Zapata formed what would be a short-lived alliance, and their followers brought Gutierrez safely to the capital to be installed as president. In the end, the convention accomplished little other than ensuring the continued chaos of the Revolution.

This activity, while based on the Convention of Aguascalientes, takes some historical liberties for the sake of the lesson plan. While Obregón and Carranza were essentially functioning as one entity at Aguascalientes, here they are represented as two separate groups. While the actual delegates were to choose a provisional president that wasn’t necessarily one of the revolutionary leaders, in this activity, to simplify the amount of necessary background knowledge, students will choose one of the four represented revolutionary leaders (Carranza, Obregón, Villa or Zapata).

Students will be divided into four groups of delegates—one for each of the four revolutionary leaders represented at Aguascalientes. The purpose of this activity is for students to understand the driving forces and motivations behind the four leaders’ movements and why it was so difficult to build long-lasting alliances among the four.

## **MATERIALS**

- ☞ Copies of roles for each of the four groups (one role per student in each group)
- ☞ Placards for each group in the role play
- ☞ Copies of “The Convention of Aguascalientes: Questions” for each student

## **PROCEDURE**

1. Explain to the class that they’ll be doing a role play about the Convention of Aguascalientes. Be sure to clarify that while the activity is based upon an actual historical event, some liberties have been taken in turning it into a classroom activity. The class will be divided into four groups and each group will represent one of the major revolutionary leaders represented at the convention: Carranza, Obregón, Villa, and Zapata. The purpose of the convention is to elect a provisional president for Mexico from among the four leaders. Each delegation is responsible for presenting their leader’s platform to the rest of the convention. Once all four delegations have presented, delegates will talk with representatives from other delegations, working to create alliances so that a leader who best represents their political and social beliefs is elected. This may mean that their leader is not elected, but that they are in alliance with another leader who will support similar causes. A hand-out with questions will be provided to help students clarify their leader’s values and then which other leaders may be possible allies.
2. As a class, review the questions from the hand-out to make sure students understand the ideas and concepts they should be focusing on as they read about their own leader and then dialogue with other delegations.
3. Count the class off into 4 groups and distribute roles to each group. Ask students to read their roles carefully and to highlight parts that they think are important and give clues to how they may answer the questions from the hand-out.
4. Once students have finished reading their roles, ask them to complete the questions on the hand-out based on the information they’ve been given for their specific leader. Circulate and help students think through their various positions. Explain that it is important that everyone in the group understand the position of their leader because they will be going to other groups looking for allies. They will need to be able to explain their own position and judge who may be a good ally.
5. Ask students to choose half of their group to be “traveling negotiators.” These individuals will move around the room, talking to representatives of other delegations looking for potential allies. The other half of the group will stay to talk to the traveling negotiators from other delegations. While they should be open-minded to all delegations, they should discuss who the most likely allies will be and focus on how to approach them. The negotiation session will provide them the opportunity to get information from other delegates that they don’t

have access to, so it's an essential part of the convention.

6. Begin the negotiation session. Be sure to tell travelers that they may meet only with other seated groups and not with other travelers. Travelers may circulate separately or together. If traveling negotiators find a delegation they believe would be good allies, they may need to move back and forth between their delegation and the potential allies in order to discuss the specifics of an agreement or deal.
7. After students have completed meeting other groups and building alliances they should return to their own group to prepare for the large-group convention. They should be prepared to explain why their leader or the leader of the delegation that they've allied with would make the best president. They should also be prepared to question the other delegates and the qualities of their leader in terms of a potential presidency. Students should think of these as somewhat informal presentations, but they should have ideas and content prepared to discuss.
8. Reconvene as a whole group with the class sitting in a circle, if possible, or the best arrangement that will encourage whole class engagement and participation. Each delegation should have the name of their revolutionary leader displayed on the provided placard.
9. Begin the convention, starting with Carranza's delegation since he called for the convention. Each delegation should be given the opportunity to present the main concerns of their own delegate, and to question the other delegations after they've presented.
10. Once all delegations have presented and been questioned, give the delegations a short period of time to finalize alliances and decide whom each delegate will vote for. Remind students that the entire delegation must vote for the same leader. For example, if the Villa delegation was divided, it would not be possible for half of them to vote for Villa and half of them to vote for Zapata. They must come to an agreement.
11. Count the votes and announce the winner. There may be no winner if each delegation voted for their own leader. While this provides no provisional president, in reality it isn't that different from the actual outcome of the Convention of Aguascalientes, where very little was accomplished in terms of bringing an end to the chaos that had erupted all over Mexico.
12. As a class discuss the assignment. What new information did they learn? What did they learn about the Mexican Revolution and its leaders? What were they surprised by? The Mexican Revolution is often described as complex, complicated and chaotic—do they have a better understanding of why that is now?

