Las Anarquistas: The History of Two Women of the Partido Liberal Mexicano in Early 20th Century Los Angeles

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in

Latin American Studies

by

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The Thesis of Nathan Kahn Ellstrand is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication and electronically:

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

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DEDICATION

To my parents,
  thank you.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page.................................................................................................................. iii

Dedication........................................................................................................................... iv

Table of Contents............................................................................................................. v

Acknowledgements.......................................................................................................... vi

Abstract of the Thesis ...................................................................................................... viii

Introduction....................................................................................................................... 1

Chapter 1: Emergence and Development of Talavera and Norman within the PLM in Los Angeles, 1906-1914 ................................................................. 12

Chapter 2: The Intensification of Crises and the Ever-Growing Importance of the Women in the PLM, 1915-1922 ................................................................. 39

Chapter 3: Reframing the PLM through Gender ............................................................ 68

Conclusion....................................................................................................................... 88

Bibliography.................................................................................................................... 94
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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Professor Everard Meade, Chair

This thesis covers the history of the radical liberal and later anarchist Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) by concentrating on two women within the organization, María Talavera and Lucía Norman. By doing so, it disrupts the traditional narrative of the organization as centered on Ricardo Flores Magón and showing the women as much more than simply having a role in the party, but as placed in a gendered group where they
slowly gained autonomy over time. The paper follows the two women through two periods in Los Angeles, first noting their emergence in the PLM, and considering their place in the party as compared to the rhetoric established by male party leaders. The second period shows how through each successive arrest, trial, and imprisonment of the men, the women gained power and leadership. Lastly, the paper ends examining where it falls in and how it diverges from the literature on gender in the Progressive Era, Mexican Revolution, and PLM, emphasizing these two women as independent and politically conscious individuals in the midst of the persecution of the party.
Introduction

“I, in a half hour, when more people arrived, I woke these people up; I went flying through the plaza of the Mexicans and I brought them with me.”

-María Talavera in a letter to Ricardo Flores Magón, 1908

Describing how she mobilized the people in the plaza in Los Angeles, María Talavera wrote to her companion and fellow activist regarding what occurred the year before in 1907. She reflected on the time when she gathered support from an audience of Mexican Americans who embraced her for the very first time as a political figure, yet she was not simply an activist. Not only did she participate in deviant Mexican politics, but she was set apart by being a Mexican woman. A few years before the Mexican Revolution in 1910 and in the middle of the Progressive Era in the United States, María Talavera and her daughter Lucía Norman began their involvement in the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM or Mexican Liberal Party). These two women were already living in the city and active in city politics when this group of Mexican political activist exiles arrived from St. Louis to Los Angeles in 1906 and 1907. Late in 1907, the United States government arrested and took the male leaders Ricardo Flores Magón, Librado Rivera,

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1 María Talavera to Ricardo Flores Magón, September 15, 1908, accessed May 4, 2011, Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón, http://www.archivomagon.net/ObrasCompletas/Correspondencia/Cor266.html. “Yo en media hora, cuando más levanté esa gente, fui volando a la plaza de los mexicanos y me los traje.”

2 María Talavera went by a variety of names including María Brousse, María B. Talavera, María Broussde Talavera, and María Flores Magón. Lucía Norman also went by various other names such as Lucía Guidera, Lucille Norman, Lucille Guidera, and even sometimes her last name was spelled Guidera.

3 Jacinto Barrera B., ed. Correspondencia I (1899-1918) (Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, Dirección General de Publicaciones, 2001), 672.
Modesto Díaz and Antonio I. Villarreal to court for violating U.S. neutrality laws. The
government accused them of planning an attack on Mexico from the United States,
sending them to jail first in Los Angeles and later in Arizona.\(^4\) This event mobilized the
party members around the organization, and especially involved both Talavera and
Norman (as in this instance noted above) as women in party politics. Over the course of
more than ten years, this and three other similar crises took place when the federal
government persecuted and convicted the male partisans. Each time, the women gathered
support for the party that they so ideologically and intimately cared about.

Both María and Lucía shared a political ideology that was representative of the
rest of the party. When considering the concept of ideology, it refers to a system of
assumptions, beliefs or ideas, and these ideas that the women had were part of a growing
political movement even years before the party’s creation. Before the PLM, its founder
Ricardo Flores Magón was a student activist in Mexico City as early as 1892, leading
demonstrations and publishing first *El Democrata* and *El Hijo de Ahuizote*, and later (and
most notably) *Regeneración* against the Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz who governed
Mexico for decades.\(^5\) From the 1880s on, his regime established a productive labor
system and creation of surplus goods to facilitate the advance of the capitalist system in
the country.\(^6\) The country was run “scientifically” with the goals of order and progress in
mind. However, despite this economic “progress,” the gap between the rich and poor of
Mexico increased. Those who already had so little soon had even less as both elite

national and foreign interests took hold. Ricardo and his followers fled into exile in 1903 partially by choice (their political activity would be safer for them in the United States) and in part by necessity (as the consequences they faced if they stayed in Mexico were grave). The PLM formed in 1905 out of a group of political exiles dedicated to overthrowing Díaz, centering their beliefs on political liberalism. They advocated for reforms including Mexican (and non-foreign) ownership of land, mandatory education, and redistribution of land holdings.\(^7\)

As the years went on, the women and the party as a whole slowly moved towards a broad conception of anarchism as past and contemporary anarchist theorists, as well as the ideas of American and immigrant political activists, influenced members of the party. One such theorist from the turn of the 20\(^{th}\) century, Peter Kropotkin, wrote that anarchism would abolish private property and integrate labor so that all people could share property and manage it equally to fully achieve freedom for the individual.\(^8\) By being mutually dependent on one another, he thought that there would be a fully equal society. This society would not need laws nor institutions since people could rely on each other for support based upon free consent. Emma Goldman, a prominent Russian American anarchist and supporter of the PLM advocated a “new social order based on liberty unrestricted by man-made law. All forms of government rest on violence, and are

\(^7\) Albro, 45-47.

\(^8\) Peter Kropotkin, “Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles,” in Kropotkin’s Revolutionary Pamphlets: A Collection of Writings by Peter Kropotkin, ed. Roger N. Baldwin (New York and London: Benjamin Blom, 1968), 46-47. One could argue that Kropotkin is not representative of anarchism, but rather of anarchist communism. This paper interprets anarchism just as the PLM did; rather broadly. They did not see themselves as collectivist anarchists or anarchist communists, but simply as anarchists.
therefore wrong and harmful, as well as unnecessary.”⁹ Without coercion and repressive institutions, liberty without law gives each individual the right to choose their own actions. These theorists in their literature pushed for a “free” society unrestricted by institutions like the state and religion. By working collectively, individuals could obtain a new social order. It was the theory that these individuals established that influenced the PLM’s own theoretical framework. The earliest references to anarchism appeared in the party’s main newspaper *Regeneración* in 1908, but by 1911 in the “Manifiesto de 23 de Septiembre 1911” the transformation was complete and the party publicly proclaimed advocating for anarchist revolution in Mexico. They took up the belief that the state was inherently a repressive structure to maintain class differences, keeping the lower class at the bottom to be exploited by the elites. The state and private property needed to be overthrown to have a more just and egalitarian system where people could work together freely, leading to the public ownership and allocation of resources.¹⁰

Talavera and Norman’s connection to the party was much more than an ideological one, and there were clearly emotional ties between the female and male members. María Talavera and Ricardo Flores Magón fell in love with one another in 1906 and by the time of the arrest in 1907, they were married in free union. A result of this was that Flores Magón unofficially adopted Talavera’s daughter, Lucía Norman.¹¹ They at once embodied the party’s goals but also tied themselves to the group through loving association. The exchanges that they had throughout the years represented both

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¹¹ Albro, 92.
romantic and familial ties they had between one another. These associations were most
evident through letters sent between Maríá, Lucía, and Ricardo while he was either in jail
or in prison from 1907 to 1909 and in the very last years of the party between 1918 and
1922. Within them, they expressed their complete love and devotion despite the
separation caused by crisis, even claiming that without each other they would not be able
to survive in the party's struggle. These particular women located themselves within an
organization where their participation was not solely political or based upon intimate
relations, but was a complex combination of these factors.

These factors placed Lucía and Maríá in a different situation from the other
women in the party who were either involved in journalism or as revolutionary soldiers.
Before Talavera or Norman’s involvement, Sara Estela Ramírez, a woman from Coahuila
was active in the movement. She was a writer, poet, and activist affiliated with
Regeneración and the movement that came before the foundation of the party, right at the
turn of the twentieth century in Laredo, Texas. She utilized journalism and published her
own newspaper, Corregidora, to expose the conditions of the poor that were a result of
the Díaz regime. Teresa and Andrea Villarreal were contemporaries of Ramírez and
sisters of PLM leader Antonio Villarreal. They too published their own publication, La
Mujer Moderna, in San Antonio, championing the revolution with the hope that it would
liberate women in Mexico. Alternatively, women in the party did more than just write

12 Barrera B., Correspondencia I (1899-1918); Jacinto Barrera B., ed., Correspondencia 2 (1919-1922)
(Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, Dirección General de Publicaciones 2001);
Ricardo Flores Magón, Epistolario y textos de Ricardo Flores Magón, ed. Manuel González Ramírez
14 Teresa Palomo Acosta and Ruthe Winegarten, Las Tejanas: 300 Years of History (Austin: University of
Texas Press, 2003), 78.
to contribute towards the revolutionary cause. Margarita Ortega fought alongside the male partisans during the Mexican Revolution, assisting the PLM in occupying Baja California in 1911.\textsuperscript{15} Talavera and Norman’s participation differed from the other female partisans as they were not defined by one role as journalist or soldadera, but promoted the party’s goals in a variety of ways through a combination of writing, activism, and leadership. They also had an emotional correlation to a major male party leader that these women just mentioned did not. Their roles in the organization were not stagnant as they shifted and transformed over time with the party headquarters based in Los Angeles, as compared to being isolated from the party leadership elsewhere.

The kinds of roles that they had in the organization through a combination of journalism and protest were very much tied to the perception of gender in the PLM. Gender is different from sex which is biologically determined in creating men and women. Gender means the understanding created by societies and cultures of relationships between these categories.\textsuperscript{16} It is constructed socially and is one of the ways that human beings organize their lives, depending on a predictable division of labor.\textsuperscript{17} Gender creates two separate and distinct categories to which people fall into: male and female. Not only does gender establish this perception of difference, but it perpetuates it. Through means of consent, it functions via a hierarchy of patriarchy where men are superior and women are subordinate. Although Norman and Talavera had unique


\textsuperscript{16} Joan Wallach Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 2.

\textsuperscript{17} Judith Lorber, Paradoxes of Gender (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 15.
positions within the party, their standing in the organization was not consistently equal to that of the male partisans.

In the particular period they lived in at the turn of the century, gender was not only important, but so was the notion of public and private spheres intricately connected to it. When considering the public sphere broadly, it is the sphere of private individuals coming together in the public to discuss matters of interest among the community. Alternately, the private sphere is the domain of property and domestic space.\(^1\) This concept of the division between the public and the private was very much part of the period from the late nineteenth to the beginning of the early twentieth century which perceived men as filling the public sphere where they would deal with the affairs of the community, whereas women were to belong in the private sphere, belonging to the home. Lucía and María both lived in the midst of this sentiment in Los Angeles of the early 1900s, and these expectations applied to them as well. The Progressive Movement occurred during this period between the American depression of 1893 and the United States’ entry into World War I. It reacted to rapid industrialization and urban growth by pushing for reform of working conditions, protesting corporations and calling out political corruption.\(^2\) Women, and in particular, middle-class white women, were very much part of this movement, and central to reform in general was to redefine the role between the private and public spheres. They sought to gain control over the forces affecting their lives and direct the entry from one sphere into another in a very specific way that often was not inclusive of women of non-white backgrounds. Within this time,


Talavera and Norman moved slowly from one sphere to the other, appearing more and more in the public eye of the community of Los Angeles consisting of the white, English-speaking population, and the Mexican, oftentimes Spanish-speaking population. Their shift did not fall within the acceptability of the Progressive Movement as they were set apart by their background as well as their “deviant” political views, yet within the party itself they still fell within a gendered framework.

A transformation in perceptions of gender occurred regarding these two women over the party’s stay in Los Angeles from 1906 to 1922. The party established how it perceived and saw the future of women in several articles both in Regeneración as well as in their other, minor paper Revolución. These pieces laid the foundation of an ideology that at once advocated for the equality of women, while still expecting specific gender roles for men and women. They were both to be involved as revolutionaries which would bring about dramatic social change and “freedom.” Yet men would be those who would fight, whereas women would support and encourage the men in their struggle.20 This contradictory ideology still supported the notion that men and women would work together, benefiting each other equally, to bring about revolution. When the party arrived in Los Angeles and when it faced its first crisis, these two women ensured that the party would be sustained without Flores Magón or its other male leaders. They distributed letters and information between members, and worked together to see that plans regarding revolution in Mexico would be carried out. Despite all of this, Flores

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Magón treated them as intermediary members who supported him with his goals for the party. They served him from the outside in while he was in jail and later in prison. It was only until later in the 1910s when the prosecution and convictions increased, that the women gradually gained more power and assured its survival as the men faced harsher sentences and as the party lost support. These women initially served roles more as private mediators and slowly moved towards being public leaders. The narrative demonstrates the development of the involvement of these two women over time.

The lives of María Talavera and Lucía Norman while in Los Angeles provide a history of the Partido Liberal Mexicano sustained by female members while the many court battles and resulting imprisonments occupied the male party leaders. Talavera and Norman began their involvement predominantly in the private sphere, subordinate to Ricardo, serving and supporting him privately to carry out his plans for revolution. This paper argues that each successive crisis provided an opening that empowered these women, giving them more autonomy publicly in the organization as the male partisans faced increasing government repression, and allowed them to defend the party they cared so much about. The women were finally able to demonstrate their active beliefs of revolution apart from men, and moved away from inferior roles in the party towards positions of leadership. Considering this complicates the role of women in the Mexican Revolution by giving them agency beyond being ancillary soldaderas, as well as in the Progressive Era, demonstrating the shift from private to public through an ideology of revolutionary resistance that rejected reform.

Chapter 1 presents the beginning of the narrative of these two women within the PLM from 1906 to 1914 in the city. It covers the party’s rather contradictory ideology on
women that seeks equality between men and women by working collectively together, and how the role of María and Lucía in this timeframe does not match up with the rhetoric. Rather, they worked as mediators between the imprisoned male members with Ricardo at its helm and the world beyond the jail and later, prison walls. They worked privately behind the scenes to ensure the success of the revolutionary plans that the men had, as well as simply dealing with the everyday politics of the party. By the second crisis, these two women finally gained some level of independence in the public by protesting the conviction of the male leaders and receiving considerable recognition in the city’s media outlets.

The prominence that Talavera and Norman gained only increased in the years that followed. Chapter 2 focuses on the second half of the narrative from 1915 to 1922 where Talavera and Norman were becoming almost ever-present in the public sphere when associated with the PLM. The party was in even dire straights than before and the women fundraised for the organization. They also appeared again in public protest, and later the federal government that was persecuting the male partisans struck María with a series of two indictments right as she took leadership of the organization. All along the way, the two women kept on promoting the views of the party in the face of government repression.

Chapter 3 differs from the previous two chapters as it is a synthesis of the paper as a whole. Just as this paper seeks to uproot and shift the narrative of the PLM, this chapter does the same. Oftentimes the historiography is in the beginning of a text, but in this case, the literature review is at the end of the piece to reflect on the information presented beforehand. It focuses on de-centering the party away from Ricardo and towards the
women. This chapter does this by noting the different perspectives from the literature on the Progressive Era, the Mexican Revolution and on the PLM, noting what they leave out regarding the inclusion of gender, but ultimately concentrating on how this work adds to the historiography, emphasizing the roles of María and Lucía as conscious political actors.

