

DREAMING UNDER A PERFECT SUN: ETHNIC MEXICANS AND THE LEFT IN
GREATER SAN DIEGO, 1900-1950

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DREAMING UNDER A PERFECT SUN: ETHNIC MEXICANS AND THE LEFT IN
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This study examines the role ethnic Mexicans played in the sociopolitical development of Greater San Diego during the first half of the 20th century: a region along the U.S.-Mexico international border encompassing San Diego County and the agribusiness empire to the east known as the Imperial Valley. Many ethnic Mexican workers (persons of Mexican heritage regardless of their nationality or U.S. citizenship status) embraced leftist politics and worked with radical unionists of all races to critique and contest the powerful business interests that were determined to transform the region into a financially lucrative community primarily for the white upper and middle classes. Workers' hard-fought battles to create a more egalitarian and socially inclusive society had consequences for Greater San Diego that reverberate to this day.

The relentless pursuit of profit by wealthy business interests like real estate and transportation magnate John D. Spreckels and his fellow boosters – a group consisting of local politicians, shopkeepers, sheriffs, and others aspiring of upward mobility – created a narrowly-defined, hyper-patriotic community that impacted the material lives of workers, especially non-whites and non-citizens whose labor and civil rights were most vulnerable. Anti-leftist measures adopted by boosters and business interests, from the restrictive free speech ordinances and “move on” laws to the vigilante terror and deportations, transformed Greater San Diego into a staunchly anti-labor region as early as 1911. In labeling the ideologies espoused and practiced

by groups such as the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM), the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), and the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA) as subversive and “un-American,” boosters and business interests eroded support for the worker cause and helped stunt multiracial and multi-ethnic working-class solidarity in the borderlands. Although initially sympathetic, white workers affiliated with the more conservative American Federation of Labor came to vehemently denounce leftist politics in order to safeguard the higher pay and other rights and privileges afforded to them by their race.

That laborers continued to reject working class segmentation and to endure ostracism is significant. Leftist workers and organizations, particularly those informed by a radical tradition and living memory of past workers’ movements, believed the means to the working classes’ freedom and full inclusion into American society was not through sectarianism, but rather through unity.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Alberto J. Milian is a Ph.D. Candidate in History at Cornell University. He holds a B.A. in History from the University of California, Irvine (2007), an M.A. in History from the University of San Diego (2010), and an M.A. in History from Cornell University (2014).

Dedicated to my *querida madre*, Bertha Alicia

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Biographical Sketch	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgments	v
List of Figures	viii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 Dreams of an Army: Revolution and the Making of Anti-Leftist San Diego	27
Chapter 2 Barbarous San Diego: The Free Speech Fight of 1912 and Its Aftermath	84
Chapter 3 Empire's Promises: Agribusiness and the Imperial Valley, 1900-1934	136
Chapter 4 (Un-)American Activities on the Waterfront: Cannery Workers, "Communists," and Anti-Communists, 1930s-1950	211
Conclusion Every Little Dollar	270
Bibliography	282

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 0.1 San Diego & Arizona Railway route map, undated	5
Figure 1.1 Mexican Revolution	65
Figure 1.2 General Mosby on his way to surrender	80
Figure 2.1 Woman standing on soapbox in IWW demonstration, San Diego, 1912	104
Figure 2.2 Police and water vs. IWWs, San Diego	118
Figure 3.1 Imperial Valley land promotion	155
Figure 3.2 Migratory Mexican field worker's home on the edge of a frozen pea field	176
Figure 4.1 Women canning tuna at Cohn-Hopkins Company, 1931	233
Figure 4.2 First Sleepy Lagoon Committee meeting, 1942	255

Introduction

To live as one wishes to live is, in San Diego, simply a matter of selection.

- San Diego California Club, 1919

On a cloudy mid-May day, Odilón Luna and a large parade of ethnoracially diverse men, women, and children walked through the streets of Los Angeles, following a grey hearse that carried the lifeless body of Joseph Mikolasek. A member of the anarcho-syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) who had been protesting for the protection of free speech, Mikolasek was shot to death days earlier by two San Diego, California police officers. Since San Diego city officials believed that even in death Mikolasek's body had the potential to cause trouble, they denied his burial in the city, forcing his fellow workers and allies to transport the corpse northward. In Los Angeles, leftists staged a parade with the hearse and then gathered at the IWW hall to listen to a handful of speeches. After anarchist Emma Goldman offered a few words of remembrance, Luna spoke on behalf of the Partido Liberal Mexicano, a revolutionary party with a large following throughout the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands. Delivered in Spanish, Luna said of Mikolasek: "This is our brother, for though he was not of our race, he was a worker, of our class, and sweated for the benefit of our common enemy: the bourgeoisie." Indeed, radical leftist workers as far away as Chile considered San Diego another location where business interests and the state had "fallen... on the unarmed worker as the wolf on the lamb."¹