### **EXTENSION/ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY: WHOM WOULD YOU FOLLOW?**

By this point students should have a good understanding of the major revolutionary leaders. Give them time to consider whom they would have supported had they been living in Mexico at the time of the Revolution. Ask students to write an essay explaining what revolutionary leader they would have supported and why. Follow your classroom procedure for writing, editing, and revising.

# **THE CONVENTION AT AGUASCALIENTES QUESTIONS**

1. Why did you join the Revolution?
2. What do you hope the Revolution will accomplish? Do you want political change? Do you want social change?
3. What kind of country do you want Mexico to be?
4. What are you willing to sacrifice?
5. Whom might you be willing to ally with?
6. Whom would you never ally with?
7. What do you think is the most essential and immediate need for Mexico now?
8. What are your feelings about land reform?
9. Do you believe in quick change or slow, gradual reform?

# THE CONVENTION AT AGUASCALIENTES



## GENERAL FRANCISCO "PANCHO" VILLA (1872 - 1923)

General Francisco "Pancho" Villa was the most iconic and best-known personality of the Mexican revolution. Villa was born Doroteo Arango in the northern state of Durango, in 1878. As a young man he was a bandolero, a common bandit. The contacts he made during these early years would serve him well later, when he sought to put together a revolutionary army.

Uneducated, and considered by many to be coarse, Villa was nevertheless a military genius, and had a superb, instinctive understanding of the game of international politics. His ability to generate publicity and give it his own spin would rival many celebrities today. He loved being in the limelight.

Villa was inspired early on by the revolution of Francisco Madero, and his military career grew during the Maderista period (1910-1911). In fact, Villa, along with fellow general Pascual Orozco, attacked Ciudad Juárez against Madero's orders and won. This victory was instrumental in bringing Madero into power. Although Madero soon pushed Villa to the sidelines, Villa never lost his admiration for the man who took the first steps in the revolution.

In response to the coup by Victoriano Huerta, which overthrew Madero, Villa developed an extraordinary army, the División del Norte. During this time, Villa also became Provisional Gov-

ernor of his then-home state of Chihuahua, and brought the politics and economy of the state under his control. Villa was joined around this time by Felipe Ángeles, who would become his chief strategist. Angeles was an expert in artillery, and many attribute some of Villa's best decisions and most successful campaigns to Ángeles's influence.

Villa loved being photographed. The fact that he operated close to the United States meant that he was nearly always in the spotlight in the U.S. In 1913, Villa signed a contract with Hollywood's Mutual Film Company to film many of his battles. Sometimes battles were re-scheduled or re-staged for the convenience of the cameras. It was during this period that the United States supported Villa and provided him with weapons. Villa, in turn, remained sensitive to U.S. interests in Mexico.