This study attempts to provide some sense of the importance of women in the Partido Liberal Mexicano in its historical context. Numerous other women besides Talavera and Norman were part of the PLM, and further studies will be needed both in regards to these other female members and also regarding women connected to the party outside of Los Angeles. However, Talavera and Norman, unlike most other women involved in the struggle had stronger leadership roles, and their stories offer elements absent in other female experiences from the Progressive Era or the Mexican Revolution. This paper shows the party much more than a group of men centered on one charismatic individual pushing for liberty for all, but an organization where women were at once subordinated and essential to its survival.
Chapter 1: Emergence and Development of Talavera and Norman within the PLM in Los Angeles, 1906-1914

The two women at the center of this paper were part of the Partido Liberal Mexicano from the very beginning of the party’s move to Los Angeles. The people who later formed the party came across the border at the end of 1903, crossing into Laredo, Texas. Porfirio Díaz’s government in Mexico immediately sought to shut down their paper, Regeneración, as well as put an end to their revolutionary activities including a series of planned revolts within Mexico. Despite this, Ricardo Flores Magón, fellow writers of the newspaper, and like-minded individuals came together in 1905 to form the PLM.21 Díaz ordered Mexican and Mexican-hired American spies to chase and follow the revolutionaries, particularly Ricardo, throughout the United States and Canada. By 1906, Ricardo ended up in Los Angeles, finding refuge at the house of a woman named María Talavera.

Thanks to María, the party moved its headquarters to Los Angeles where her and her daughter, Lucía Norman, became deeply involved with the organization. She had been in communication with Ricardo for about a year beforehand, and participated in socialist politics in the city. At the time of Ricardo’s arrival, María resided with her husband Marcelino Talavera and her daughter. Soon she became the public companion of Ricardo, and both her and Lucía actively participated in the party, but their participation was almost completely on the sidelines in this specific period.22

22 Barrera B., Correspondencia I (1899-1918), 672.
This chapter focuses on gender relations at the beginning of the party’s time in Los Angeles and argues how these women emerged in the party as influential members, acting in combined roles as both politically active members in the organization and as emotional companions. These positions often conflicted as the party ideology advocated the liberation of women, while in practice, women served as secondary party members. This gender ideology appeared to be radical at the time as compared to reformist women’s politics of the Progressive Era, though it was on par with what anarchist women such as Emma Goldman were promoting. Still, the PLM’s actions did not follow through with pushing for such equality within the organization. The first part of this chapter covers the views that the party promoted regarding women. Secondly, the 1907 trial of Ricardo and other male party leaders encouraged the involvement of women purely as backers of the organization. Third, a series of letters between Ricardo, María, and Lucía demonstrated that the women continued to perform more roles sustaining the party in the middle of his imprisonment, but were still dictated by the party leader. Fourth, Ricardo made María responsible in smuggling out the organization’s outline for a planned revolution in 1908, serving the party while also putting her own life on the line. Fifth and lastly, years later during the second major trial of party leaders in 1912, Lucía’s public involvement in activism marked the beginning of a turning point where partisan women like her could actually demonstrate publicly and independently from men. During this era, Lucía and María partook in party politics, slowly gaining influence, but

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were always under the surveillance of men, remaining inferior to them, and this chapter reflects this phenomenon.

**The PLM’s ideology on women**

Not long after the party’s move to the United States, the male leaders sought to clarify and solidify their views regarding a variety of issues, including their perspective on the role of women and their respective rights. The male-defined ideology on women changed over time, oftentimes arguing for liberation and equality as the central themes in various pieces published through the years. Despite those themes, the ideology had contradictions within itself, not to mention contradictions in how the PLM practiced its ideas as the years went on.

Although the male members of the party were together for years even before the formation of the party, they did not establish a concrete set of values or plan as an organization until 1906. The 1906 party manifesto laid out the ideology of the PLM, advocating for a series of reforms including direct election of politicians by people who valued the public interest, land for everyone who wanted to cultivate it, no obligatory military service, and an end to the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. These represented the party’s relatively moderate political stance at the time, which radicalized quickly over the years as the PLM was in exile and with the development of the events as part of the revolution following 1910. The party had very little to say about women. The only noticeable reference in this manifesto stated that the political tyrants of Mexico hated

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25 Julia Tuñón Pablos, *Women in Mexico: A Past Unveiled* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 82. Tuñón Pablos writes that the party took a strong stance regarding women early on, however by examining the manifesto there is only a very small reference to women amongst all the other issues mentioned.
independent, revolutionary men for defending weak women from the abuse of them, the political elites.\textsuperscript{26} Included almost as an afterthought, this statement placed women in a position where they were not even those to be respected, being labeled as “weak” as opposed to the supposedly “strong” men in a patriarchal system. The men were the central focus of the piece as they were the ones who were to bring about these reforms in Mexico, overturning the political tyrants (such as Díaz) who they believed ruined Mexico.

The next year when the party was in Los Angeles, they used \textit{Revolución} (the party’s other paper besides \textit{Regeneración}), to shift their focus to fully recognize women publicly in a variety of pieces. One such piece written in July of 1907, titled “El Deber de la Mujer” (“The Duty of the Woman”) was placed prominently on the front page of the newspaper. In it, the anonymous author wrote that the party as an organization composed of both men and women, and thus dedicated to the cause of revolution. They saw the goals that they aimed for in the manifesto with the potential of bringing about dramatic change for the betterment of both sexes. The article perceived the woman as “the companion and not the slave of the man, and together they must fight, like any other biological species, against anything that opposes them satisfying their needs.”\textsuperscript{27} In one

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{26} La Junta Organizadora del Partido Liberal Mexicano, “Manifiesto a la Nación del Plan del Partido Liberal Mexicano de 1906,” 96. In the manifesto it states that “ese pretexto con que los actuales caciques arracan de su hogar a los hombres, a quienes odian por su altivez o porque son el obstáculo para que los corrompidos tiranuelos abusen de débiles mujeres, se difundirá la instrucción, base del progreso y del engrandecimiento de todos los pueblos.”
\end{flushright}

The piece is originally written as: “La mujer es, pues, la compañera y no la esclava del hombre, y juntos tienen que luchar, como cualquiera especie biológica, contra todo lo que se oponga á la satisfacción de sus necesidades.” Also at the time, there were other pieces regarding the “liberation” of women such as two articles promoting the PLM-related and El Paso-based publication, \textit{La Voz de la Mujer} (\textit{The Voice of the Woman}).
instance, the party stance appeared liberatory, denouncing women as enslaved to the will of men, similar to what Goldman claimed at the time of how women had to have “the road towards greater freedom cleared of every trace of centuries of submission and slavery.”

At the same time, the article still argued that women were the companions of men. They were meant to be by their side and assist them in their endeavors. This expectation was evident in the article as it advocated that “women, sisters, lovers, do not further delay the men: let them fight for the welfare of others, and if any of them, for cowardice or for ego, refuse to take an active stand in the fight that is coming, push them to fulfill their duty!”

Men were to take up arms in revolution against the Díaz regime, whereas women clearly had a different role to play. This “duty” was to continue their position as a companion, but they had to be more than simply a domestic companion. Rather, women had to be the companion who encouraged and forced their husbands to serve in the struggle for freedom. They were not the actual ones who brought about the transformation of the country, but instead were the supporters on the sidelines.

Three years later in 1910, the PLM’s ideology on women evolved and while maintaining some of these similar ideas of women as supporters, also became a bit more radical, as the party itself shifted more towards anarchism. Ricardo wrote the party’s foremost piece on women that year titled “A La Mujer” (“To The Woman”) in Regeneración. He included a similar argument regarding a woman’s duty claiming “your duty is to help the man; to be with him when he wavers, in order to inspire; fly to his side when he suffers, in order to sweeten his pain, and laugh and sing with him when triumph

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29 Ibid. The article argues that “Madres, hermanas, amantes, no detengáis más á los hombres: dejadlos luchar por el bienestar de todos, y si algunos* do ellos, por cobardía ó por egoísmo se rehusan á tomar parte activa en la lucha que se prepara, empujadlos á que cumplan con su deber!”
smiles." Once again, there was emphasis on the partisan female being a supporter, rather than a full-blown revolutionary herself. Their role was to be the encourager, emotionally buttressing the male fighter along the way. Simultaneously, he contradicted the above point elsewhere in the piece, advocating for women’s independence, taking a more progressive stance towards women than before. He denounced marriage as being legal prostitution, claiming that it was not for love, but for social maintenance. More broadly, he discussed the history of the acceptance of women over time, and argued that science proved that women were fully equal to men. The PLM’s rhetoric was at once both talk of a secondary role of female companionship while at the same time a demand for liberation and respect.

This kind of rhetoric was common in the party’s ideology on women and Práxedis Guerrero, another prominent male party member and revolutionary fighter, provided his viewpoint as well in several pieces in the party’s paper. In his piece “La Mujer,” he denounced “feminism” claiming “not able to be a woman, the woman wishes to be man; she throws herself with the worthy enthusiasm of a rational feminist after all the ugly things that man is able to be and do; she wants to carry out the function of the police, of the troublemakers, of the political tyrants, and to elect, with men, the masters of the human race.” He spoke as a radical social critic and did not denounce feminism as a

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31 Ibid.

32 Práxedis G. Guerrero, “La mujer,” in Númenes Rebeldes. Mexico City, Mexico: Grupo Cultural “Ricardo Flores Magon,” 1922. It translates as: “No pudiendo ser mujer, la mujer quiere ser hombre; se lanza con un entusiasmo digno de un feminismo más racional en pos de todas las cosas feas que un hombre
whole, but rather this particular enemy was liberal, capitalist feminism. Guerrero related feminism to that of the enemy on the outside – the capitalist elite and not an ideology stemming from inside the organization itself. To be feminist, he argued, was to replicate every negative aspect of the male-dominated regime that oppressed the country. However, to be a revolutionary was to be completely the opposite, detaching oneself from the established norms. He wrote that “libertarian equality does not try to make man out of a woman, it gives the same opportunities to the two dissenting groups of the human species so that both can develop without obstacles, mutually serving and supporting, without grabbing rights, without hindering the place each one has in nature. Women and men have to fight for rational equality.” In his mind, capitalist feminism did not bring about real equality, but simply buttressed the existing structures in place. Conversely, libertarian equality would maintain “natural” gender roles so that each would support one another.

Contradictions existed in all of the pieces, though ultimately this was what was evident in the overall party ideology on women in these pieces over the years. Male party leaders constantly brought up the concept of “liberation” time and time again, and this concept did not completely uproot and question gendered difference, but rather saw women as having the ability to contribute more to society than they had in the past. Through cooperation, both genders could benefit one another equally. Still, such ideas contrasted greatly with those of the time during the Progressive Era as women activists...
were just considering simple reforms like voting to give rights to women, not full equality. However, this notion of equality that the male leaders of the PLM promoted did not always play out as stated in their belief system, and instead of being granted considerable freedom, the party gave them limited freedom. The women did not define their own ideology for themselves, and the only autonomy that these women did have in this period, emerged in times of crisis.

**Crisis in 1907 and beyond: male party members victimized and female supporters on the sidelines**

By 1907, the party established its new headquarters in Los Angeles where Talavera and Norman were already involved in the party’s activities, though they soon faced a moment of crisis. On August 23, the Los Angeles police and the Díaz-funded Furlong Detective Agency raided the headquarters and arrested party leaders Flores Magón, Rivera, Diaz, and Villarreal. Both governments and particularly the Mexican government sought to place them on criminal charges for years while the group was in exile in the United States, so when they finally captured them, they had to find something on which to base the arrest. The charges that they were being held on were unclear, as they were first accused of resisting an officer and the federal court later charged them of violating neutrality laws. During this time, the government jailed the male party leaders in the Los Angeles County Jail. The case itself created a climate where all the members of the group felt directly attacked by outside forces. As such, there was a backlash

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34 Catt and Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics*, 5.
against both the arrest and charges, perceived to be unjust by many of the males and females alike who supported the party.

Although the case focused on male defendants, women actively participated in their support during the trial. On November 26, Mexican and American supporters gathered at a bilingual meeting at the Simpson Auditorium. John Murray from the Socialist Party and part of the Mexican Revolutionists Defense League was the Master of Ceremonies of the event. Despite simply leading the event, he commented on the notable difference of the people present there. Murray noted that “I don’t believe any of you have been to a meeting where not only the men took part but the children and women also did their share. We have here these girls and children, who although they can not speak, have been willing to come onto the stage and show their interest in this movement for liberty.”37 Later on in the meeting, Lucía gave her support in an address during the event as fellow supporters collected money for the defendants. Murray, in speaking on behalf of the party, promoted the presence of having women at a meeting such as this. Simply having them on stage elevated their status, yet there really was no actual participation. They were there to shape the perception of the party and who it was composed of to the public. This “public” in this instance was that of predominantly members of the socialist, labor, and progressive communities in the city, but the event

37 “Report at Meeting at Simpson Auditorium, Tuesday, November 26, 1907, 8PM.” MSS 0582 Box 1, Folder 8 Ricardo Flores Magón Documents, Mandeville Special Collections, University of California, San Diego. An article by the Los Angeles Times on November 27 also notes the presence of women, dressed in white and wearing red caps. “Conspiracy was gigantic in scope,” The Los Angeles Times, November 27, 1907, p.II1, accessed April 26, 2011, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=345619812&sid=2&Fmt=10&clientId=1561&RQT=309&VName=HNP
hoped to reach beyond those who sympathized with their cause. Even later on, the media mentioned the supporters, including the women, but they never were the center of attention. The Los Angeles Times noted that “ever since the cases of the ‘reds’ first came up in the Federal Court, the officials have been very lenient with the rabid outbursts of counsel, and with the disorderly tactics of sympathizers who have forced an entrance at all proceedings.” The paper noted their dedication and ability to raise a ruckus, but ultimately they were just unidentified sympathizers on the edge of the movement.

María and Lucía fared a bit better and had more sway in the organization since they both had personal relations with Ricardo as respectively his common-law wife and stepdaughter, but they still remained as associates of the party during this time of crisis. This crisis – the first of many that affected the party – was simply more than just one trial, but two. Because of the strong defense movement, the charges were dropped, freeing them from jail in Los Angeles, but the American government immediately sent them to Arizona in late October 1908, where it charged and eventually convicted them of violating neutrality laws again the next year. The court first jailed them in Arizona and then imprisoned them for eighteen months at McNeill Island Prison in Washington. These series of events involved the women as they needed to assist the party in a time of need. They participated in the meetings and protests, but never stood out or were perceived as equals to the men. However, they took part in another form of participation

38 “Report at Meeting at Simpson Auditorium, Tuesday, November 26, 1907, 8PM.” The manuscript mentions the newspapers, the “public” that the men in the PLM received attention from, and who are sympathetic to the cause. These include The Herald, The Express, Common Sense, and The Citizen, all of which represented progressive/leftist perspectives at the time.
40 Douglas Monroy, Rebirth: Mexican Los Angeles from the Great Migration to the Great Depression (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 218; Gomez-Quiñones, Sembradores, 33.
as a direct result of the trial, providing them with more direct involvement with Ricardo. This participation took place through a series of correspondence between Ricardo and these two women, allowing for an opportunity not only to share personal concerns, but to begin to give some agency to these women regarding the political affairs of the party.