¹ Ricardo Flores Magón, "Joseph Mikolasek," *Regeneración*, 18 May 1912; William C. Owen, "For All This San Diego Must Answer," *Regeneración*, 18 May 1912; "Several Hundred I.W.W.'s Attend Funeral of Man," *Los Angeles Herald*, 13 May 1912; "Liberty's Flag with Anarchy," *Los Angeles Times*, 14 May 1912; "The Weather,"

For Freeman Tilden, the wolf more resembled an eagle. In mid-June 1912, after reading graphic news reports of San Diego's months-long violent suppression of constitutional rights, Tilden cheekily wrote in the national humor magazine *Puck* that the beachside community was "the most patriotic city in the United States." Tilden described the "beautifully staged" extralegal mob-terror inflicted upon unarmed anarchists Ben L. Reitman and Goldman, who after Mikolasek's funeral had headed south to San Diego to deliver a speech defending free speech advocates. There the pair encountered a hundreds-strong vigilante posse, which accused the pair of bringing "the impending doom of Anarchy" to the Southern California community. As Tilden told his readers, San Diego was no place for leftist dissent: "Henceforth, let knaves know this: that in San Diego speech is free – if you have the kind of speech acceptable in San Diego; and that the [vigilantes] will safeguard human rights, even if they have to kill somebody in doing it; and that the [American] Eagle shall scream on the Coast even if it gets laryngitis in the act."²

Boosters and business interests defended their actions during what came to be known as the San Diego Free Speech Fight of 1912, contending that such draconian measures were necessary to ensure capitalist progress in the region. As booster William E. Smythe claimed, they were on a mission to build "a mighty city as an everlasting monument to the Pilgrim Fathers of the West."³ Leftists, then, subverted such efforts by organizing, protesting, and striking. By the end of the 1910s, as Americans consumed news of violent and chaotic social revolutions in both Mexico and Russia, and were warned by national political leaders that "red" agitators had

Los Angeles Times, 13 May 1912; "Joseph Mikolasek," *El Productor*, July 1912, *Latin American Anarchist and Labour Periodicals Online*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013.

² Freeman Tilden, "The Eagle Screams," *Puck*, 12 June 1912.

³ William E. Smythe, *The History of San Diego, 1542-1908; An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Pioneer Settlement on the Pacific Coast of the United States* (San Diego: History Co., 1908), 22.

infiltrated the country through organizations like the IWW, boosters' rough treatment of leftist workers became the norm, effectively silencing Luna, Mikolasek, and Tilden alike.

In addition to emphasizing the region's nearly constant sunshine, beaches, natural harbor, and vast lands, San Diego promoters proudly championed their civilizing mission. In *San Diego, California* (1919), for example, boosters invited their upper and middle-class readers – or those select few who could afford and were allowed to “live as one wishes to live” – to imagine a docile “barefoot Mexican boy” standing in the historic city center, proudly showing a Christian cross left by Spanish priest Junípero Serra, and the weathered but sturdy “adobe walls of the American headquarters” used during the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848. Around “Old Town,” the booklet explained, boosters and business interests had built thriving “American” industries and opportunities for leisure on the placid San Diego Bay; enticed substantial investment from the U.S. Navy; driven the “golden spike” through the San Diego & Arizona Railway; and had spawned the growth of modern and market-oriented farms in the desert to the east.⁴ Greater San Diego, under the stewardship of responsible boosters and business interests was, and would continue to be, free from the ills of the region's barbarous past. In Greater San Diego, capitalism marched onward.

This fictitious barefoot Mexican boy who celebrated the markers of conquest was central to the boosters' romantic and ahistorical portrayal of the city. Excised from this marketing narrative were the many radicalized workers who were calling for dramatic social change. Boosters obscured Greater San Diego's relationship to Mexico, and they erased the large working-class ethnic Mexicans who built and labored in the regional economy. Chicano historians Mario T. García and Richard Griswold del Castillo have argued that this “unreal

⁴ San Diego California Club, *San Diego, California* (San Diego: Frye & Smith, 1919), np.

spectacle” has resulted in a “historical amnesia” in the United States’ eighth-largest metropolitan area, as present-day boosters and business interests have continued to romanticize an invented past.⁵