Among his triumphs during this era, the battles of Zacatecas and Ojinaga stand out as particular highlights. At Ojinaga, Villa defeated Huerta's federal troops and forced them across the Rio Grande to Marfa, Texas. Late in the campaign to overthrow Huerta, Carranza tried to sabotage Villa's progress toward Mexico City by sending him to Saltillo, an insignificant target, rather than the more important town of Zacatecas. Ángeles convinced Villa to once again disobey orders, and Villa's triumph at Zacatecas, one of the bloodiest campaigns of the revolution, helped defeat Huerta once and for all. While he was a hero in the revolution, Villa was also known for his brutality in the face of betrayal. Both he and his "trigger-man," Rudolfo Fierro, were known for the particularly barbaric ways in which they would dispatch their enemies.

After taking power, Carranza tried to eliminate Villa. A turning point came in 1915, when Villa and his elite soldiers, the dorados, lost several battles to Carranza's general, Álvaro Obregón. The battle of Celaya was a brutal and unexpected defeat – one which sent the seemingly-invincible Villa reeling. In this battle, and in the battle of Agua Prieta, against Carrancista general Plutarco Elias Calles, Villa and his 19th-century-style cavalry came up against 20th century technology imported from the war in Europe (WWI) and employed by the Constitutionalists. Their use of barbed wire, sophisticated machine guns, and trench warfare resulted in a massacre of Villa's troops.

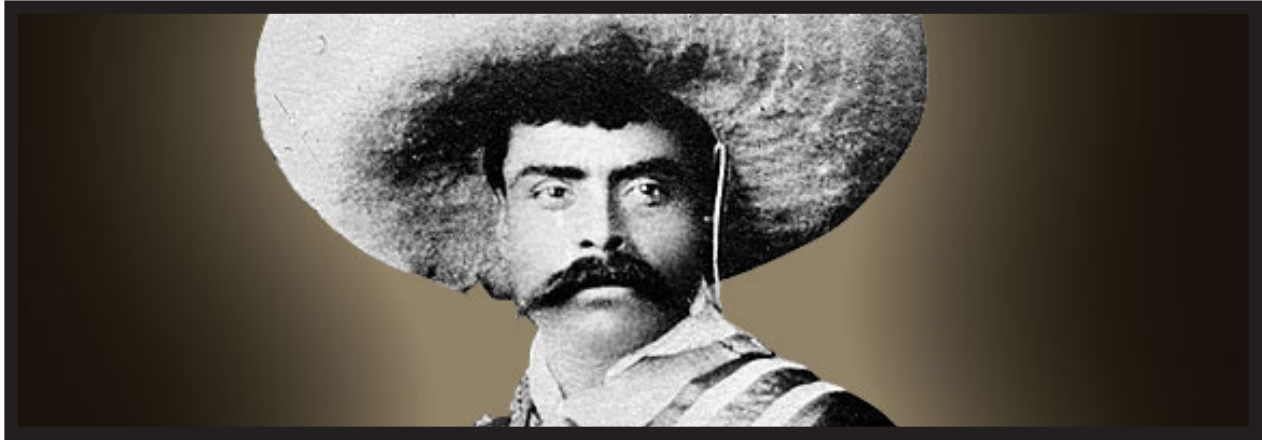
Partly because of these defeats, the U.S. withdrew their support of Villa in favor of recognition of Carranza. In 1916, angered by what he perceived as a betrayal by the United States, Villa attacked the border town of Columbus, New Mexico. Although Villista casualties far outweighed those of the Americans, the U.S. government was outraged and sent troops, led by General John J. "Blackjack" Pershing, into Mexican territory to rout out Villa and eliminate him. The search continued well into 1917 but Pershing's men never found him.

The effort of avoiding Pershing's forces took its toll on Villa. Although he won a number of skirmishes during the period 1917-1919, he was never the same as he had been at the height

of his power. In 1923, in an agreement with then-President Álvaro Obregón, Villa retired to a hacienda in Canutillo, near Parral, Chihuahua. He seemed to be living the quiet life of a rancher, surrounded by former comrades and friends, many of whom now served as his body guards. But Obregón, and his soon-to-be successor, Plutarco Elias Calles, wanted to take no chances that Villa might regain his strength. They established a conspiracy to assassinate him. On July 20, 1923, as Villa made his way back to his ranch from Parral, seven riflemen rained a fusillade of shots on his car. The “Centaur of the North” was no more.