**Political love letters: correspondence between Marí, Lucía, and Ricardo**

From 1907 to 1909, Marí, Lucía, and Ricardo wrote a series of letters between one another during Ricardo’s period in either jail or prison, which demonstrated at once their personal dedication to each other but also their political dedication to the cause of the party. When Ricardo first arrived in Los Angeles, he had many letters directed to him to be postmarked to “Marí B. de Talavera” as he was in hiding from government agents on both sides of the border who were seeking to capture him. She received hundreds of letters from fellow party members regarding the party’s plans for rebellions across Mexico. After Ricardo’s arrest in late August 1907, even more letters continued to be sent to her as she was his main connection to the world outside of the jail. So when they corresponded, they discussed his arrest and trial while demonstrating through these letters their emotional reliance on one another, and to Lucía. Through this correspondence, Marí and Lucía both served liminal positions in the organization between the main male leader and the mass of party members. The relative secretiveness of the letters and their private nature only added to the status of the women as betwixt and between the workings of the organization. Ricardo at once accepted them but never allowed them to fully be at the center of the party’s attention. Instead, he and the party placed them in

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41 “Letter addressed to Marí B. de Talavera, August 12, 1907,” Caja 1A, Expediente 10, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Mexico. Many other letters were found in the AGN and all were addressed the same way to Ricardo through Marí.
secondary positions as mediators rather than as leaders in the politics of the organization at the time.

These two women and Ricardo made sure that the information found in these letters would not leak out, though this was extremely difficult as Mexican and American government agents were keeping a very close eye on the party. The media picked up on any of this leaked information and exploited it to their advantage. According to letters that *The Los Angeles Times* found, it reported on September 19 that Flores Magón sent María on an expedition to Chihuahua to assassinate a high ranking Mexican official. Although she failed in her mission, the paper mentioned Ricardo as remarking that it was not her fault, but rather that she failed because the men whom she relied did not give her enough assistance. He argued that “she is prepared for any excursion no matter how dangerous. She does not inquire if she will be in danger of death. She simply gives herself to the cause. Such self-abnegation is not to be found among our brothers.”

The letters revealed María’s participation in the organization as being much more active that ever publicly recognized beforehand. They portrayed her as a hitwoman who was serving the male members of the party to set into motion a revolution in Mexico. What was perhaps most interesting about the article uncovering these letters was simply this notion that it showed that she demonstrated self-sacrifice, and more importantly a (limited) level of independence as a woman, to this revolutionary cause.

A few days later, the *Times* once again wrote an article focusing on intercepted correspondence, with María at the center of the piece. She accidentally dropped a

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package of letters and the paper published the content of what was inside them. One letter had a receipt from St. Louis, the old headquarters of the party, showing that María donated to the revolutionary fund.\textsuperscript{43} Within this confiscated correspondence, it was evident that she clearly invested herself in the movement by this point. Not only was she supporting the cause monetarily but she was also vital in the maintenance of communication between party members as was the case here. Another one of the letters showed Ricardo’s gratitude for her active participation. It was from Ricardo to María and had Ricardo’s handwriting, but was under the pseudonym of “Rafael.” Inside, he wrote how he appreciated her courage and devotion to the movement, explaining that he would always remember her dedication to the cause.\textsuperscript{44} The newspaper’s readership could start to see the intimate connection that the two had both politically and romantically. It gave an insight into these private conversations that they had.

As mentioned before, the governments of both Mexico and the United States were very interested in the inner private workings of the party as much as the media, but they had different motives as they sought to keep it contained rather than simply sensationalize their actions. Authorities were able to confiscate an abundance of letters. They wrote to one another on pieces of cloth when María brought clothing to the Los Angeles Jail for Ricardo. Although many of the letters made it to each other, quite a few fell into the hands of the authorities.\textsuperscript{45} By exposing these letters, Mexican government

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
agents brought the private affairs of the party members into the public eye. They provided insight more into concern about each other than divulging major party secrets.

Almost every single letter between them from this period placed emphasis on the emotional connection between one another. In the correspondence, it is evident that there was a sense of loss on the part of particularly María and Ricardo caused by his jailing. Not only did they miss one another, they felt like they lost one another, although they were both still in the same city, and they could oftentimes see each other from the windows of the jail. He passionately wrote to her that “I dream of my María. I sigh for life with you, sweet like your kisses, tender like your soul. I am delirious by the heat of your love.”46 In another letter, he expressed a similar sentiment explaining that “I am tired of suffering from the deprivation of love. Also, I think you will be my best medicine, because without you, I am dead.”47 In each one of these cases, Ricardo claimed that he was lost without her in jail, as he was isolated from the outside world. She was necessary for his well-being and they were co-dependent on each other. Talavera wrote to him to comfort these thoughts he had by saying that “soon I will take care of you so that you will be well. I will be your medicine. We will cure ourselves of

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A variety of similar reports exist just like this in both the SRE and the AGN during this period regarding correspondence found between María, Lucía, and Ricardo.
46 Ricardo Flores Magón to María Talavera, September 27, 1908, accessed May 4, 2011, Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón, http://www.archivomagon.net/ObrasCompletas/Correspondencia/Cor270.html The translation of the quote is “Sueño con mi María. Suspiro por la vida contigo, dulce como tus besos, tierna como tu alma. Delirio por el calor de tu amor.”
the sickness that consumes us both.”

This struggle moved beyond simply being Ricardo’s struggle as she consciously recognized that they were going through the same pain and loss together. She had faith in him just as he continued to believe in her as a source of inspiration while he was in jail.

This concept of trust was important even beyond the loyalty they had for each other, but in the trust that they had for others outside the organization itself. Although the Socialist Party did not directly affiliate themselves with the party goals, they threw their support wholeheartedly into the cause to free the male party leaders. Many of the letters between María and Ricardo involved discussion about how much involvement the predominantly white, non-Mexican socialists could have in the party. María wrote to Ricardo on September 15, 1908 that she knew for sure that she was a socialist when the authorities took him the year before as she realized that she wanted the wellbeing of others and to be strong. She wrote in the same letter how she allowed Lucía to stay with an American socialist family. A few days after the previous letter, María advocated that the PLM could affiliate with the party to gain more support for the freedom of the prisoners. Both of the women by this point already identified with the socialists, however the view that he held differed notably. His ideology was a mixture of Mexican reformism and anarchist radicalism, and he was closer to moving towards the latter. He

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49 María Talavera to Ricardo Flores Magón, September 15, 1908, accessed May 4, 2011, Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón, http://www.archivomagon.net/ObrasCompletas/Correspondencia/Cor266.html

50 María Talavera to Ricardo Flores Magón, September 17, 1908, accessed May 4, 2011, Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón, http://www.archivomagon.net/ObrasCompletas/Correspondencia/Cor267.html
became to see the problem less as simply Porfirio Díaz, but rather the capitalist system more broadly. The anarchism that he adopted advocated that voluntary associations and communal land would eliminate poverty and bring the country towards economic justice, overthrowing the state and capitalism. Socialism alternatively pushed for a more gradual process that would have the state take over all property for the benefit of the people.\(^{51}\)

This ideological conflict was where this immediate issue arose as Ricardo clearly saw himself and the party as different from the socialists, and thus different from the ideology that the women held.

He held considerable suspicion in regards to the socialists as compared to María. He argued to her that “the socialists of Los Angeles could make a lot of noise for our cause. Why don’t they? They can talk in the streets about our cause, protesting against the lack of communication. Why don’t they do it?”\(^{52}\) She replied that she would talk to the socialists so that they would deal with these issues, but he continued to complain that no one used the press, protests, or meetings in their favor.\(^{53}\) She obviously held her own defined ideas seeing herself as a socialist, and thus aligned with these individuals although they were whites rather than a Mexican like her. In this dialogue, she held her

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\(^{52}\) Ricardo Flores Magón to María Talavera, September 20, 1908, accessed May 4, 2011, Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón, http://www.archivomagon.net/ObrasCompletas/Correspondencia/Cor268.html “Los socialistas de Los Ángeles podrían hacer mucho ruido a nuestro favor. ¿Por qué no lo hacen? Pueden hablar en las calles de nuestro asunto, protestando contra la incommunicación. ¿Por qué no lo hacen?”

ground against Ricardo to some extent but it came to the point where his perspective won out as she had to convey his personal bias to the socialists. Even though he was in jail, he held a level of authority as both the leader of the organization and simply as a man, and overpowered her viewpoint on the issue even as a person who directly interacted with members of the organization. The party’s patriarchal structure kept her down as a leader and prevented her from leading the PLM’s policy. Rather, she remained as a mediator between the “correct” male viewpoint from inside the jail and the “incorrect” female viewpoint outside the jail.

Lucía too had her own ideological issues with Ricardo in her letters to her stepfather. In addition to having difficulties with the socialists, there was also a split that emerged within the organization itself. In late 1908, the party split among an ideological divide between the members who were more moderate and those who were more radical as the junta was breaking up over the question of anarchism. Flores Magón perceived former fellow founders of the party, Antonio Villarreal and Manuel Sarabia, as not political enough to the cause, and as he moved ever closer to anarchism, he wrote them off as fellow partisans.54 This issue emerged in several letters between Ricardo and Lucía, as Lucía was communicating with Manuel, even after Ricardo decided he no longer belonged to the organization. He explained to her that “those of us who stay are very enthusiastic and determined” implying that the others were completely the opposite.55 He was defining the party from inside the jail and he defined who would be part of it or not. But perhaps more importantly, Ricardo continued to impose his ideas

54 Albro, 109.
and influence upon Lucía just as he had with María in regards to the socialists. He told her outright that he forbid her interacting with Manuel, claiming that “if you wish to continue writing to Manuel, do it; but you will make Ricardo suffer, like you have made him suffer this time.” He had control over her in their father-daughter relationship. She did not want to disappoint him and she later did cut off communication with Manuel. Lucía was still inferior in the relationship that they had between one another, and although the party’s ideology preached female liberation, emotional and political obligations made them act otherwise.

Ricardo and the inherent patriarchal structure of the PLM limited Lucía and María’s participation during this period. The correspondence between these party members placed these women in median positions between the world that Ricardo perceived and the reality outside out of his jail cell. They negotiated between these two worlds, serving him in pursuing his vision. Even beyond the letters, Ricardo took advantage of his association with these women. He published articles in another PLM publication, *Libertad y Trabajo*, under their names. They served as pseudonyms for him, as a way for him to get his voice out. Yet his voice was very different from theirs. He used their names, but their own voices and their own viewpoints were not expressed as there was no opening or opportunity in the organization for them to present their perspectives. Both Lucía and María valued their association with Ricardo and the party, but the association that they had in this period was almost consistently secondary. This

56 Ricardo Flores Magón to Lucía Norman, December 6, 1908, accessed May 5, 2011, Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón, http://www.archivomagon.net/ObrasCompletas/Correspondencia/Cor284.html “Si quieres seguir escribiendo a Manuel hazlo; pero harás sufrir a Ricardo, como lo haz hecho sufrir esta vez.”

was especially true in this moment of crisis as Ricardo presented María with an opportunity to be involved, yet the opportunity was a muted one that was beneath the public eye.

María’s involvement in smuggling out the 1908 revolutionary plan

Just as the women wrote these letters to Ricardo and vice versa, the party was planning on making the revolution that they hoped to bring to Mexico finally a reality. The plan for the revolution, however, would have to be smuggled out of the jail where Ricardo was residing. The same top-down leadership style that existed between Ricardo, Lucía and María throughout the course of the correspondence was also evident here in this specific situation. María had to serve as the mediator once again between inside the jail and the city of Los Angeles outside of it, but in this specific instance she performed a slightly different role. No longer was she distantly writing and exchanging letters with him. Rather she was critical in making sure that the revolutionary outline that Ricardo drew up made its way outside of the jail.

This outline for the revolution of 1908 that María later helped release consisted of a master plan that would bring around a series of rebellions throughout the country. It would bring together liberal groups from all over Mexico who would come together to rise up against the Díaz government at the same time.58 Ricardo was once again the mastermind behind the party’s plans in this instance, as he single-handedly created and wrote up the revolutionary plan from jail. He was hopeful that uprisings would take place along the border due to the influence the group had with the Mexican American population, as well as in Veracruz, because the party had success there in earlier years.

58 Albro, 100.
When he sent the revolutionary plan out in 1908, María took full responsibility in making sure it became reality.

Ethel Duffy Turner was an American woman who was present when María acted upon the task at hand. Ethel was one of the Americans involved with party politics and served as co-editor of *Regeneracion*’s English-language section. Her, María, and Elizabeth Trowbridge, a Bostonian libertarian socialist, often visited the prisoners in jail when they could, especially when the revolutionaries could see anyone besides their lawyers. Ethel wrote how the three women plus Ethel’s husband, John Kenneth Turner, met María outside of the jail, and once they entered, María directly sat down in front of Ricardo. In that moment, Ethel described how “just as we had passed, María let her bag fall open and when she bent down what had fallen out, Elizabeth and I, on both sides of her, hid her movement with her skirts.” At that specific instance, “María took the edge of the paper that Ricardo Flores Magón had passed under a crack between the lattice and the floor, and in the next instance, the paper was in her bag.” Her and the others left the jail where she successfully brought the revolutionary plan out of the jail, and gave it to Enrique (Ricardo’s brother) so that the document could be followed as imagined by Ricardo. María took on a position that was once again between others, particularly other male members, who lead and made decisions for the party. It was up to her to ensure that

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59 Ibid. 92.
60 Rosa Castro, “Galeria del Mundo: Ethel Duffy Turner, Precursora de la Revolucion Mexiucana,” *El Día*, April 27, 1966, 3, Ethel Duffy Turner Papers, Carton 1, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, California. Turner writes that “Justamente cuando nos pasaba, María dejó caer su bolso abierto, y cuando se agacho como para recoger lo que de el se había salido, Elizabeth y yo a ambos lados de ella, ocultamos con nuestras faldas los movimientos que ella hacía.” Later on, she describes that “María tomó la orilla de un papel que Ricardo Flores Magon hacía pasar bajo una rendija que había entre la celosía y el piso, y al siguiente instante, el papel estaba en su bolso.”
these essential transactions to pursue the PLM’s goals, such as bringing about revolutionary change in Mexico, were possible.

The planned revolution of 1908 did not take place as planned, and it would not be until late 1910 when the revolution in Mexico would finally begin. A series of arrests took place along the border, yet rebellions did occur in Viesca and Las Vacas, Coahuila in Mexico. Despite the few uprisings, the arrests continued to happen and the revolution ultimately failed mainly because the authorities intercepted the revolutionary plan.  

Although the revolution failed, María’s participation in an instance such as this demonstrated at once her continued involvement and dedication to the party’s cause as well as the secondary position in the party that she held. She put her life on the line to smuggle out the revolutionary plans just as she made herself a target writing the letters to Ricardo in jail. These actions facilitated the continuance of the party’s stated goals of bringing about the end of dictatorship to Mexico, yet it was hardly recognized by the men deeply involved with the party, signaling a gendered hierarchy that existed in the organization. Her position behind the scenes in serving men perpetuated gender roles promoting an obvious hierarchical structure that the party sought to deny. The party wanted a mutual beneficial relationship between the two sexes, yet it was one-sided.

