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also spelled Ñanga, was a fugitive slave leader who negotiated for his followers' freedom and right to establish a free black town in seventeenth-century New Spain (colonial Mexico). Of Bran ancestry, Yanga claimed royal descent in northwestern Africa before his enslavement and transport to Mexico.

Yanga escaped during a slave uprising in the sugar producing regions of Veracruz in the 1570s to become the leader of a *palenque* (runaway slave community) in the regions near Mt. Orizaba in eastern Mexico. The constant predations of Yanga's followers on local haciendas and caravans traversing the Camino Real between the port of Veracruz and Mexico City unsettled colonial officials. In the first decade of the 1600s, the Spanish attempted, but failed, to reduce the runaways militarily. Thus, Viceroy Luis de Velasco II decided to pursue negotiations with Yanga to reestablish peace (the Spanish had previously negotiated with runaway slaves in Cuba and with the runaways of Las Esmeraldas in modern-day Ecuador). To that end, Velasco dispatched a Franciscan friar, Alonso de Benavides, and Captain Manuel Carrillo, a *regidor* (alderman) from Veracruz, to engage Yanga in negotiations in 1607.

These negotiations resulted in a short truce, and in March 1608 Carrillo delivered a set of demands from Yanga to the viceroy, stipulating the conditions under which his followers would lay down their arms. The existence of this set of demands, and the specific requests therein, are quite exceptional (see Landers, 2006, for a translation of the demands). Yanga requested that everyone in his community who had fled slavery before September 1607 be freed. In exchange, the community would become slave catchers, returning all those who had escaped after that date to their masters. While such promises prove quite common in negotiations with runaway slaves (like the Maroons of Jamaica), some scholars doubt if the runaways truly intended on fulfilling it. However, Yanga included a surprising concession: he promised to replace future runaways with a member of his community until the runaway had been captured, and to pay the master the value of any slave they failed to capture.

In return, Yanga requested that his community be declared a free town with all the rights inherent therein, that a Franciscan friar be dispatched to serve as the town's priest, and that the viceroy pay for the ornamentation of their church. Yanga's followers promised to pay tribute (a head tax) like other free blacks and mulattos, and to assist the colony militarily against foreign invasion. Yanga, and his descendants after him, would be the town's governors. Velasco believed that meeting these demands, within certain limits, offered the best solution to the problem. Yet, at the same time, Velasco prepared a military option, ordering Captain Pedro González de Herrera to begin preparations to destroy the *palenque*.

Padre Benavides had remained in Yanga's camp, but upon Captain Carrillo's death in early 1609, the initial truce broke down and Benavides was cast out as a spy. Yanga's men resumed their attacks on local haciendas and towns as Gonzalez moved into the region. Yanga's followers reportedly captured two Spanish scouts from Gonzalez's force, killing one brutally, scalping him and drinking his blood. Whether the report was propaganda to underscore the danger the runaways represented, or real, and thus a warning to Spanish forces, it highlights the escalating tensions in the region. The second Spaniard was spared and sent back with a taunting letter challenging the "coward" González to meet Yanga in battle.

González's force, nearly 550 strong, assaulted Yanga's *palenque* in early 1610. A Jesuit, Juan Laurencio, wrote a firsthand account of the assault (see Pérez de Ribas, 1896). An elderly Yanga entrusted the stronghold's defense to his Angolan military captain, Francisco Angola, while he led the camp's women and children in prayer in the rustic church. Despite careful planning to defend the encampment, the Spanish eventually overwhelmed Yanga's followers. After capturing the empty camp, González attempted negotiations with Yanga, but he had retreated before the two could meet.

According to Spanish reports, approximately eighty warriors (presumably all runaways), twenty-four black women, and an unspecified number of Indian men, women, and Afro-Mexican children lived in the camp, which included nearly seventy houses and the church. The runaways had only occupied this location for nine months, but the Spanish found fields planted with corn, squash, cotton, beans, and sugar, among other vegetables. Yanga apparently dedicated half of the town's population to agriculture and half to defense, as the town was crudely fortified. There is little information on the cultural life of the community, but it appears to have been a mixture of African and Christian traditions. Africans of very different ethnicities (e.g., Bran, Angola, Mozambique) resided there. Conversely, Father Benavides reported that he performed Mass, baptisms, and Christian marriages while he resided among the runaways.

What transpired next is not entirely clear. Scholars agree that Yanga, or his descendants, successfully negotiated a truce with colonial authorities, resulting in the establishment of San Lorenzo de los Negros (renamed Yanga in 1932), but no one is sure when (although 1618 seems most likely). Following the camp's destruction, the region remained troublesome for the Spanish because of continued runaway activity. In 1618 Viceroy Diego Fernández de Córdoba y López de las Roelas founded the villa of Córdoba, establishing a presidio there, to prevent ongoing *cimarrón* attacks that he attributed to Yanga's camp, which he suggested consisted of nearly three hundred people. In January 1619, Viceroy Córdoba reported that the leader of this group of runaways had been captured and imprisoned. In 1641 Gaspar Ñanga, the leader of the blacks of San Lorenzo and likely a descendent of Yanga, was tried for aiding and abetting runaway slaves in the region. In 1742, reports indicate San Lorenzo included some seventy-eight Afro-Mexican and eight Indian households.

Today, a statue of Yanga stands in the town of the same name, where residents praise him as the "first liberator of the Americas." Modern residents also participate in a "Carnival en Negritude," in which revelers paint their faces black, supposedly as a reminder that Africans and their descendants founded the town.

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