In death, as in life, Villa remains a controversial figure. One hundred years later, he is loved by some and despised by others. Today, the specter of this rogue genius lives on in hundreds of photographs and thousands of feet of motion picture footage — images inspired by the daring bandit who became the one of the most famous generals of the Mexican revolution.

# THE CONVENTION AT AGUASCALIENTES:



## EMILIANO ZAPATA (1879 - 1919)

Emiliano Zapata was born in Anenecuilco, in the Mexican state of Morelos, just south of Mexico City. It was in this region that Zapata would spend his life. His career would be dedicated to the people of the region, and it was in Morelos that he would make the supreme sacrifice for his beliefs and for the people he so loved.

Zapata lost his father when he was 17 years old (in 1896), and thus his education was cut short. He took up work as a horse trainer to support his family, his mother and nine siblings. One of his brothers, Eulalio, would join him in the revolution. Zapata's main cause was the return of stolen land to its rightful owners, the peasants of Morelos. It is said that he kept the deeds of the peasant families in a tin box he had with him always. Over time, the Spanish deeds that proved peasant ownership of the lands had been ignored and even rescinded. The hacendados (hacienda owners) had taken over the land to build money-making haciendas, which used the labor of those who truly owned the land, to harvest and manufacture sugar cane and other crops for export. The sugar-producing haciendas of Morelos were notorious for bad working conditions and the workers were virtual slaves under the whips of the hacendados' foremen.

In 1909, around the time of his 30th birthday, Zapata was officially put in charge of the village council and was thus officially responsible for the welfare of the people of Anenecuilco. Zapata protected his village with the kind of care and attention to detail he would have given to protecting his own family.



Zapata initially supported the anti-reelectionist movement of Francisco I. Madero, and formed the Liberation Army of the South to fight for the Maderista revolt. But once Madero became president, Zapata quickly became disenchanted. He realized that Madero would not institute true agrarian reform. In fact, Madero was from a family of rich land-owners, and while in many ways his heart was in the right place, he was not about to expropriate the lands of members of his own class. Therefore, just around the time Madero was sworn in as president, Zapata and his men issued the Plan de Ayala (1911), in which Zapata broke with the president. Madero sent troops south to rout the Zapatistas. Zapata joined forces with another former Maderista, Pascual Orozco, who was based in the north. Orozco was a disgruntled former general who had fought for Madero alongside Francisco Villa. Orozco, with the support of Zapata, launched an uprising against Madero in March, 1912. It was soon put down by Madero's general, Victoriano Huerta.

Zapata was a hero to the families in his region, although he and his men continuously drew the wrath of the federal government down upon Morelos. The Zapatistas fought against a series of federal agents sent to destroy them, but none was more brutal than Juvencio Robles. When Madero was overthrown in a coup engineered by Victoriano Huerta (himself a brutal dictator), Zapata declared war against Huerta. Huerta responded by declaring every poor person in Morelos a Zapatista. He brought Juvencio Robles back to carry out a "slash and burn" policy to, in Huerta's words, "depopulate the state." It was tantamount to genocide.