Radicalization of the party and the women in the public eye in 1912

The United States government freed the male revolutionaries in 1910, right as the Mexican Revolution began just south of the border. The struggle was not over for the PLM and in 1911, the male leadership of the party time of Ricardo, Librado Rivera,

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61 The planned revolution of 1908 is discussed briefly in Gomez-Quiñones, *Sembradores*, 33-34 and also mentioned in Albro, 100-101.
Anselmo L. Figueroa, and Enrique Flores Magón published two new manifestos, supplanting the one from 1906. The first one addressed to the “workers of the world” provided background on the revolutionary situation of Mexico at the time and denounced the Anti-Reelection Party of Francisco Madero, who was the main opponent to Díaz, for being intertwined with wealthy interests. It pointed out that the revolution was a class struggle and that that could not be denied. Later in the year, another party plan exhibited how the party had transformed and explicitly targeted private property as the issue which created inequalities at all levels. The party’s focus became broader and rather than specifically targeting Díaz, villainized authority as a whole. Instead of reforms, the solution would be throwing off authority, bringing about complete structural change including workers cooperatives where giving workers agency. These new communities would consist of men and women in assembly who would determine procedures and actions together. The organization created a platform that thoroughly established them as adopting anarchism by advocating for the overthrow of the state. It also pushed for the incorporation of both sexes into the decision-making of a future authority-less society. These manifestos set a new tone for the party and showed their continued dedication to the revolutionary cause, leading it into another crisis and marking a turning point for the women, and especially Lucía. Their public involvement in activism began to bring them out of the shadows as intermediary figures serving the male

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63 Ibid., 120-125.

leaders, and instead set a precedent where female partisans could be politically autonomous and independent within the organization.

This involvement on the part of the women came about from another one of the party’s attempted revolts, but this time the revolt occurred much closer to home. The party decided in 1911 to attack northern Baja California, and hoped that this attack would spark other similar worker revolts throughout Mexico. The revolution that started late in the year before brought about increased excitement and involvement in the PLM by international anarchist and socialist groups, as well as by labor unions, all of whom donated funds for arms to facilitate the rebellion. The party captured Mexicali on January 29, 1911 and Tijuana on May 9, 1911. The party’s capture of these towns ended up unsuccessful and Mexican federal forces eventually defeated the PLM and allies in the region. Not only had the PLM angered the Mexican government, the United States government also took issues with the revolt. The U.S. federal court tried the Flores Magón brothers, Figueroa, and Rivera as well as three Americans for again violating neutrality laws. The court only convicted the male Mexican leaders and sought to keep him contained so as not to commit another revolt. The party’s female members worked together to counter this and to ensure his freedom. They emerged together to engage in overt protest out of another moment that tested the party’s stability.

During June of 1912, the United States District Court was the site of this highly visible activism led by Lucía Norman. Inside the courtroom she called Peter Martin, a

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66 MacLachlan, 41.
Mexican spy who was a witness, a coward and threatened to kill him. When the court officially convicted the men later in the month on June 25 to McNeill Island Penitentiary in Washington, she took her anger and converted it into political action. Fleeing down the steps of the courthouse, she joined the crowd congregating outside and called for revenge on officers of the law. Lucía, then accompanied by Anselmo Figueroa’s daughter Mercedes, took charge of a protest of 2,000 protesters in the Los Angeles Plaza composed of revolutionaries, socialists, anarchists, and unionists. Female partisans in the crowd prominently, such as María, wore red ribbons in support of the anarchists on their chests. Lucía led the protesters through the streets of Los Angeles chanting in support of “Libertad y Tierra” (“Land and Liberty”). The police eventually called the occurrence a riot – which according to the Los Angeles Examiner was “one of the wildest riots witnessed on the streets of Los Angeles” as “many of the women during the riot wielded hat pins with painful effect.” The police beat many of the protesters as they resisted. At the end, the police arrested thirteen men and five women, including the “girl leader” Lucía who told the police to stand their ground as they pushed her into a jail cell. The press elevated her from an unknown female supporter of the group to someone who they literally mentioned as a “leader.”

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leaders were at the center of attention for their rebellion, her actions shifted the focus
towards her overt, public activism.

A few days after the protest, Lucía continued to be at the center of attention for
her actions. Her and her fellow co-rioters appeared in front of Justice Young for
arraignment where she sat quietly to hear the charges that she was about to face. María
was also present along with other Mexican women, men, and supporters from the
Industrial Workers of the World. The judge decided at the end of the arraignment that
bail would be set for each of them at $500.\textsuperscript{70} The party used Re
gen\'{a}ción as a way to
gather funds for those who had trouble with the court, and Lucía was no exception. She
eventually paid off her bail and faced no charges thereafter. The demonstration that she
led left a lasting impact from that moment on and gained her notoriety in the party. Lucía
no longer simply partook in party politics on the periphery, but took on an active role as a
female party member during the Mexican Revolution while in the United States. Unlike
the concept of the soldadera who followed her man while fighting, there were other
women like Lucía who served an active role as precursors, propagandists, and political
activists as she did in 1912.\textsuperscript{71} She defended men who she thought were unjustly
convicted for attempting to bring about liberation and freedom to Mexico through
revolution, ideals that she held herself.

What happened in June 1912 was not possible even a few years earlier in the
party and was a direct result of the changing gender roles occurring within the PLM.

\textsuperscript{70} “Ardor Cooled on Steel Bars,” \textit{The Los Angeles Times}, June 28, 1912, pg. II7, accessed August 11, 2010,
http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=347077912&sid=1&Fmt=10&clientId=1561&RQT=309&VName=HNP
\textsuperscript{71} Anna Macías, \textit{Against All Odds: The Feminist Movement in Mexico to 1940}. (Westport and London:
Greenwood Press, 1982), 40 and 49.
Lucía and María slowly gained influence over the course of the first crisis between 1907 and 1910, even as they supported and served Ricardo. This crisis that occurred the second time the federal court convicted the male members provided another opening for the women to take charge when otherwise the men would be the ones to gain attention and rally supporters. As the men were in a period of hopelessness, the women seized upon the opportunity and secured control of the party.

Conclusion

By 1914, the members of the party solidly thought of themselves as anarchistic. During this time, María and Ricardo along with Enrique and his wife Teresa, settled on a communal farm near Los Angeles where they attempted to practice out the anarchism that they preached. However, as before, the rhetoric did not fit the party’s actions. Although the women and men did farm work together, the men wrote for the party’s newspaper while the women cleaned, cooked, and prepared *Regeneración* to be mailed to its subscribers. There were still inequalities in the organization between women and men, each serving their own traditionally prescribed gender roles.

This proved to be quite ironic as the party’s ideology on women, albeit not fully liberatory in nature, did promote equality between the sexes. The women in reality were consistently on the periphery of the party’s activities. Only through a series of crises did women gradually gain real participation and a level of partial equality in the organization. The first imprisonment of male leaders gave María and Lucía intermediary positions where they served Ricardo to ensure that his revolutionary ideas and plans were followed

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through. The actions of Lucía and other women marked the beginning of a turning point in 1912, however it would take at least a half decade later for women to achieve the equal roles that the PLM ideology preached. There would have to be another series of predicaments that would force the women ever more into the public sphere to the point where they would eventually lead and control the party, and that was indeed what took place in the years thereafter.
Chapter 2: The Intensification of Crises and the Ever-Growing Importance of the Women in the PLM, 1915-1922

By 1915, María and Lucía were resilient in the midst of a variety of crises affecting the organization. The PLM lost significant economic support after the 1912 arrest and imprisonment of Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón, as well as Librado Rivera. This was mainly due to the developing perception of that organization as too extreme politically. No longer was this ideology confined just to reforms within Mexico or in regards to the now-dethroned Díaz, but it took on a much broader scope. The women (as well as the party) embodied a politics of worldwide social revolution on the part of workers everywhere against the elites and the institutions associated with them. This viewpoint, however, placed them further on the radical fringe. As a result, there was a lack of funds to drive the party’s efforts. This situation forced them and other women into the spotlight to ensure that their party did not collapse.

This chapter examines how the women of the PLM struggled to keep the party functioning and acquired greater roles as leaders of the organization, increasing their influence as women. At the same time, the party’s male leaders still placed the women within a gendered hierarchy. First, the female partisans participated actively in fundraising to keep the party’s mouthpiece on Mexico and on anarchism – Regeneración – alive. They promoted the paper by forcing themselves into the public spotlight, yet they also fell into socially acceptable positions of what women were to do by caring and supporting from the outside in. Secondly, in 1916 the federal government struck the Flores Magón brothers again with arrest and trial for the third time, sparking involvement from Lucía and María on the sidelines, gaining them considerable attention from the
English-language media at the time. Third, political openings such as this and previous crises provided a forum for women to write more often publicly in *Regeneración* and to protest independently from the male members. Fourth and lastly, the growing involvement on the part of these women gave them considerable attention, causing the U.S. government to indict María twice, in order to limit her growing influence and power over the organization, just as they had in regards to the male members in the various crises. All the while, the women’s participation took place during broader events and trends affecting the United States at the time such as at the end of Progressive Era, in the midst of World War I, and at the beginning of the Red Scare.

These periods clearly created a distinction between who fit into the American nation and who did not, and women, particularly during the Progressive Era, were to move from the private to public sphere, but the expectations towards immigrant women by politically-active, protestant reformers were decidedly different. They were to be cleaned up, assimilated, and emerge slowly in the political arena. Marfa and Lucía moved into the public sphere, but they were different in their overt, performative radicalism advocating for anarchist revolution rather than reform with their bodies and their voices, both vocally and through the written word. Thus they actively played the role of both partisan radical and woman. As a result of their actions in the public eye, they were at once being empowered gaining more independence and prominence in the organization than before, while at the same time fitting into a gendered structure within the PLM that resisted their rise in the public sphere until it was absolutely necessary.

**The PLM’s economic straits and the increased presence of female fundraising**
María and Lucía found themselves in a party in transition. The PLM was rapidly losing support. Not only was the Mexican Revolution going down a path different than the members of the party – male and female – originally planned, but this new direction shifted the way the party’s sympathizers viewed the role of the party. The revolution did not bring about a social revolution, implementing drastic change as the party had previously advocated. Rather it turned into a prolonged conflict between various actors who all had different visions of Mexico. Those who once supported the party now viewed it as having an unrealistic approach for solving the country’s problems, especially as the party became more radical and publicly anarchistic since 1911, in opposition to capitalism, with large.73 Former supporters who were not anarchists found it difficult to continue on with the party’s newly declared ideology. The party denied supporting new leaders like Venustiano Carranza, even as another Mexican anarchist group, the Casa del Obrero Mundial, did.74 The PLM did not have the advantage of being within the country and was increasingly losing its clout inside the nation. This lack of support resulted in a lack of economic support that they once had. The PLM needed to regain its ground not solely on the basis of obtaining funds, but in reappearing and appealing to the public in a different light.

The lifeline of the party from the very beginning had always been the male-dominated and male-written *Regeneración*. If the publication of the newspaper was to cease, then the party would be in danger. The publication began with Ricardo at the turn of the century and he was always a controlling force of the newspaper, frequently serving

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74 MacLachlan, 52.
as editor. It disseminated the PLM’s ideals to their supporters at home in Mexico and
within the United States. From the beginning, it was clear that men (such as Ricardo)
controlled the newspaper. Women had little power within the newspaper and they wrote
very few articles until 1915 when the women used the paper as a critical means to
demonstrate their own gender politics inside the organization.

The female members of the party took the lead in defending and saving their party
in these hard economic times. An all female branch of the PLM, Luz y Vida, formed in
November 1915 by María Juarez, Micaela Grijalva, Elisa Martínez, Carmen Mendrano,
and Benita and Carmen Talavera. The women created the group with the explicit intent
of raising funds for the organization, and for Regeneración in particular.75 Over the next
several years, they planned a variety of events that brought together the Mexican
American community in Los Angeles to support the newspaper. One dance had a live
orchestra and sold tamales, refrescos, sandwiches, and enchiladas in late November of
1915. All of this was to support a “noble and just cause that is the cause of the poor.” In
an advertisement for the dance, the group wrote that by attending the dance, “we won’t
leave our selfless compañeras of Luz y Vida alone in their efforts to sustain the fight of
the poor against the rich, to be free and content.”76 Benefits such as this served much

75 María de Juarez, “Grupos,” Regeneración. Number 211. November 6, 1915, Archivo Electrónico
Ricardo Flores Magón, accessed February 3, 2011, http://www.archivomagon.net/Periodico/Regeneracion/CuartaEpoca/PDF/e4n211.pdf ; Emma M. Pérez,
experiences of women within the organization.
more than simply as fundraisers for the newspaper, but demonstrated the efforts of female party members to the Mexican American public that the women indeed actively involved themselves in maintaining the political message of the party.

Yet, it cannot be denied that this fundraising was clearly a gendered act. The paper never mentioned the role of men in raising money for the organization, nor was it evident that men ever raised funds themselves. There was an expectation by female partisans that the men led and were responsible for the orchestration of the party. In the founding statement of Luz y Vida, the women wrote that “all women, like us, are convinced that the duty of women is to be at the side of men, that in order to liberate humanity, they need to ignite all the intelligent workers of the land.”

They internalized the gendered structure of the organization, which although supposedly based upon mutual equality according to party rhetoric, was not equal. The women knew that men were the ones to officially write and represent what the party stood for. Fundraising was explicitly a woman’s act that was socially acceptable and fell into expected norms of what women could do politically as supporters and less as instrumental party members. The women took up domestic acts of cooking and serving as their “political” act to maintain the struggle of the “poor against the rich.” Their role was purely symbolic. What they were truly doing was buttressing the party from the outside in.

It translates as: “Los que quieran pasar varias horas agradables y al mismo tiempo ayudar a una causa noble y justa corno es la Causa del Pobre.” Later on, it mentions: “No dejemos solas a nuestras abnegadas compañeras del Grupo LUZ y VIDA en sus esfuerzos por sostener la lucha entablada por el pobre contra el rico, para ser libre y feliz.”

Maria de Juarez, “Grupos,” Regeneración. Number 211. November 6, 1915, Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón, accessed February 3, 2011, http://www.archivomagon.net/Periodico/Regeneracion/CuartaEpoca/PDF/e4n211.pdf This article argues that: “todas las mujeres que, como nosotras, esten convencidas de que el deber de la mujer es estar al lado del hombre en la lucha que, por la emancipación humana, tienen entablada todos los proletarios inteligentes de la Tierra.”
María Talavera was not absent from these gendered fundraising efforts. *Regeneración* reported in early 1916 that she was instrumental in collecting money in the Los Angeles Plaza for like-minded revolutionaries Máximo Castillo and Jesus San Martín, who were prisoners at the time in El Paso, Texas. Talavera’s presence placed her, like the members of *Luz y Vida*, in a new and obvious role of women being integral to the party, but in a certain acceptable position as she was still not the center of attention, but these men were. By raising funds, she raised awareness for and cared about the party. Castillo and San Martín whom she was defending, according to the newspaper, were “true revolutionaries” and therefore deserved to be supported.\(^\text{78}\) The divisiveness and increasing radicalism of the party were evident as the revolution continued abroad in Mexico, placing those into either supporting the “right,” just cause of the PLM or otherwise going down the wrong path for Mexico and the revolution. By positioning herself as a supporter of Castillo and San Martín, she was on the correct side of the issue, as a loyal female partisan.

These loyalties and gender expectations played out literally in a couple of theatrical performances that the party wrote and performed within the city. New ideas emerged of how to support *Regeneración* beyond *Luz y Vida*’s dances. On December 30, 1916 and later on April 7, 1917, the PLM and its associated groups (including *Luz y Vida*) held two “Artistic-Literary Evenings” that the paper promoted as having revolutionary art, poetry, music, and dance. The highlight of these evenings each time

was the play *Tierra y Libertad*.\textsuperscript{79} It utilized similar party rhetoric as before of a social conflict between the rich landowners and the poor workers in Mexico. The play written by Flores Magón, was a fictional representation of what the party experienced, how he perceived the situation in Mexico, and most importantly how he perceived the political contributions of men and women in the group. The use of theater was not unique to this political group alone, but used as a way to bring in supporters to other causes such as through the workers theater movement of the 1930s that brought plays to the workers and promoted a working class labor identity.\textsuperscript{80} Plays often served as a way to attract and unify people around a common political objective.