This dissertation, then, examines the role ethnic Mexicans had on the making of Greater San Diego – a region that encompasses San Diego County and the agribusiness empire to the east known as the Imperial Valley (See Figure 0.1). In particular, this study traces the impact the leftist politics practiced by some working class ethnic Mexicans and their multiracial and multi-ethnic working-class allies had on the sociopolitical development of Greater San Diego in the first half of the 20th century. Working class ethnic Mexicans, or persons of Mexican heritage regardless of their nationality or U.S. citizenship status, and radical unionists organized around inclusive leftist politics to critique and contest powerful, and often ruthless, boosters and business interests determined to transform the border region into a financially lucrative and comfortable community built for themselves: the white upper and middle classes.⁶ The relentless pursuit of profit by businessmen, politicians, and others aspirational of upward mobility, whom I

⁵ Mario T. García, “A Chicano Perspective on San Diego History,” *Journal of San Diego History* 18 (Fall 1972), <https://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/1972/october/chicano-2/>, accessed 10 September 2017; Richard Griswold del Castillo, “Introduction: A Border Region and People,” in *Chicano San Diego: Cultural Space and the Struggle for Justice*, ed. Richard Griswold del Castillo (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 5.

⁶ A note on terminology: In this work, I generally use the label “ethnic Mexican” when referring to persons of Mexican heritage. However, I do differentiate when helpful, using the term “Mexican American” when referring specifically to those who were citizens of the U.S. (either by birth or naturalization), and using “Mexican” or “Mexican national” for those who were not citizens of the U.S. However, as will be evident in the pages that follow, I generally use “ethnic Mexican” to demonstrate the often-shared position or identity Mexican heritage persons occupied in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands. As cultural theorist Stuart Hall noted, “Far from being externally fixed in some essentialized past, [identities] are subject to continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power... [I]dentities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narrative of the past.” On a related note, unlike some historians, I do not use the term “Chicana/o,” unless quoted and/or an historical actor clearly identified as such. Because my study ends before the term became a popular self-descriptor amongst many ethnic Mexicans, it is a term I seldom use in this dissertation. Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990); for discussion on how Mexican immigrants “became Mexican American” simply by living in the United States, see George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 22-25. For an example of this sanitized and tourist-friendly promotion of San Diego, see San Diego Tourism Board, “Happiness Is Calling,” <https://www.sandiego.org/>, accessed 15 November 2017.