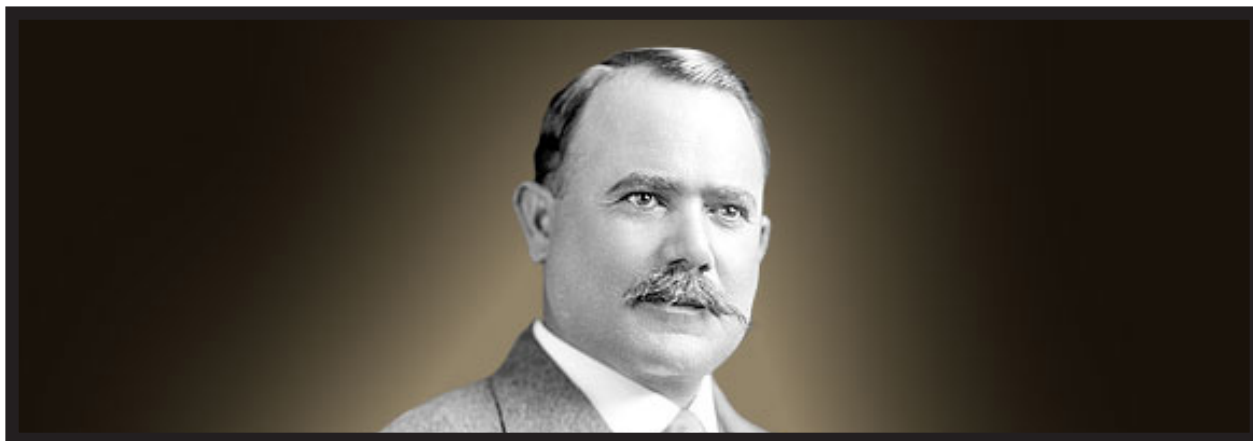
Once again, Zapata and his men defended their people at great cost, and rallied around Venustiano Carranza's Plan de Guadalupe (April, 1913) – which created the Constitutionalist rebellion, designed to defeat Huerta and strip him of power. But Carranza, too, would prove to be a disappointment. After Huerta's defeat, and Carranza's seizing of de facto power in Mexico (he would not officially become president until 1917), a convention was called among the various revolutionary factions. They met in October, 1914 in the town of Aguas Calientes, to determine what could be done about Carranza's lack of legitimacy. Although Zapata would not attend the meeting, he and Villa met that December, in the village of Xochimilco. The two generals, much loved by the common people, then rode with their troops into Mexico City, taking control over the capital and capturing the imagination of the masses. Unfortunately, unwilling to rule Mexico, they each soon returned home – Zapata south to Morelos and Villa north to Chihuahua. Carranza retained power.

As president, Carranza decided he had to eliminate Zapata as a threat. An intricate plot was devised by Carranza's right-hand man, Pablo Gonzalez, by which a federal general named Guajardo would pretend to defect to the Zapatistas. He would work methodically to prove himself anxious to leave Carranza's army and join Zapata. Guajardo staged a rout against other federal troops, sacrificing scores of men for what was essentially a "performance" to gain credibility with Zapata. Finally, a deal was sealed. Zapata and Guajardo were to meet to sign an agreement

to join forces at the hacienda of Chinameca. In the early afternoon of April 10, 1919, Zapata rode into the hacienda with just a handful of his men, indicating to the rest of them that they should wait some distance away. A bugle sounded four times, and when Guajardo's soldiers were to deliver a military salute to Zapata, they instead pointed their rifles at him and his small contingent. The men waiting for him heard the two volleys, and saw his now-riderless horse run toward them, covered in blood. They knew their leader had been slain.

Soon after, signs containing one of Zapata's mottos began appearing around Morelos, as both a memorial and an inspiration for his men to continue the fight: "It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees."

## **THE CONVENTION AT AGUASCALIENTES:**



### **ÁLVARO OBREGÓN (1880 - 1928)**

Álvaro Obregón was a Mexican farmer-turned-general. Born in the State of Sonora in 1880, he would become president as the bloodiest years of the revolution came to an end. Obregón was a study in contradictions and ever-changing loyalties. He was one of the greatest generals of the revolution, but he never considered himself a military man. Although he admired President Francisco Madero, he did not choose to join the Maderista forces as they fought to end the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. Instead, he joined the military later, in order to fight to keep Madero in office, against the rebellion staged by Pascual Orozco, a disenchanted former Maderista.