This particular play put on by the PLM represented the simultaneous existence between involvement in the public sphere and the reality of gender difference embedded within the party’s structure. Both Talavera and Norman featured prominently in the play as actresses, acting out their public, yet still secondary role as partisans. Lucía played the role of Marta, and María was Rosa, both of whom were acting as the devoted wives of two working class men. Their characters demonstrate dedication to the cause of the emancipation of the working class, but appear to do so because of their status as supporters of their husbands. Don Julian, a *hacendado*, seeks the affection of Marta (Lucía’s role) and wants her to be with him. However, she devotes her life to her husband Juan, complaining that he works too much and she cannot do more than bring him food. She explains that although she considers herself ignorant, she believes that it is


unjust that he works in misery while others who do nothing, live in comfort. Marta is at once the companion of Juan who simply cares for him as his wife, but she also demonstrates an evident political ideology. Her choice of not being with the hacendado goes beyond her love for husband, recognizing the inequalities of the society that she and her husband live within, and not wanting to partake in that class hierarchy. Marta makes her stance clear and places her life on the line as a result, creating an antagonistic relationship with her and Juan’s employer.

María’s character Rosa too plays two roles as companion and as an individual with a clearly defined ideology. She dies next to her husband in the last scene of the play shouting “Long live the Mexican Liberal Party! (All answer: long live!) Long live the anarchy! (All answer long live!) Long live Land and Liberty! (All answer: long live!) (Falls dead.)” Defending the party and its politics alongside her husband, she is taking an active role in the movement. Rosa places her life on the line and publicly dies for a just cause. Both of these characters in Tierra y Libertad – Marta and Rosa – portrayed not only Ricardo’s perception of Lucía and María (and women more generally in the organization), but also in a sense represented the ever-growing importance of these women. Their positions as actresses made the fiction that they were portraying real.

What appeared simply as a play to support Regeneración as a fundraiser was much more than that. It represented how the party was transforming and slowly recognizing women like Talavera and Norman.

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82 Ibid., 63-64. Rosa (María’s character) yells: “¡Viva el Partido Liberal Mexicano! (Todos contestan: ¡viva!) ¡Viva la Anarquía! (Todos contestan: ¡viva!) ¡Viva Tierra y Libertad! (Todos contestan: ¡viva!) (Cae muerta).”
The 1916 trial of Ricardo and Enrique: crisis and further recognition of women

Fundraising served as an entrée for the women in the latter years of the party, providing them with further access to disseminate the values of the party both in Los Angeles and elsewhere through other means. However, the continued arrest of male members pushed both María and Lucía to the forefront once again, protesting their arrest. As of 1916, four years passed since the last arrest of Ricardo and Enrique, as well as Librado Rivera in the federal court for violating laws of neutrality. The time came where they once again were targets of the government. The men were obviously the centerpiece of the case, but this case was about much more than them, it was about the public inclusion and recognition of women in the party in this specific moment. Talavera and Norman publicly displayed their resistance. They were once again supporters on the sidelines, but their actions in the case drew them more attention as integral members to the party, especially in moments of crisis as this one.

A grand jury indicted the Flores Magón brothers and William C. Owen for the content of Regeneración on February 18, 1916. The court indicted them on three counts of violating section 211 of the Federal Penal Code of 1910. The specific section declared that any material that was “obscene, lewd, or lascivious, and every filthy book, pamphlet, paper, letter, writing, print, or other publication of an indecent character” was material that could not be transported via mail.\(^83\) Several articles written by these men in the party’s newspaper fell squarely into that description within the eyes of the American government for attacking the leadership of Venustiano Carranza in Mexico. Although

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previous court cases affecting the PLM did not target the party’s ideology, this one targeted their ideas rather than simply their actions. All of these ideas from the party’s paper in one way or another dealt with its perspective on Carranza, the head of Mexico’s preconstitutional government. He was set on the creation of a new constitution for the country, replacing one state with another. The court noted select passages from several articles published over the course of late 1915. They showed that these male PLM leaders saw this as inherently violating their ideals as they sought the abolition of the state. The first count charged the defendants of “vile and filthy substance and language” in how they depicted Wilson as working with Carranza in bringing “American capitalists” to Mexico, subjugating the Mexican people to them just as Díaz did. The second count went against Enrique and Ricardo for writing about the Carrancistas as reformists, not bringing about actual change, and how they deserved to be disrespected. This arose out of Carranza filing a complaint against Flores Magón and Regeneración with the postal service for inciting unrest along the border and encouraging Mexican Americans to turn to violence, resisting American authority. The basis of the third and last count involved comments that advocated destroying the various representatives of authority in Mexico including the clergy and elites.

Due to the arrest and ensuing court case of the men, the women of the organization came together to convince others that the government persecuted the party. Luz y Vida, for example, reemerged publicly in their support of the party in April, but this time not for the purposes of raising financial support, but rather for support from United

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84 MacLachlan, 58.
85 Ibid., 60-61.
States President Woodrow Wilson. They utilized *Regeneración* again as the newfound platform for female voices in the party, and wrote that the only crime that Ricardo and Enrique committed was supporting the innocent. The organization argued that what they wanted was justice and not for their case to be simply forgotten. Perhaps the strongest statement to Wilson made was “we will wait for your response, so that the foolish don’t silence our voices until justice has been made.”

The female partisans made their stance clear to the public, whether it was to the readers of *Regeneración* or the president of the United States. They cared for their organization and what it stood for, not standing idly by as the ones who they not only shared thoughts with, but loved, were incarcerated.

This notion of radical thoughts intersecting with gender truly was powerful in this period and especially during the trial. To be anarchist was to be the complete antithesis of what American society represented. This scared the public, but what frightened them even more were female anarchists. Progressive Era reformers after 1910 directed their efforts towards social protection regulating what women could and could not do. They needed a way to identify why Mexicans and women like María, Lucía, and others expressed strong political sentiments and explained the reason that Mexicans were political was due to them not “progressing” to Protestant notions of asceticism, antisepsis, and control of the body’s passions. Their rebelliousness supposedly came from socially constructed notions of them having lower intelligence and moral constitution.

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87 Dye, 4.

could not rationally think out their decisions or their thoughts on the world because they were supposedly biologically inferior. Thus they were more much more extreme in their views and “radical.”

Similar sentiments regarding public female radicals were extremely evident in the English-language media of the time. While focusing on the trial of Ricardo and Enrique, the Times wrote the majority of an article in June not about them, but rather about Lucía as a witness. The piece brought her into the spotlight for the first time since she led the large protest against the federal court in 1912 in regards to the PLM’s violation of neutrality laws. This time around, the issue at hand was her open defiance in the courtroom. The assistant district attorney questioned if she knew who the editors of Regeneración were and thus who was responsible for the “obscene” material of the articles. In response and after several times ignoring the question, she stomped her foot saying “I will not answer.” Finally after Judge Trippet threatened that she could be sent to jail for not responding, she noted that she saw Ricardo writing in the office of the paper and reading his editorials, admitting that he in fact was in charge of editing the newspaper.89 She maintained a level of silent resistance for a period of time that “has its own contours, its own texture” and revealed a clear opposition to the unjust persecution by the court.90 Norman defied the court, demonstrating her own political investment in the party, just as she had earlier in 1912. The paper picked up instantly in that specific instance of defiance, and later on as well. A few days later when the court declared

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Ricardo and Enrique guilty, the *Times* reported shock that the “firebrand” Lucía did not demonstrate in any way. Rather she simply clutched her stepfather’s hand and appeared to be distressed.\(^1\) The court gave Ricardo a one year sentence and $1000 fine, whereas Enrique received three years and the same fine.\(^2\) Another crisis did indeed hit the party, throwing the main male party leaders into prison. What emerged however was the rising importance of women in the PLM, particularly those intimately invested and intertwined with the party’s overall cause. Their marginalized status on the periphery of the party and not at the immediate center of attention did not set them back. The party appeared to be losing momentum, however Lucía and María, as well as others, were not ready to let it go because of their commitment to the movement.

**Re-emergence of activism in the spotlight: writings and protest**

In this period, the women emerged in other ways, oftentimes completely independent from the male party leadership. Lucía gained prominence not only for her actions around the court cases targeting the party, but for her presence as a writer in *Regeneració*. Beyond writing, both her and María came together in protest in the Los Angeles Plaza in 1917 once again reigniting a spirit of resistance within the Mexican American community. This gendered resistance not only represented the ideology and thus radicalism of the party, but questioned the patriarchy of the prevailing institutions, including that of the PLM. Their presence as women was much more pronounced than before, and also became more normalized. Although the community and the city at large

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first perceived them as being very different earlier on, they later came to be accepted to a broader extent, albeit still considered politically different due to their extreme political beliefs and actions.

Female involvement in the paper, as stated before, became more commonplace as crises deepened, and the male leaders were either in trial or imprisoned. Lucía solidified her position as a political activist and journalist through a variety of articles in the organization’s paper that became commonplace over the course of 1916. In most of her writing, she wrote in detail particularly about class distinctions on a broad scale and about the hierarchies that existed in either Mexico or the United States. There needed to be a return to a state of nature where all human beings were equal. This was only done through an active emancipation of society of those who were “slaves” against the bourgeoisie, the ruling elites.  Although these views presented were very much the ideas of the party as a whole, they were also clearly her own, and there was little, if any reference to the arrest or trial of Enrique and Ricardo that year. This was definitely due at least in part to the federal court’s attack on the leaders creating once again another power vacuum. Whereas female writers to Regeneración were extremely rare when the party originally moved their operations to Los Angeles in 1907, now they had considerable prominence. Although the party emphasized in its earlier years in Los Angeles that women were equal in all ways, they did not act upon their ideology.

Women still were second-class partisans, however much less so than before. They now were actually were the ones who were creating and dictating the goals of the party, not solely the men, and therefore became recognized figures of authority. Not only did Lucía contribute as a writer, but so did Enrique’s daughters Juanita and Estella Arteaga, who wrote as many if not more articles to the publication. Estella specifically kept the readership up to date regarding the sequence of events that were taking place abroad in Mexico, and of course providing the party’s perspective on these occurrences.

Writing was one way of demonstrating activism yet protests played an important role as well in bringing these women into the public spotlight. The *Los Angeles Times* reported in April of 1917 that María and Lucía “reappeared on the soap boxes of the Plaza, and with fiery utterances have again started to incite the local Mexicans.” Resurgence of female-incited protest brought back memories of the past. The newspaper referenced the 1912 protest that Lucía led once again, attributing to the effect that it had in regards to bringing out thousands of predominantly Mexican supporters. This time around, María was “exhorting a gathering of perhaps 500 Mexicans, Sunday afternoon, while Lucille Norman, her stepdaughter, circulated throughout the crowd, distributing literature.” María supposedly “was using vile epithets and vituperation in discussing the government of the United States.”94 Though this demonstration did not gather as many supporters as years before, it still inspired contempt and fear. Their radical activism appeared once again in the spotlight, beyond just party supporters or even the fellow Mexicans there, allowing others in Los Angeles by reading the *Times* to know about

these women. What they saw were two women who played out their full political independence in the public sphere, contrary to the modesty promoted by women in the Progressive Movement. It was them in this instance who gained attention, not the party’s men. No distinction was made in the paper of their gender beyond them simply being party members. The party’s feminization was more evident than before: women were becoming the voice of the party within *Regeneración*, the face of the party through protest, and soon they were the de facto leaders of the party.

**The first indictment: The United States of America v. María Magón and E. Zavala**

María was one such de facto leader – an empowered woman who was the public face of her party. In 1918, the United States District Court indicted Talavera and Epigmenio Zavala, another member of the PLM, in front of Judge Bledsoe. The main issue in the case was that the state perceived her as being actively involved in circulating an incendiary article – a new party manifesto that advocated for radical structural changes in the world – from the party’s paper *Regeneración*. It was Ricardo and another PLM member, Librado Rivera, who wrote the article and who were already in a trial that same year because of it. However, it did not matter that it was not her that wrote the article, but what was important to the government was that this was an opportunity to take away power from María. She became the new leader of the organization during this time and as a result was in the public eye, while Ricardo was already facing his own issues with the government. Part of her role as leader was her position as the editor of the party’s newspaper and therefore what the party disseminated to its readership. She was able to

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95 The United States of America v. María Magón and E. Zavala, Case 1489 (United States District Court, Southern District of California 1918) National Archives, Riverside, California.
escape any incidents with the court beforehand that Ricardo had not, but finally the
government would not let her go as a radical woman – the first such woman of the PLM
to be indicted. Her movement to the front of the organization tested past gender norms of
the party plus placed her firmly in the public sphere.

She received her indictment squarely during World War I. The court claimed that
María violated a series of laws, all of them being recently passed in the past ten years,
and two of them emerging out of World War I. The main article and party manifesto in
question in the indictment argued that World War I at the time was the right moment for
a social revolution of the masses against the elites. Government, the article expressed,
was tyrannical as it did not protect the weak, but rather the wealthy. Anarchism was the
model for dismantling tyrannical government and this “tyranny” was to be replaced
instead with “freedom.” The article appeared to contain much of the same rhetoric as
before, but the United States just began its involvement in the war and felt like dissenting
voices within their own borders was a threat. The U.S. joined the war in 1917 and
viewed the struggle as between democracy (like its own political system) and dictatorship
in the form of a country like Germany. Political identity was still dichotomized
between good and bad, loyal and disloyal. While the United States was fighting the
foreign Central Powers abroad (with Germany at its helm), the government attacked
foreigners – both literally and figuratively – at home.

The court used three laws against María, all of them recent, and two of them
emerging out of World War I. The Espionage Act of 1917 was one such law and it

96 “Manifiesto,” *Regeneración*, Number 262, March 16, 1918, 1.
explicitly laid out espionage as “information respecting the national defence with intent or reason to believe that the information to be obtained is to be used to the injury of the United States, or to the advantage of any foreign nation.” The punishment for anyone who participated in espionage would receive a fine of up to $10,000, time in prison for a maximum of twenty years, or even receive both consequences.98 This broadly-worded act provided the state with the power to arrest and to detain anyone within its borders, especially if it came through the form of print media. The content of this particular court case was under scrutiny as the court considered the “information” in both the manifesto and the letters that María distributed, to be a threat to the United States. “Information” was essential as a way for the female party members to get their voice out as was evident in the preceding years as part of their contributions to Regeneración.

Another similar law used against María in the midst of the war was the Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917. The act made it unlawful for any person to trade without a license with any individual who was considered an enemy or an ally of an enemy. Like the Espionage Act, it too focused on publications and made it illegal to print, or cause to be printed, in any foreign language, any item that demonstrated an opinion regarding policies of the United States or any country involved in World War I without filing a legal translation, which had to be approved before it was published. Anyone who violated the law faced up to one year in prison, a $500 fine, and was also placed in violation with the Espionage Act.99 As the new editor of Regeneración, Talavera was the target for publishing the paper. Just the fact that it targeted anyone who wrote in a

99 MacLachlan, 80.
“foreign language” according to the United States government showed that it indeed was targeting more than just Germans, the “enemy” of the war, but immigrants at large. The Mexican women within the party were directly affected by this as the majority of their communications were in Spanish, and María even had a Spanish interpreter within the court, proving that language was clearly an issue for her.100

The third law that the court declared that María violated was Section 211 of the Federal Penal Code of 1910. This was the same law that the Flores Magón brothers and William C. Owen violated in the 1916 district court case against them a few years before declaring that any obscene material could not be sent via the postal service.101 Like the other laws, it targeted written material and the party’s ideas. The state could easily decide what material it thought was undesirable and incriminate anyone involved with it as a result. This was extremely clear in this case against María, turning even the most widely-interpreted material into being viewed as indecent and labeling her as a “radical.”