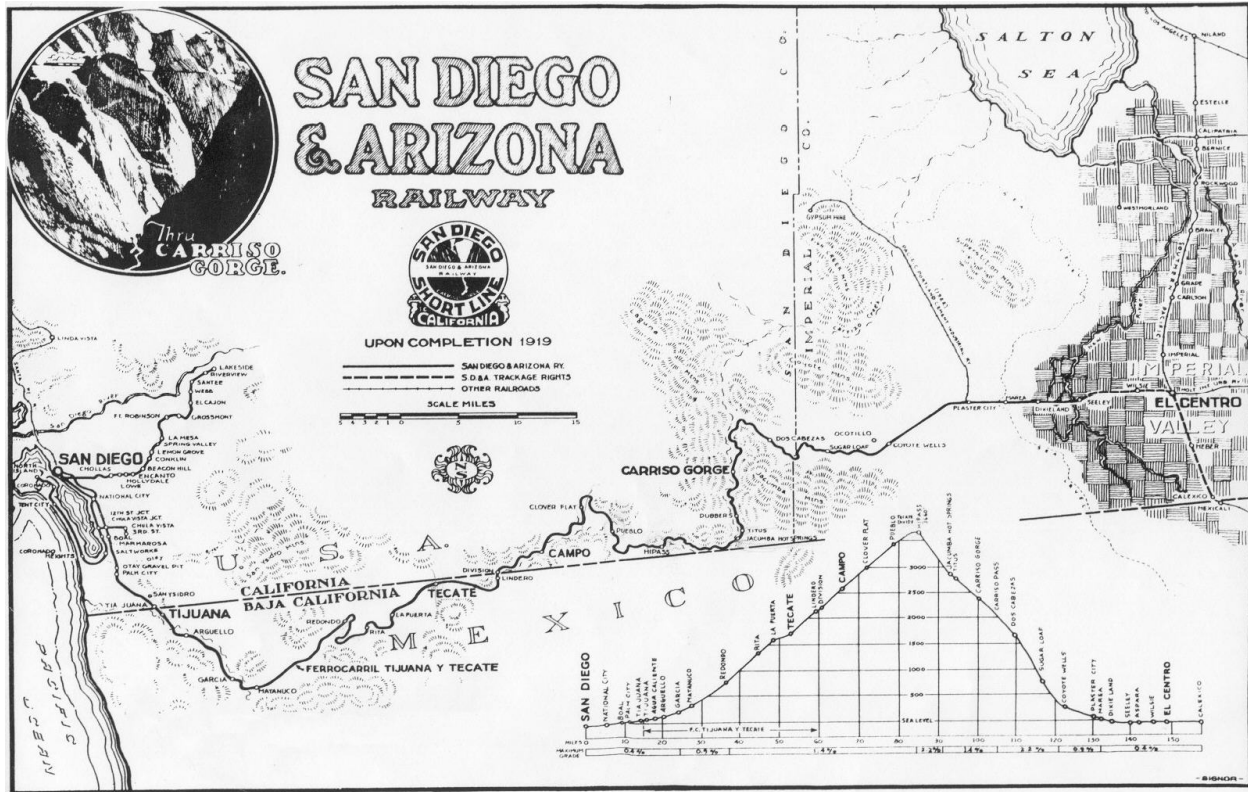


Figure 0.1. San Diego & Arizona Railway route map, undated. Courtesy of the Pacific Southwest Railway Museum Association – Campo and La Mesa, California.

refer to collectively as “Booster San Diego,” ultimately created an anti-labor environment under the guise of patriotism that profoundly impacted non-whites and stunted the possibility for a united working class. Pivotal, then, this work builds on and departs from the work of urban theorist Mike Davis to argue that Greater San Diego’s sociopolitical development cannot be understood without a thorough investigation into the region’s race relations.⁷

Though fundamentally a local history concerned with bringing focus to the lives and contributions of ethnic Mexican workers in this understudied area of the country, this dissertation

⁷ Although Davis and his collaborator, Jim Miller, have largely excluded race from their analyses of San Diego’s anti-labor bent in *Under the Perfect Sun: The San Diego Tourists Never See*, much of this dissertation is still indebted to their respective writings. *Under the Perfect Sun*’s third contributor, Kelly Mayhew, has provided useful accounts of more recent histories of Mexican American San Diegans. Mike Davis, Kelly Mayhew, and Jim Miller, *Under the Perfect Sun: The San Diego Tourists Never See* (New York: The New Press, 2005).

has wider implications for the study of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, Chicana/o history, the relationship between capitalism and representative democracy, and racial formation. Indeed, an examination of Greater San Diego from 1900 to 1950 allows for a critical analysis of broader themes, including inter- and intra-class struggle; racial difference and the working class; labor and civil rights; (im)migration; and boosterism and democratic principles. To interrogate these themes is to better understand the rise of “America’s Finest City” and its environs, and to thus counter the “unreal spectacle” that has dominated the telling of Greater San Diego’s history since the early 20th century.⁸

Race, Class, and Boosterism

In 1893, historian Frederick Jackson Turner presented his paper entitled “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in which he argued that American democracy had been fostered not by the Pilgrims or other early English settlers along the Atlantic coast, but rather by a menagerie of humble and rugged pioneers of European origin, who continued to push the frontier west. While on the frontier, away from the “overcivilized” and feminized city, Turner theorized, these pioneers built egalitarian, peaceful communities brimming with opportunity.⁹ Widely praised and popularized, Turner’s views were accepted by professional

⁸ The moniker “America’s Finest City” was self-anointed. Reeling from the Republican National Committee’s decision to rescind the awarding of the 1972 Republican National Convention to San Diego, then mayor Pete Wilson began a public relations campaign to demonstrate to the nation that the Southern Californian city was not second-rate. Wilson began to refer to San Diego as “America’s Finest City” and hosted several events to celebrate its presumed importance to the country. Although Wilson moved on – first to the United States senate and then to California’s governorship – the slogan remained. Fred Dickey, “The Return of Pete Wilson,” *San Diego Magazine* (November 2004), <http://www.sandiegomagazine.com/San-Diego-Magazine/November-2004/The-Return-of-Pete-Wilson/>, accessed 16 December 2017.

⁹ Frederick Jackson Turner, like many Americans, was deeply concerned with the “overcivilization” of American and European cities. After reviewing the 1890 census, Turner came to believe that the closing of the frontier imperiled American masculinity, as men would no longer have a “safety valve” by which to remain intimate with their more “savage” qualities. Historians Gail Bederman and Kristin L. Hoganson have chronicled how new outlets could be found in popular culture and even war. Frederick J. Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, Reprint, Empire Online, [http://www.empire.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/The Significance of the Frontier in American History_](http://www.empire.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/The%20Significance%20of%20the%20Frontier%20in%20American%20History_), accessed 16 December 2017; Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Kristin

and amateur historians, as well as by a large cross-section of the American public. Promoters, who possibly believed in the importance of the pioneer in American lore but also clearly understood that capital flows were crucial to development, created a new myth out of Turner's interpretations. In Greater San Diego, boosters and business interests, aware of the power and appeal of the rugged individual, began to produce local historical literature that altered Turner's thesis and described deep-pocketed investors as brave pioneer civilizers, too.