Thus, Obregón would begin his military career fighting under a man he would later oppose and work to overthrow, General Victoriano Huerta. Although Huerta was successful in staving off Orozco's rebellion, he would soon hatch a plot against President Madero. In February, 1913, Huerta staged a coup, supported by the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Henry Lane Wilson. Huerta overthrew Madero, arranging for him and his vice-president, Pino Suarez, to be executed. This coup would serve as a "wake up call," and like other federal generals, including Felipe Ángeles, Obregón switched sides, joining Venustiano Carranza's "Constitutionalists" to defeat Huerta and drive him from office. After a 17-month campaign, which also included decisive victories by General Francisco Villa, the Constitutionalists finally succeeded in overthrowing Huerta. In July, 1914, just weeks before World War I broke out in Europe, Carranza and Obregón rode into Mexico City, triumphant. While Carranza became the de facto president, Obregón maintained the military and strategic muscle to keep Carranza in power.

By the fall of 1914, Carranza had disappointed various important military factions. Zapata turned against him, as did Francisco Villa. In October, a summit of military leaders met in the town of Aguas Calientes to decide the future of Mexican politics. Carranza did not attend, but Obregón did. The convention at Aguas Calientes created a split between the Constitutionalists (whom Obregón represented in Carranza's absence), and the so-called Conventionalists, led by Villa. (Zapata did not attend but sent his emissaries).

It quickly became clear that the Conventionalists were the favorites of the Aguas Calientes participants. Although Obregón had comrades on both sides, he had to make a choice. He chose to remain loyal to Carranza. In December, 1914, Zapata and Villa met in Xochimilco, rode into Mexico City, and for a few months took control of the government, as Carranza escaped to Veracruz in order not to confront them.

As Carranza's top general, Obregón focused his energies on eliminating Francisco Villa. Carranza had long felt Villa was a crude, low-class annoyance. But Villa and his men were still strong and popular, in both Mexico and the U.S. In a series of battles throughout 1915, Obregón pursued Villa and his elite soldiers, the *dorados*. For the first time, Villa found himself on the losing side, as Obregón borrowed military techniques being developed in the war in Europe, including the use of barbed wire, entrenchments, and new-technology machine guns. Villa continued to fight using 19th century cavalry strategies – essentially men on horseback expecting face-to-face combat.

In four battles fought very close in time and geography, collectively known as the Battle of Celaya (April 1915), the Villistas charged Obregón's trenches again and again, but were massacred by machine guns, and impaled on barbed wire before they could ever reach Obregón's protected troops. It was one of the bloodiest battles in the history of Mexico. Villa narrowly escaped, but lost 4,000 men, while another 6,000 were taken prisoner by Obregón's forces. He also lost a tremendous amount of his armaments and horses, thus crippling his ability to fight. Obregón lost an arm. After the battle, Obregón attempted to commit suicide, only to be thwarted by a loyal soldier. Mexican history would have been very different if he had succeeded.