The court specifically brought in the female party leader and attempted to make her involvement regarding the distribution of the new party manifesto clear. The grand jury provided a list of a number of letters that had been deposited in the mail, and supposedly discovered by the Post Office’s censors.102 It found several letters and used them against her as evidence. They showed that she played a vital role in the movement and was equally culpable as the male leaders Ricardo, Enrique, and Librado who were in the middle of their trial. The court explained that she explicitly broke the law as she circulated and deposited “in the Post Office establishment of the United States, for

100 The United States of America v. Maria Magón and E. Zavala, Case 1489 (United States District Court, Southern District of California 1918) National Archives, Pacific Region, Riverside, California.


102 MacLachlan, 94.
mailing and delivery to various persons whose names and places of residence…write and
cause to be written, and publish and cause to be published, an article containing false
reports and false statements.”

The first of such documentation the court showed as evidence against María (as
editor of the newspaper) was a letter signed by her to a person named Francisco Aonte
Ocasio San Juan from April 10, 1918. It stated how Regeneración could not be released
for lack of funds, and asked more or less for money. However, this is not what the court
had issue with. It was within the postscript of the letter where there was evidence made
public against her. She mentioned that the tyranny of Russia had not ended with the
Russian Revolution, but rather the tyranny continued on in the “Classic Republic of
Liberties, the model republic, the ‘United States.’” Although the court had issue with
the extremely broad reference to the U.S. in the “Manifiesto” earlier, it saw something of
this nature as a direct attack. She explicitly mentioned the country where she was
residing, arguing it as being corrupt, mocking the liberal ideals of the nation. Talavera’s
ideology was evident and now public, as she challenged the very foundations of the state.
This also showed that her position as a woman did not prevent or hinder her involvement
as an anarchist. The court tried to demonstrate through this letter that she was a threat,
and attempted to do the same via the second letter that it found.

The second letter was by Talavera to Leopoldo Valencia on April, 29, 1918. It
included several references to her responsibility in being the editor of the party’s
newspaper. The letter discovered by the court claims that “Lucia and I will stay here

103 The United States of America v. Maria Magón and E. Zavala, Case 1489
104 Ibid.
alone and we will fight until we can do so to continue Regeneración.”105 It provided evidence to the jury that she and Lucía were indeed actively involved in the party, although it was struggling. Her letter exclusively mentions them as the two women who were invested in maintaining the party and securing the power of the organization as the men face imprisonment. As such, the letter also claims that they were willing to keep the paper going no matter what, and by publishing it, she was to continue publishing pieces like this “Manifiesto.” Yet, more to the point of the indictment at hand against María was how she characterized World War I as meaningless to workers.106 World War I was the political project that the government was endeavoring in to bring perceived stability to the world, seeking to make it a “better” place for all. This direct accusation from her own words stated the opposite and clearly demonstrated her opinion on contemporary world affairs. She boldly claimed her views in a party that was less patriarchal than it was before 1915, marking change within the group.

The court also moved beyond her and featured one letter by Zavala asking for funds and containing the manifesto. Although this indictment was about bringing down other elements of the PLM, it ultimately targeted her as the focus, as a gendered radical. The court used coercion as a means to silence and eliminate the threat that she presented as a public and radical female. By the end of the indictment, as a result of resisting the nation’s dominance and violating each one of these laws, the court jailed María. Judge Bledsoe, overseeing the case, set her bail at $10,000.107 It appeared that she was to have the same fate as her partner, also in jail. The party was hard hit by the combination of

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105 Ibid.
106 MacLachlan, 94.
107 The United States of America v. Maria Magón and E. Zavala, Case 1489
laws used against them, and each one of the main leaders was now under bars. However, this was not the end of María’s issues.

**The second indictment: The United States of America v. María Magón et al.**

In August of 1918 there was another indictment against Talavera, and now this time there were more defendants beyond just her and Zavala. There was also Nicholas Senn Zogg and Raúl Palma (who was Lucía’s husband at the time). Bail for each, including María, was again set for $10,000. This indictment in many ways was a repeat of what occurred earlier in the previous case. The violations in this indictment were similar, however this time around the government realized they did not need to have as many laws to utilize against the defendants. Instead, the district court used only the Espionage Act, and within it, they together only violated three counts of the law.\(^{108}\) The court continued to use this advantageous law that emerged during the war. It loosely interpreted the law once again, especially in regards to the three counts that they were charged upon. They also once again targeted María’s agency in charge of publishing and distributing written material.

The first count considered the power of information once again and her actions in disseminating the party’s propaganda. It involved the “mailing and delivery of letters and circulars containing false reports and false statements which would interfere with the operations of the U.S. military, promote success of its enemies,” or causing insubordination.\(^{109}\) Like before, the circulation of written material was the issue and in fact it was the same publication – the manifesto written by Ricardo and Librado that the

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\(^{108}\) The United States of America v. Maria Magón et al., Case 1508 (United States District Court, Southern District of California 1918) National Archives, Pacific Region, Riverside, California.

\(^{109}\) Ibid.
court had problems with. The U.S. government continued to view the document, and María’s role in releasing it, as a direct attack. The government continued to use it to persecute the female and male members of the PLM, but this time they included more documents.

The court provided María’s “mailable” material as evidence again, with the manifesto inside as its first count against the defendants. María addressed an envelope to “La Protesta” in Lima, Peru. Inside, there was a similar message as before in the other case, as she and the others (such as Zogg and Palma) asked for money.\(^{110}\) This only demonstrated to the court that the party was, as they expected, near its end. María and Lucía did have considerable power and clout, as mentioned before, but it was the kind of power acquired out of desperation by the male leaders. The women knew that their leadership was valuable, but it was also temporary. However, this did not stop them from carrying out the message of the PLM. The court found a letter that could be interpreted in a variety of ways. María described conditions under the “Great War” in the United States almost as complete submission to “Mrs. Authority” claiming that even those who were “so called radicals” were afraid to communicate due to the climate at the time.\(^{111}\) She criticized the government that emerged with the war with such laws as the Espionage Act to suppress those involved in politics throughout the country. Ironically, it was that government who used such a law to indict her as she held a position in the public spotlight as a “radical.”

\(^{110}\) Ibid.

\(^{111}\) MacLachlan, 95.
The government portrayed itself as being injured by the information transmitted by Talavera and the others in the second and third counts of the indictment. The second count charged that they used disloyal and abusive language in regards to the government, flag, and military of the United States so as to bring them into contempt and disrepute by others. The third count argued that Talavera, Zavala, Zogg, and Palma “took part in advocating and urging treason, insurrection and forcible resistance to the laws of the United States.” One count focused more on language threatening American institutions, whereas the other had more of an emphasis on language supporting direct action. Yet, both focused on the party’s manifesto featured in Regeneración, showing that the court was still trying to attack this document for their own means, bringing down the new woman leader of the PLM. Both counts were also once again broad in scope to the charges used against Talavera and Zavala in the earlier indictment, and used against all of the defendants in the first charge in this case. She was still at the center of the various indictments as the target of the court and the others were included more as an afterthought. Thus the woman was now the central figure of this particular political struggle regarding the PLM, with the men on the sidelines.

The court in this indictment was very much like the court in the previous indictment, seeking to eliminate all related power to the PLM, with Talavera at the top, using what little evidence they had to bring charges against these individuals. María’s lawyer, Sakharam G. Pandit, argued to the court that the allegedly false information should be seen instead as matters of opinion. The court, unfortunately, had already

112 The United States of America v. Maria Magón et al., Case 1508
113 Ibid.
114 MacLachlan, 96.
made up its mind. He emphasized the use of freedom of speech, but it was obviously being ignored by the Espionage Act itself, which was silencing radicals like her throughout the country.

Near the end of 1918, María was in jail while the party was constantly shrinking as it lost its principle members. By November, the government released her from jail for the first time since she went to court for the first time that year.\textsuperscript{115} She obtained her release on $5,000 bail, pledged by Reuben T. Forrester and Thomas Strain, on November 13, 1918, only two days after the end of World War I.\textsuperscript{116} The Department of Justice finally declared that “it is by the court ordered, pursuant to a letter of authority from the Attorney General for the dismissal of this cause, that this cause be and the same is hereby dismissed.”\textsuperscript{117} As for the other PLM members in the cases, they faced different fates. Zavala fled Los Angeles, Zogg was in the process of serving a previously-assigned twenty-five year sentence, and Palma ultimately did nothing wrong. As for Ricardo and Librado Rivera, they were all serving substantial, practically lifelong prison terms.\textsuperscript{118} María tried to maintain the party, but the hardships she had through these indictments made it incredibly difficult.

**The aftermath of the indictments**

At the beginning of 1919, following María’s indictments and the war at the beginning of 1919, the United States was beginning to go down a new path. Russia was in the midst of its civil war, and elsewhere in the world there grew a fear of socialist Bolshevism, particularly in the United States. The First Red Scare was a departure from

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\textsuperscript{115} Barrera B., *Correspondencia I (1899-1918)*, 672.
\textsuperscript{116} MacLachlan, 96.
\textsuperscript{117} The United States of America v. Maria Magón et al., Case 1508
\textsuperscript{118} MacLachlan, 96.
the Progressive Movement in its conservativism, however it was similar in how it had a similar crusade for how society should be. It wanted to prevent society from falling into disorder, and so in part it connected this perceived “loyalty” to gender. Scores of groups like the National Nonpartisan League and the Daughters of the American Revolution defended the hierarchical, patriarchal order in light of fears of sexual and gender disorder connected with political disorder. These organizations, many of them female-driven, attacked the feminism and increased obvious movement towards female equality that both María and Lucía represented. There was the perception by the members of these groups that this deviance inherently undermined traditional values, and needed to be stopped. Talavera and Norman were such deviant individuals who did exactly that – they were in the public eye, took on leadership positions, and were unabashedly political. Although not explicitly stopped and rooted out by the U.S. government at the time, this new period signaled the end of their overt participation in the party.

However, their actual participation did not drop off; it just became less obvious as the fate of the PLM took a turn for the worse. The fourth court case against Ricardo, Enrique, and Librado, regarding the same counts as María, ruled him guilty and sent them initially to the federal penitentiary in McNeill Island, Washington in 1918 and later to Leavenworth, Kansas in 1919. As a result of Ricardo’s imprisonment, correspondence took off again between María and him between 1920 and 1922 as it had before between 1907 and 1910. In much of his letters to her, Ricardo expressed his desperation of knowing that he would be in prison for so long. In one such letter to her, he expressed

119 Nielsen, *Un-American Womanhood* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2001), 4
120 Albro, 146-147.
that “I feel for my María, Lucía, and Carlos who very names have the power of soothing my sorrows, and al[lev]iating the grayness of my existence with their grace and poesy.”¹²¹ Both of the women, as well as Lucía’s son Carlos provided not only hope, but a connection to the outside world.

Yet, perhaps the best description of what the women were going through at the time was evident in letters that Ricardo sent to a fellow radical and sympathizer of the party, Ellen White, who lived in New York at the time. He reflected to her in one such letter what he thought of them. In regards to Lucía, “she is daring and has a keen sense of justice. My ideals are her ideals.” Ricardo had similar thoughts regarding his wife saying that “she is very brave, and my ideals are hers. She loves what I write or what I say on the platform, and her applause is in grand part responsible for my endeavor in seeking becoming forms of expression.”¹²² Though his perspective presented a viewpoint that was not directly theirs, it still demonstrated how they fell within the party as members in its last few years. Like the play mentioned before, their gender roles played out in mixed ways. Ricardo saw them as companions, as in part secondary individuals, sharing his ideals. Yet, from another angle, he respected their independence and valiance throughout the years. The very fact that they held such ideals was a testament to their own chosen devotion to the cause of the PLM.

Conclusion

¹²¹ Barrera B. Correspondencia 2 (1919-1922), 238. Unfortunately the only letters that exist are from Ricardo to María, and not the other way around. The last mention of her from within the party are these letters.
¹²² Ibid., 204. Ricardo wrote to Ellen White (whose real name was Lilly Sarnoff), a New York anarchist and member of his defense committee, in considerable detail about his family. In fact, there are more letters found to her in these later years than to María and Lucía.
In late 1922, the death knell rang for the PLM with Ricardo’s death on November 21. His death shocked radicals as well as Mexicans in both Mexico and the United States. The Mexican-American community had an informal leader in Flores Magón who fought for what he saw as liberty abroad in Mexico and throughout the world. Though as presented here, it must be noted that it was not him, nor solely the male leaders like Enrique or Librado, who struggled in the later years of crises for the party’s ideals.

María and Lucía participated, fundraised, protested and put their life on the line in court on behalf of the party as female anarchists. Even until the very last years, she chose where Ricardo’s funeral was to be located. Hundreds of supporters came out to see his dead body at the Breese Brothers Mortuary in Los Angeles and later his body was taken to Mexico City. Both were conscious decisions on the part of María in her quest to remember Ricardo. The funerals were more than just a public remembrance of him, but a recognition of her in the public sphere. Although the papers showed her as the faithful widow, what they did not realize was what she did for the party itself throughout the years. Her presence alone at these events made her visible and made the legacy of the party visible as well. The death did change the lives of the women dramatically. María went back to Mexico and ended up living the last years of her life in Ensenada. Lucía died very shortly after the death of her stepfather in Mexico City. Their actions made the party more inclusive and forced the party to truly demonstrate its anarchistic ideals of freedom for all – women and men alike. While neither of them stayed in Los Angeles, however the memory of them remains in the newspapers that documented them, the

123 Albro, 149.
people that interacted with them and in the places where as Mexican women they made themselves known protesting injustice and promoting anarchism.
Chapter 3: Reframing the PLM through Gender

The narrative of María Talavera and Lucía Norman shifts the narrative of the Partido Liberal Mexicano. Histories of the PLM often show it as a party centered on the cult of personality of Ricardo Flores Magón. When historians include anyone else, they mention his brother Enrique, and other notable party members like Librado Rivera, Antonio Villarreal, Manuel Sarabia, and his brother Juan Sarabia. The men appear to be the only members that mattered. Contemporary literature on the PLM continues to focus on select events such as the 1907 arrest of party leaders for violating American neutrality laws and the 1911 seizure of Baja California, all as part of the struggle initially against the dictator of Mexico in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Porfirio Díaz, and later for a broader worldwide anarchist revolution.\footnote{Albro, Always a Rebel; MacLachlan, Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution; Gomez-Quiñones, Sembradores. All of these are the main secondary texts on Flores Magón and concentrate on central events within his life, focusing on him and less on the members of the party, not to mention the women.} There is no doubt that they obviously played a huge role and led the party. However, in light of the narrative presented here, the party was not solely an organization of men nor was it a group that thrived only on the work of men, but rather a group supported, sustained, and later led by women who held revolutionary ideas.

The literature pertinent to this topic on the Progressive Era, the Mexican Revolution, and particularly on the PLM, does not frequently make reference to gender and gender history, but rather draws from different historical perspectives such as historical materialism. This essay concentrates on gender to examine the constructed difference between men and women. Gender, as mentioned before, is a “constitutive element” of relationships in society based on differences that supposedly exist between
the sexes, and it is a way to focus on the importance of power in these relationships.\textsuperscript{127}

Whereas human genetics creates men and women into two different sexes, gender shows how these perceived distinctions affect how individuals should behave and act in society within a hierarchy with male privilege and female inferiority. Gender matters more than sex here as it relates more to the issue of power between the sexes, and in this instance the relationship between male and female members of the party. Since gender is a social construction, it is therefore constantly changing, and the narrative of Talavera and Norman’s ever-shifting and growing importance over time in the organization from the private sphere to the public sphere demonstrates this.