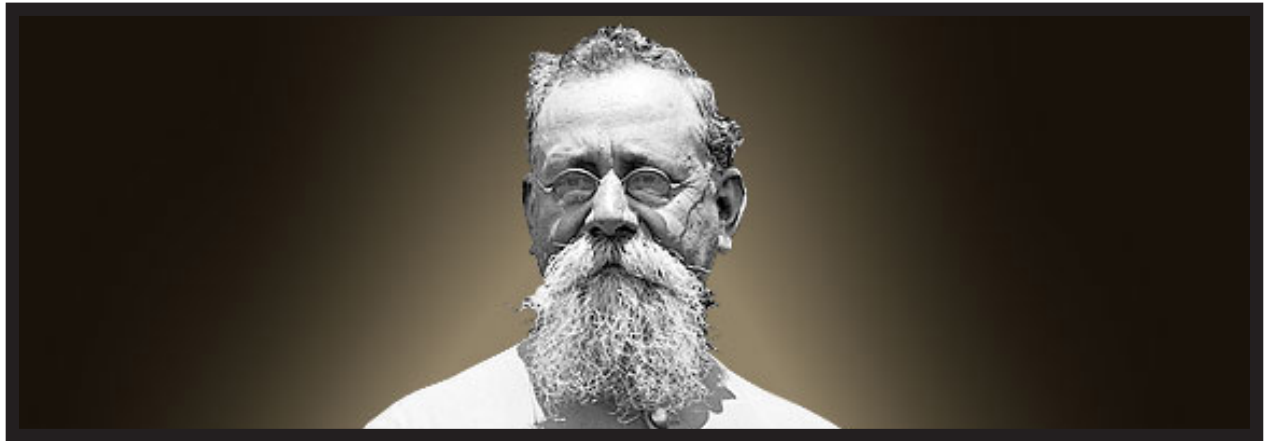
General Carranza called for a constitutional convention in 1917. But the constitution that was ultimately adopted was significantly more radical and more progressive than Carranza had hoped for. Although Carranza was disappointed with the outcome, Obregón sided with the radicals. This drove a wedge between Carranza, the conservative Constitutionalist, and Obregón, who believed in true reform. In 1917, Carranza was officially elected President of Mexico, and served for another three years. During that time, he engineered the assassinations of Emiliano Zapata and of Villa's compatriot, Felipe Ángeles. But soon it was Carranza's turn.

When Carranza was assassinated in 1920, Obregón saw his chance. He ran for president, and became one of the most popular candidates in all of Mexican history. With the support of the labor unions, as well as broad popular support, he easily won. Under his presidency, Mexicans began the task of putting the bloodshed behind them and rebuilding the country. Although he was one of the caudillos, the military generals who often abused their power, he had a true vision for the future of Mexico. Obregón moved toward fulfilling the precepts of the 1917 Constitution. One of Obregón's biggest contributions as president, one which would have a lasting effect, was that he created the Ministry of Public Education and appointed José Vasconcelos to run it. The Ministry of Public Education expanded literacy campaigns into the rural sections of Mexico, and used the arts as a way to help establish a Mexican cultural identity and re-establish Mexican pride. The Ministry's support of education, literature and the arts would have far-reaching effects, resulting in murals and paintings by such luminaries as Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and Frieda Kahlo; music by Carlos Chavez and Silvestre Revueltas, and literature by Martín Luis Guzmán, Mariano Azuela, Nellie Campobello, and others.

Obregón served as president from 1920 to 1924. In 1923, finally seeing his chance to eliminate his old foe once and for all, he helped arrange for the assassination of Francisco Villa. In 1924, although still popular, Obregón was forced by constitutional law to cede power, and the presidency fell to his former compatriot on the battlefield, Plutarco Elias Calles. Although Calles continued Obregón's educational initiatives, and instituted some agrarian reform, he was not a friend of the common man. Obregón was easily re-elected in 1928.

But before he could take office, Obregón was assassinated at a banquet held in his honor. He was shot by a man posing as a caricaturist, reported in the press as a Cristero soldier disenchanted with Obregón's subjugation of the Catholic church.

# THE CONVENTION AT AGUASCALIENTES:



## VENUSTIANO CARRANZA (1859 - 1920)

Sometimes derisively called “the billy goat” by his enemies because of his long flowing beard, Venustiano Carranza called himself the “Premier Jefe” (First Chief), because of his political ambitions. Carranza was born into the middle class at the end of 1859 in the northern state of Coahuila. He went to school at the Prepa (Preparatory school) in Mexico City just around the time the young Porfirio Díaz had proven himself a great military hero and was marching triumphantly into Mexico City.

After school, Carranza became a northern cattle rancher. He entered politics early when, along with his brother and other ranchers, he opposed Porfirio Díaz’s “reelection” in 1893. Thus, his actions anticipated the Maderista movement that came almost two decades later. Despite this, in 1904, the Governor of Coahuila recommended to Porfirio Díaz that Carranza would make a good senator. Although he didn’t like the científicos, Carranza did become a senator during Díaz’s administration. But when he tried to run for Governor of Coahuila, Díaz refused to support him, and he lost. From that point on, he disliked Díaz intensely.

Carranza came late to the revolution, but he did ultimately become a strong supporter of Francisco I. Madero and his anti-reelection movement, designed to remove Díaz from power. Madero made him Minister of War shortly before the Battle of Ciudad Juárez, and as a result, Carranza was part of the peace conference that led to the resignation and exile of Porfirio Díaz. Carranza was on the podium with Madero during Madero’s famous speech to the troops at the conclusion of that battle.

Carranza finally did become Governor of Coahuila, and in that role, watched as Madero's presidency faltered. Carranza advocated for Madero to be stronger and more ruthless as a politician. When Victoriano Huerta and his co-conspirators (including U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Henry Lane Wilson) overthrew Madero, Carranza watched helplessly as Madero was executed and Huerta took power.

In response to Huerta's brutal dictatorship, Carranza issued his Plan de Guadalupe, calling for the restoration of the 1857 Constitution, and the elimination of Huerta. In 1913, the same year Huerta took power, Carranza developed what he called the Constitutionalist Army, to overthrow Huerta and establish what he imagined would be a constitutional democracy in Mexico. With his general, Álvaro Obregón, he developed a three-pronged military strategy to take Mexico City from the North – with Obregón coming down the western side of the country, Pablo González Garza coming down the eastern side, and Francisco Villa and his División del Norte cutting down the center.

The plan basically worked, and Huerta was defeated in mid-1914. He departed for Spain, and the Constitutionalist, specifically Obregón and Carranza, took over the government. Carranza pushed Villa, whom he had never liked, out of any position of power, just as Madero had done before him.

Carranza was not universally liked by the revolutionary leaders. They convened at the town of Aguas Calientes in October, 1914 to choose another leader. The result of this conference was that the joint armies of Villa and Emiliano Zapata rode into Mexico City, while Carranza fled to Veracruz to avoid the swell of popular support that surrounded the two iconic leaders.

The pattern of fleeing to Veracruz when things got rough in Mexico City was one that Carranza followed a few times, making him seem like a coward. But one thing that Carranza was able to do as leader of Mexico (in fact, a year before he officially became president), was to call for a convention to create a new constitution for Mexico. His idea was that the new constitution would be strongly based on the one from 1857 but would be moderately updated for the 20th century. Instead, more radical forces took political control of the convention's agenda, and as a result, the Constitution of 1917 became a model of democracy, calling for labor reform, repatriation of land back to the peasants, and far-reaching restrictions on foreign access to Mexico's natural resources.

But many forces were working against Carranza. The trauma of the revolution had left a country that was impoverished, with not enough food or clean water for its people. Illness was rampant. And when Carranza refused to begin instituting the reforms that the Constitution called for, both Villa and Zapata came to believe that Carranza needed to be overthrown.

When Villa attacked Columbus, New Mexico in 1916, Carranza gave the U.S. permission to send troops, led by General John J. Pershing, into Mexican territory to hunt him down. It was Carranza's hope that Pershing could eliminate the threat of Villa, but Pershing's troops were never able to locate the revolutionary leader. A closer threat to Carranza was Emiliano Zapata, who was based in Morelos, very close to Mexico City. Carranza developed a scheme to have Zapata eliminated. In April, 1919, the plot worked. A federal general pretended to defect to Zapata's side, and was thus able to engineer his assassination.

But only a year later, it was Carranza's turn. As he tried for a final time to flee Mexico City for Veracruz, conspirators working on behalf of his general, Álvaro Obregón, arranged to have Carranza's train sabotaged, and the Premier Jefe was murdered that night. Later that same year, Obregón became President of Mexico