This chapter reframes the party narrative, considering the PLM no longer as a group revolving around a cult of personality (hence the term “magonistas” used for party members), but rather as one that had many people of importance to the organization. They each played their own respective part in pushing for the ideals of the party. The purpose of this chapter is to review the historiography on the PLM and the periods affiliated with it in the United States and Mexico, giving attention to their treatment of women. It considers their strengths as well as weaknesses of the literature, arguing that gender as presented in this paper as not only a way to examine the differences that existed between men and women in the party, but more importantly to show Talavera and Norman as women who were conscious revolutionary political actors in a male-dominated group.

\textbf{Examining these women in the context of the Progressive Era}

\textsuperscript{127} Scott, \textit{Gender and the Politics of History}, 42.
María Talavera and Lucía Norman were Mexican revolutionary women in a period of massive reforms within the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. The literature on the Progressive Era in the United States inevitably includes sex into the discussion as women actively participated in reforms from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century combating changes in American society regarding the problems of industrialization and urbanization. Some historians leave out the inclusion of gender from their analysis, mentioning the influence of women broadly during the period. Others emphasize it, considering the importance of the impact of the socially acceptable norms between men and women during this period, and the resulting independence that certain women could gain. The latter will be of more value to the discussion presented here to evaluate the development of María and Lucía as politically-conscious women within this socio-historical context.

Cultural history provides a way to evaluate concepts of the everyday such as gender and ideology that affect particular communities. Cultural historian Gail Bederman provides a history of both gender and race in the U.S., situating her argument on the concept of “manhood” and its perceived fixity during this period, adding to the viewpoint regarding the shifting view of gender seen here. She argues that “gender – whether manhood or womanhood – is a historical, ideological process” that is constantly changing. Rather than viewing gender from a contemporary perspective, Bederman places it into its historical context and complicates it by bringing in race. She provides

the example of how whites at the time associated lynching of African Americans with being manly, because to be black was to be the antithesis to whiteness and civilization itself. Civil rights activist Ida B. Wells contested this notion and claimed that in fact whites were barbaric for killing blacks, reversing the discourse. Bederman points out how a historically disadvantaged group could change the discussion on gender and race by taking action themselves. They did not accept the ideology that was placed upon them, but sought to overturn it. Just as how Bederman argues that “manhood” was not fixed in the perception of African American males, nor was the idea of “womanhood” in the PLM. Talavera and Norman began in lower, inferior positions in the PLM, but through their actions, they too contested the gender mindset in place within the party.

These two women had to gain their political consciousness over time as did other women during the Progressive Era. Sharon Harley examines how African American women moved into the private domestic sphere into the public workplace when black fathers and husbands could not earn enough to make ends meet. Triggered by the effect of poverty on black families, these women often went against ingrained gender assumptions about a woman’s place in the home and joined the labor force. They did not simply partake in work, but rather Harley notes that they took up a political consciousness that supported and empowered fellow women in their similar situation. Black women formed clubs and homes that sought to prevent working women from being exploited by employers. Harley demonstrates that these women took on positions out

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131 Ibid., 75.
133 Ibid., 50.
of necessity that at once served the needs of their family, but later on demonstrated their ideology as female workers, caring for each other. Their roles shifted as did the positions of Talavera and Norman when the time called for them to take on more for their political community of the PLM as the party was in decline.

Yet the work of Jennifer Guglielmo is perhaps the most relevant here as she narrows in on political women on the fringes of society. Guglielmo details the migration of Italian migrants to the United States and concentrates on strictly women and their involvement anarchist politics in the Northeast. Centered in Paterson, New Jersey, these women spoke and wrote publicly about anarchism and the importance of women in the international movement. They needed to be emancipated and to have the rights that every human being demanded. These women were active participants in politics and in the public sphere, and by concentrating on this, Guglielmo recovers the importance their history and ideology on the margins and excluded from political power. This politics was more deviant than what the reformists through the suffrage movement were offering at the time in regards to giving oppressed and overworked women movement and the right to vote. Instead, they had a clear and present political ideology that did just propose reform to fix inequalities between men and women, but pushed for a revolution of a woman’s place in the world. This essay seeks to follow Guglielmo’s approach in examining both the women’s place within a broader ideological movement and also they advocated such a position. In the case of the PLM, María Talavera and

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Lucía Norman’s rise in prominence gave them more power and political clout in a similar anarchist movement. They complicated the perception of a women’s place within American society during a time when certain channels from the private to public sphere were acceptable. They were also more than purely supporters, but active political actors.

**Talavera and Norman in the context of the Mexican Revolution**

While María Talavera and Lucía Norman were female migrant partisans in the United States, they were revolutionary Mexican women in the context of the Mexican Revolution in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The literature on the revolution is quite vast and provides various interpretations of the revolution. Historical materialists, for example, present a perspective of the event that views it arising out of class conflict and social consciousness. Although the party advocated extensively regarding this rhetoric, it is more advantageous when examining Talavera and Norman in the midst of the revolution to consider gender as a form of analysis. The image of the soldadera remains immortalized in Mexican popular media, yet these two women were different from this category of female Mexican revolutionaries. Unlike soldaderas – the most common portrayal of women participants in the Mexican Revolution – who have been immortalized as women who accompanied male revolutionaries providing food and services, María and Lucía were supporters of men, but also were women with a concrete

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137 I mention first two decades, rather than 1910 to 1917 as the dates normally considered for the Mexican Revolution because I include the Precursor Movement of which included Talavera, Norman, and Flores Magón. See James D. Cockcroft, *Intellectual Precursors of the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1913* (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1976).

political ideology of radical liberalism and later anarchism. Their activism clearly supported the interests of working class peasants and laborers as they gained independence in the organization from men over the course of the 1910s, situating them in the middle of the revolution – both literally and figuratively. Recent literature on the revolution emphasizes this point, actively presenting gender to view the patriarchal relationship between the male and female actors during the struggle, while still emphasizing what women were successful in achieving during the period.

Although the focus of the majority of the historical literature regarding a gendered reading of the revolution is actually after the revolution, there still is a focus on the period itself and on these gender stereotypes. Stephanie Mitchell establishes very clearly the forgotten yet very present activities of women at the time serving in such positions as soldiers, cooks, and as landholders. The stereotypes reflect a different “reality” stereotyping and romanticizing the women, placing them into categories such as sweetheart adelitas. Martha Eva Rocha goes in more detail, focusing specifically on the soldadera. Seen in the literature as the woman who gave up herself for the cause of the revolution to carry her man’s possessions and care for them, in many cases in reality she was an individual who fought alongside the men. The patriarchal Mexican government forgot to officially recognize these women and instead these myths formed over time. Rocha argues that recognition of women’s actual participation in the military in order to receive veteran benefits would threaten the military – the most patriarchal of

140 Ibid., 13.
institutions. These authors not only simply make their focus Mexican women, but they purposely consider the power dynamics between them and others. Bringing in gender demonstrates both women and men as real actors, such as in the case of the Partido Liberal Mexicano where the complex relationship between Talavera, Norman, and Flores Magón forms the narrative.

This relationship between the party members was patriarchal as there existed perceived male and female functions in the revolutionary organization. Although they changed and loosened over time, certain conditions needed to be met so that Lucía and María could serve in positions of leadership. Gabriela Cano tackles a similar predicament as she provides the narrative of Amelia Robles, a woman who masked her own gender as Amelio Robles in order to partake and gain such rights and respect that she didn’t have otherwise. She describes that a “radical and permanent transgendering occurred” for Robles as a result of joining the Zapatistas and through the process of being in the middle of war. Robles’ transformation came out of a desire to at once participate and be accepted into the revolutionary culture. Cano explains that Robles both subverted and supported homosexual norms. Robles felt free, having mobility as a male fighter that she did not have as a woman. She also took on male sexual patterns, behaving like a man in twentieth-century Mexican rural society, maintaining relationships with several women at once. Cano examines the power dynamics that

143 Ibid., 43-45.
took place during this period that caused a woman to forgo her own gender. There were clearly benefits that existed in being a man, and her decision to take on a new role provided her with these benefits. Although she participated publicly in fighting and forced herself into the forefront as a woman, Cano makes it clear that Robles was still living out her life disguised as a man, giving into gender norms at the time. She demonstrates the power of what it meant to be male in this period and points out in this specific instance what it took to overcome the perception that women could only participate in the revolution in supporting roles.

Women were prominent in the battlefield, but they also had influence during the revolution in countering gender norms. Anna Macías makes her feminist ideology clear noting the impact of *machismo* (strict male dominance) and *hembrismo* (strict female dominance) in maintaining strict gender roles over Mexico. Out of this, came a reaction and push for women’s rights in tandem with the rising tide against Díaz in the years before the revolution. Macías details the lives and works of three women, one of them being Juana Belén Gutiérrez de Mendoza, who was active before and during the revolution. She describes how Gutiérrez created a newspaper, *Vesper*, to share her opinions regarding the negative effects of the regime such as the foreign domination of Mexico’s industries, the influence of the Catholic church, and the neglect of Mexico’s lowest classes. Macías gives attention to a woman often forgotten in the historiography and not just any woman, one who actively stood up politically in a period as she argues as “millions of supposedly enfranchised men silently endured the abuses of the Díaz

regime." She focuses on someone deeply connected to a political cause, just as Talavera and Norman were intricately part of the political project of the PLM. Macías and historians add to the historical literature on the Mexican Revolution, bringing gender to the forefront in the revolution and reviving the forgotten histories of the women in this period. This therefore alters the perception that exists regarding either the lack of involvement of women or their role as simply supporters to men. In regards to Lucía and María, this approach provides the women with agency and independence as revolutionary participants and thinkers.

**Reframing the PLM though María Talavera and Lucía Norman**

Just simply considering Talavera and Norman as revolutionaries along the lines of Flores Magón disrupts the narrative presented of the PLM. It de-centers the cult of personality that many historians create when they follow the life of Ricardo. The literature on the PLM that does bring in gender creates a basis which this paper adds onto. Each historian points out the contradictions in the supposedly egalitarian party and gives visibility to the female members. The party needed women to survive and although male members such as Flores Magón created a hierarchy along gender within his group, the women overcame it slowly with each passing crisis.

The most notable and cited piece that looks at women in the party directly is Emma M. Pérez’s essay “A La Mujer: A Critique of the Partido Liberal Mexicano.” Within the essay, she takes the approach of focusing specifically on the party’s ideology towards women. Present in the PLM’s ideology on women was this notion of full

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145 Ibid., 27.
emancipation to make women completely equal to that of men in all aspects of life. Pérez notes this when she goes through the party’s main piece on women titled “A La Mujer” by Ricardo Flores Magón in *Regeneración* in 1910. She writes that he attempts to persuade his female audience that their struggle is equal to that of men, since past traditions and capitalism enslave them both. Since there is this common struggle, they need to fight together in the goal as an organization in overthrowing the state. Once they destroy the state, they can achieve equality with men.147 Flores Magón’s promise was a large one, especially for this era, where gender roles were particularly strict. Many Americans at the time viewed the idea of emancipation for women with fear and as too much, since they already considered the suffrage movement alone to be pushing the boundaries a bit too far. However, Pérez notes that there was a distinct difference between what Flores Magón advocated and what actually occurred within the organization. She gives attention to the contradiction that existed between rhetoric and practice.

There were still some limits to the party’s ideology on women as Pérez argues that they still wanted to maintain gender roles, despite advocating for women’s “emancipation.” She describes that Flores Magón viewed women as still needing to be the nurturer, caretaker of the family, and housewife. Her argument is that, in the eyes of the official party perspective, they had to take on a dual role that men did not want to have, which was to be both revolutionaries and housewives.148 According to Pérez, a whole variety of other articles in *Regeneración* support this viewpoint as well. Douglas

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148 Ibid., 465.
Monroy agrees with Pérez’s interpretation when talking about the political passions of Mexican migrants in Los Angeles. He does so by quoting another PLM leader in the early years of the party, Práxedis Guerrero, as arguing that women who follow traditional gender roles “will enforce equal opportunities without disturbing the natural order between the sexes.” He uses the same position as Pérez in that these party leaders sought to maintain what was “natural” – to be nurturing.\textsuperscript{149} Both authors point out the institutional patriarchal order within the party. They support their argument further by examining the lives that the women actually lived, countering ideology with practice.

The actual experiences of the women demonstrated an attempt to live out the lives they sought to follow from their anarchist perspective. Pérez describes how María Talavera along with Ricardo, Enrique, and Teresa Arteaga (Enrique’s companion) lived on a communal farm close to Los Angeles. Women and men shared work on the field, but a division of labor existed within the home as the men wrote the articles for the paper, while the women fulfilled traditional roles such as cooking and cleaning, as well as rolling the papers for dissemination.\textsuperscript{150} Pérez further supports this, citing a \textit{Los Angeles Times} article on Talavera, portraying her as a housewife who in “her fry pans she was seeing men fighting; hearing in the sizzle of the grease the crash of arms, the pound of horse’s feet and the din and commotion of a nation’s government overthrown.”\textsuperscript{151} There was a disconnect between the party’s ideology and the actual practice of the members, citing equality and yet the women performed socially-assigned domestic roles. Pérez is correct in giving agency to the women by having them as the focus of her piece, pointing

\textsuperscript{149} Monroy, \textit{Rebirth: Migrant Los Angeles from the Great Migration to the Great Depression}, 220.
\textsuperscript{150} Pérez, “‘A la Mujer: A Critique of the Partido Liberal Mexicano’s Gender Ideology on Women,’” 467.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 468-469.
out the inherent contradictions that existed within the structure of the organization. In doing so, she still recognizes that they still fell into a gendered system of labor contrary to the party’s belief system.

Alejandro Wolbert Pérez goes beyond purely the political and moves towards the emotional, narrowing in specifically on the romantic relationship that María had with Ricardo and how they expressed their love for one another via a series of letters (like those noted earlier in the thesis). He argues that the two of them practiced both love and liberation through their shared ideals for liberty, revolution, and for each other.\footnote{Alejandro Wolbert Pérez, “María y revolución, eso es lo que ocupa mi corazón: Love and Liberation in the Prison Writings of Ricardo Flores Magón” (paper presented at the National Association for Chicano and Chicana Studies Annual Conference, April 1, 2008): 74.}

Whereas Emma Pérez shows ideology towards women as being top-down, he sees it rather as something not quite independently coming from women, but as claimed by both because of their constant interactions with one another. He takes more of a literary approach, going into textual analyses of the various letters. Wolbert Pérez emphasizes the letters from Ricardo towards María, and how he not only loves her, but respects her as an individual. Through this, he states that “clearly, the correspondence between Talavera and Flores Magón aptly demonstrate that her commitment to Ricardo, the party, and the revolution went beyond her person.”\footnote{Ibid., 79.} He has good intentions with his argument, however his evidence does not match up as what he provides is consistently Ricardo’s perspective. He tries to shine the spotlight upon María, yet falls back upon Ricardo. Nonetheless, Wolbert Pérez takes on a topic never before discussed in the literature on the party, and consciously inserts gender into his work.
Clara Lomas also follows the PLM and the involvement of women in radical politics, but centers on the efforts of women in radical journalism along the border. Somewhat similar in the approach of Anna Macías, Lomas emphasizes how writing articulated and defined their gender in this period of contestation before and during the Mexican Revolution both in Mexico and in the United States. They were dealing with a different set of gender norms in each country and had to negotiate their way as women in each society. She describes how a female member of the PLM in Texas, Teresa Villarreal, attributed the action that initiated the overthrow of Díaz to a woman in her own publication, *El Obrero*.\(^{154}\) Simply advocating that a woman could perform such an act was questioning patriarchal ideas that women as a whole belonged in the domestic sphere and not in the realm of politics or warfare. Lomas notes how Villarreal’s narrative was quite different from the official narrative as it inserted female heroism in the mix, and she attributes her place on the borderlands as allowing for this perspective that would not be permitted in central Mexico. Both gender and location also played a vital role in the lives of Lucía and María while they were in Los Angeles, shaping their experiences differently than if they were deeply embedded in either country. Lomas mentions later on the significance of another radical and quite feminist publication at the time, *Pluma Roja*. She writes how the editor of the publication, Blanca de Moncaleano (who was also part of the PLM), advocated that at the center of the struggle of freedom, women needed to be recoded in society.\(^{155}\) By utilizing this evidence, she supports her point that women like Moncaleano articulated their gender and sought to rearticulate it to make society

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\(^{155}\) Ibid., 61
more just for themselves and others. Although Lomas does not center her work on Norman and Talavera, Lomas embraces gender as a tool to examine the PLM and the Mexican Revolution more broadly, placing each of these individual women as the centerpiece of a narrative. By doing this, she does what Emma Pérez does not do. Whereas Pérez focuses on ideology from the men towards the women, Lomas provides a female-based ideology rooted in real-life active participation in writing from the period.

**Adopting and diverging from what currently exists**

This work adopts similar approaches as much of the literature covered, yet diverges from the literature in these various fields in how it creates a narrative out of the experiences of the two women examined here. Other pieces concentrate mainly on select instances, ideology, or certain primary sources as their inspiration for their work or simply to insert the perspective of women. Through a perspective that examines these individuals in the context of Los Angeles via correspondence, newspaper articles, court cases, manuscripts, and plays, this essay presents a broader, more-encompassing viewpoint not offered before. This not only places them in a specific location, but solidifies their presence as seen by themselves and others in the early 20th century when patriarchy and power dynamics between the sexes were ever-present. This angle does not deny the strong presence of men in the organization, but what it does is reveal the public activist and leadership positions that Lucía and María took up to maintain the party in instances of crisis. Flores Magón cannot be ignored, yet there has to be recognition and a detailed perspective of other, forgotten revolutionaries in the organization.

As Joan Wallach Scott argues, history figures as an actor in the development of knowledge about sexual difference, and also who historians remember and who they
constantly forget. Following that sentiment and by providing that perspective here in this paper, the two historical periods regarding these women are clear. The first period from 1906 to 1914 addresses the emergence and development of gender in the organization, starting off where the women are first present in the sources in Los Angeles. This portion gives less emphasis to Ricardo’s activism in Mexico and early activism in the United States against Díaz, and instead provides more attention towards the early involvement of the women specifically in one American city. This was particularly behind the scenes as evidenced in the letters between the party members. More than simply directed by Ricardo towards María as Wolbert Pérez notes, they were quite reciprocal and incorporated Lucía as well into discussions of love and politics. The letters especially demonstrated the amount of influence that both of them held over other party members during the party’s first arrest in the United States and the divisions that were already forming at the time. They even related to María’s involvement in smuggling out plans for a major revolt in 1908. Soon they emerged to prominence out of political necessity when the party’s collapse appears evident due to the arrest and imprisonment of male members in 1912. Ward S. Albro, a specialist on Flores Magón, does recognize the importance of Lucía in this event, yet what he does not recognize is the significance of the protest that she lead against the federal court’s decision to imprison Ricardo, Enrique, and Librado. Thousands of impassioned supporters joined

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156 Scott, 2.
157 Barrera B., Correspondencia I (1899-1918).
her in the Los Angeles Plaza and throughout the city in retaliation.\(^{159}\) This marked the end of the emergence of gender in the organization to the point where it was obvious that women like Lucía obviously gained both a level of respect and notoriety.

The second period featured in this paper from 1915 to 1922 demonstrates the intensification of crises of this nature and the ever-growing importance of gender to the point where the women were consistently in the public eye. The women struggled more than ever to sustain the party at the time in the latter part of the revolution with Carranza as the revolutionary leader in Mexico, and with the emergence of World War I and later saturation of the war effort in the United States. Pérez is the only one in the historiography at present who addresses the patriarchal nature of the party upon its female members, noticing the contradiction between a supposedly egalitarian belief system regarding gender and a reality that demonstrated otherwise. She incorporates quite a few sources into her examination of the PLM’s gender ideology on women, though there are still sources she did not incorporate. One source featured in this essay that adds to the previously-written literature on the PLM is the play that Flores Magón wrote in 1916. He featured female characters prominently in his play, in addition to male characters, reflecting the rising leadership of the female partisans at the time. Although they were obviously revolutionaries sharing the same ideas as their companions, he portrays them as remaining and dying at the side of their men against the “evil” government of Carranza.\(^{160}\)


\(^{160}\) Flores Magón, “Tierra y Libertad,” 63-64.
court indicted Talavera in 1918, however like the other literature reviewed, he pays more attention instead to Ricardo, and in this particular instance, his trial in 1918. María’s two indictments also draw out issues that the government had with foreign political radicals, and in some ways, her case is more intriguing as it shows the government’s roundabout attempts to bring her down as both a woman and editor of Regeneración in that particular historical moment. The women dealt with gendered pressures both inside and out of the party as “othering” against them only became stronger. This, in addition to the persecution of the remaining male leadership, brought the party to its collapse.

The gendered lens presented here also expands the other hierarchies at play in the period and relevant to pre-existing theory. The party was constantly at odds with the federal governments of Mexico and the United States during major social conflicts affecting both nations. Antonio Gramsci, an early 20th century Italian political theorist, in his Prison Notebooks, explains that governments throughout the world seek to maintain control of their populations by exercising power from the top-down. He refers to this process as two-pronged with “hegemony” as the power that the dominant group exercises throughout society and “direct domination” as the command exercised through the state. The dominant group forces consent from the masses and the state uses coercion to “legally” enforce discipline. A small, dominant elite group controls the masses that agree to be governed by them. The hierarchical system in place appears to be natural, however the state consciously constructs and systematically perpetuates the system. They

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161 The United States of America v. Maria Magón and E. Zavala, Case 1489; The United States of America v. Maria Magón et al., Case 1508.
coerce the masses to follow by legal institutions such as the courts, congress, and others that create laws to subvert the populace.

Examining such concepts in the paper assists in gaining an understanding of gender as one such hierarchical system in the period is essential, but other such systems affected María and Lucía as well, but in less obvious ways. Race is incredibly important to consider within the context of institutions because it is through them that race is created and sustained. Race, according to Michael Omi and Howard Winant, “is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies.”

Although race may be derived from biological characteristics, it is in itself a social construction with real implications of how a “created” group acts, thinks, and behaves a certain way based solely on how they look. The issue of race was of little or no importance to the women in the Mexican context, but in the American context, it shaped them and how those outside the party perceived them. In particular, the Los Angeles newspapers racialized the women when discussing their participation in protests portraying them as wild and untamed like animals. Although the women did see themselves as politically conscious, simply having the label of being “wild” radicals put them at a disadvantage. For women, this only added to pre-conceived notions that that they were inferior and thus maintained gendered ways of thinking that they could not think for themselves. Yet, through their actions, and especially their activism, they overcame this.

Conclusion

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164 “Bloody Riots Magon Adieux.” The article states that “Lucille Norman (Mrs. Lucille Quidera) and Mercedes Figueroa leaped out and ran like antelopes for the street.”
The narrative presented here observes gender within the structure of the PLM, rather than simply ascribing gender. Inequalities clearly existed in the organization when considering the contradictions between the rhetoric of equality and actual treatment of women in the party. The literature that deals with gender in the Progressive Era, Mexican Revolution, and on the Partido Liberal itself provides a place of which to adopt and diverge from. Several historians bring attention to forgotten women, but in the end they do much more than that. They reframe the history of the Progressive Era, showing the place of (often racialized) women in redefining the shift from the private to the public sphere. They also defy the stereotypes of women in the Mexican Revolution, providing the women with more than merely aiding men in battle, but taking action themselves. Within the literature of the PLM itself, authors begin to cover specific instances where female members interacted with and combated established gender norms. From all of this, this paper complicates previously-written works, by presenting these women as multi-dimensional, taking on many positions in the party to promote the party’s revolutionary goals. It adds a new dimension by presenting María Talavera and Lucía Norman as not simply having roles by accident through a series of crises, but rather through independent action to keep the party afloat, and to keep the ideas of revolution and revolutionary action alive.
Conclusion

Oftentimes the greatest indicator of remembrance of anyone, including of María and Lucía, occurs through cultural representation. The author, Douglas Day, in his fictional account of the prison notebooks of Ricardo Flores Magón presents a first-person description of what his thoughts were while he was in prison during the last months of his life in 1922. No such notebooks actually existed, but Day draws from historical events and figures in his story. Of particular importance is how he portrays Ricardo’s interpretation of María. The fictional Ricardo writes earlier on in the novel that:

I have said nothing to you of my young friend, María Talavera, who had come to San Antonio from Mexico City in hopes of joining the Struggle, and who had became my companion almost overnight, so simple and honest was she, so easily seduced. I had left her in Texas, where she was waiting for me now, believing absolutely in the easy promises I had made to her, ready to be loyal to me for the rest of my life. I have not mentioned her to you, reader, because I am ashamed to bring so decent a girl – for that is all she was – into so scabrous a tale as this one. And besides, she is still waiting for me, even now, in Los Angeles, hoping each day that Librado Rivera will be able to smuggle a note from me out of Leavenworth. May we not speak of her, please?165

Day changes the actual dates and figures to fictionalize both Ricardo and María, but the actual essence of gendered perceptions within the party remain. His Ricardo portrays her as weak and completely dependent on him, although she came to join the movement. Even the words used to describe her as a “girl,” “so simple” and “honest” downplays her and her capabilities as an actual viable member of the PLM. Later on as he continues to write, there is a noticeable change in how he describes her:

I wrote you three notebooks ago that I did not wish to tell you more about María Talavera, my Mexican mistress, than was absolutely necessary.

Today I will amend that evasive description to say that she was not only not a little campesina, blindly following wherever I might lead, grateful for whatever crumb of affection I might feed her; but that her name was really María Talavera de Brousse; that she was slightly older and considerably taller than I; that she was a woman of great intelligence and spirit, just as willing to fight and be jailed as any of us; and that she played a crucial role in the events that were to follow this arrest.\textsuperscript{166}

Ricardo’s description of María transforms after he writes about his first arrest in 1907. Although he introduces her once again as his “Mexican mistress,” he completely reverses almost everything else he said. The details that he provides this time around reflect reality. He admits that she was not inferior to him in just about every possibly sense, and gives credit to her dedication and investment in the PLM’s struggle. This fictional Ricardo highlights her position in the organization as an equal member, essential to the movement just as he was.

Day’s fictional Ricardo and the transformation of his description of Talavera parallels to some extent the shift that happened regarding gender in the PLM. The character begins by demeaning María as if she was someone to take advantage of, and then he later recognizes her for who she really was, and notes that she was essential to the party. This sentiment was not as direct in the real past as there is no documentation of Ricardo making such a bold and empowering statement as in the latter segment from the novel. What did take place concerning the changing roles of both María and Lucía in the party was indirect and occurred over the period of a little more than a decade.

The organization’s move to Los Angeles marked the beginning of the involvement of the two women in the PLM. Lucía and María had an interest in socialism

\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., 214.
and participated in socialist politics before Ricardo’s arrival to the city.\textsuperscript{167} Once he arrived and publicly moved the PLM to Los Angeles in 1907, U.S. government officials arrested him for violating laws of neutrality, planning to attack Mexico and the Díaz regime from the United States. They delved into Mexican revolutionary politics, triggering the start of Norman and Talavera’s activism in the party. They rallied for his release, but were almost entirely on the periphery of the party during the time, never at the center of attention like Flores Magón or the other men arrested and in jail. Their involvement increased behind the scenes as they wrote back and forth with Ricardo from jail about dealing with the practicality of getting out, ideological issues with other groups, and how they cared for one another. The women served as mediators between the world inside and outside of the jail, ensuring that Ricardo’s wishes and goals carried out successfully, including the 1908 plan for revolution. They were out of the public eye, performing the duties of the party behind the scenes. Only in 1912 when the government took male members to trial again did they start to emerge independently and publicly as the center of media attention for their activism regarding the conviction of the defendants. This marked a turning point, yet it would take longer for Talavera and Norman to move out from the private sphere to the public sphere as they still performed domestic duties at home. All of this ran contrary to the ideology set by male leaders touting full equality between the sexes, yet the party gradually shifted even more.

The shift takes place more firmly around 1915 as women forced themselves into the public spotlight as the party entered even dire straits than before. They fundraised, promoting \textit{Regeneración} and those who continued to be in jail or under persecution by

\textsuperscript{167} Barrera B., \textit{Correspondencia I (1899-1918)}, 672.
federal authorities. Their public participation increased, though they still fit into expected roles for women as supporters. Their activism did increase as did their writing, especially for Lucía who published a series of articles continuing to advocate for the goals of the party. By 1918, María took the helm of the party as the men once again dealt with the government. She was at the center of two indictments taking on the government as they accused her of denouncing the U.S. in a period of war. The two women moved from semi-mute activism on the sidelines towards full-blown attention in the eyes of the law, shifting from the private to the public over the matter of years as female revolutionaries.

This narrative runs contrary to two persistent narratives existing in this period. First, in the context of the Progressive Era, their participation in revolutionary, “radical” politics as women and as foreigners made their move from private to public unacceptable. Yet, they did it and received prominence as a result. Secondly, in the context of the Mexican Revolution, the involvement of the two, as stated before, was complex as they took on various roles as journalists, activists, fundraisers, and companions all abroad in the U.S. They were not simply supporters to soldiers as soldaderas but were active in the revolution on multiple levels.

María Talavera participated as a revolutionary, an activist, and served as a companion to Ricardo Flores Magón. Her legacy lives on through the documents that remain and through those who knew her when she returned back to Mexico and died in Ensenada.¹⁶⁸ This paper does not seek to venerate or idolize her, and instead only attempts to tell her story and the story of her daughter, Lucía Norman, within the organizational structure of the Partido Liberal Mexicano amidst a series of struggles. Her

¹⁶⁸ Barrera B., Correspondencia I (1899-1918), 672.
and Lucía were not simple, one-dimensional individuals, simply supporting the leadership of the party. They were complex, dealing with the pressures of being women in a patriarchal party, while at the same time promoting political ideologies (as they were changing) that deviated from the norm both in the United States and in Mexico. At the same time, the emotional ties for both of them also connected them to the PLM. Lucía took Ricardo as her stepfather and there were obvious familial connections between them, but María was more obviously tied to Ricardo out of a combination of familial and romantic ties. These various reasons make them multi-dimensional actors in this specific past and redefine our memory of the party.

This paper questions and complicates many “established” points regarding the PLM. It changes perceptions of both women in the Progressive Era and the Mexican Revolution, placing them in different contexts with more complex, “real” individuals. The focus on the women through their story and their narrative shows them as essential to an organization that they maintained through a series of struggles. This disrupts the existing narratives placing Ricardo Flores Magón at the center of the organization, and considering him alone to be the party. They were participants and leaders in an organization that sought to change Mexico through revolution and they did bring about change. The party’s ideas were their ideas, and they sparked and brought about revolution. Even their later anarchist ideology that a world could be possible without states or repressive regimes lives on today. They believed that worldwide revolution could happen, and the revolutions taking place currently in the Middle East show that to some extent change is possible. The past activism of María Talavera and Lucía Norman demonstrate that women did bring about change. It is essential not to lose sight or forget
to recognize the agency of many other women from then to now who call out and
denounce what they see as injustice in their communities and throughout the world.
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