For instance, booster William E. Smythe's *The History of San Diego* (1908), besides promulgating a fictional Spanish past, lauded the investments of real estate and transportation mogul John D. Spreckels.¹⁰ A Hawaiian sugar scion who in 1887 sailed into San Diego Bay from imperial San Francisco, Spreckels quickly established himself as the dominant force in Greater San Diego by investing in several business enterprises. Among his vast holdings were the San Diego & Arizona Railway, the massive and luxurious Hotel del Coronado, and plots of land in the undeveloped but promising lands of Baja California and the Imperial Valley. In *The Conquest of Arid America* (1900), Smythe chronicled how Imperial Valley land colonizers, developers, and engineers escaped the decadent and over-civilized cities of the east to harness the Colorado River and transform the Colorado Desert from a wasted space to a fertile and profitable agricultural oasis.¹¹ Other triumphalist, "Great Man" histories, such as Margaret

L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

¹⁰ In the 1940s, journalist, lawyer, and historian Carey McWilliams argued that the "Spanish Fantasy Past" was used by late 19th and early 20th century Anglo American boosters in Los Angeles to promote for financial gain a romanticized Spanish colonial heritage that diminished and erased the histories and contributions of Mexicans and Indians. Historians have since written extensively on this fictional past, noting that many California municipalities distanced themselves from an allegedly inferior Mexican past by stressing their Spanish roots. Carey McWilliams, *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincot Co., 1949); William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of Its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Phoebe S. Kropp, *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

¹¹ Originally published in 1900, I use the revised edition published five years later. Smythe, *History of San Diego*, 618-620; William E. Smythe, *Conquest of Arid America*, Revised Edition (New York: MacMillan Company, 1905).

Romer's *A History of Calxico* (1922) followed in subsequent years, highlighting the efforts of intrepid capitalist pioneers who brought water to the "desert of death." Smythe and Romer, however, were bested by preacher Harold Bell Wright, who penned the immensely popular historical novel *The Winning of Barbara Worth* (1911). As I argue in chapter three, Wright's romantic depiction of Imperial Valley's agriculture industry placed the rugged individualist banker-farmer and his tools – plows, hoes, and a check book – at the center of not only Greater San Diego's development, but also at the core of American civilization.¹²

Historians have attempted to understand the workings of American West boosters like Smythe and, in the process, have countered Turner and Turnerian interpretations of capitalist development on the frontier, arguing that during the 19th and 20th centuries, cities were pivotal to building of the west.¹³ Cities provided the credit, supplies, and markets for rural farmers. In turn, the boosters and business interests of metropolitan centers like Minneapolis-St. Paul were aided by the interventions of the federal government, as various federal agencies and bodies helped remove troublesome Indians, distributed public lands to homesteaders, and subsidized railroad construction. Local government, which drew from the ranks of the business community, further sustained economic growth by funding public infrastructure projects and other ventures.¹⁴ By the Great Depression era, boosters and business interests of the American West benefitted

¹² Worth's novel was later turned into a Hollywood film, *The Winning of Barbara Worth*. Margaret Romer, *A History of Calxico* (Los Angeles: Historical Society of Southern California, 1922); Harold Bell Wright, *The Winning of Barbara Worth* (Chicago: Book Supply Co., 1911).

¹³ The historians William Cronon and Jocelyn Wills, for instance, have argued that the cities and urbanites were pivotal to the building of the west. According to Cronon, the hinterlands of the Midwest could not have developed without the bustling metropolis of Chicago. Wills makes a similar argument for Minneapolis-St. Paul. William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), xiv-54; see also William G. Robbins, *Colony and Empire: The Capitalist Transformation of the American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994); Carl Abbott, *How Cities Won the West: Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008).

¹⁴ Jocelyn Wills, *Boosters, Hustlers, and Speculators: Entrepreneurial Culture and the Rise of Minneapolis and St. Paul, 1849-1883* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2005).

from other forms of corporate welfare, including regulatory rollbacks that favored big business.¹⁵

Labor-friendly rules and regulations introduced by the New Deal were considered impediments to capitalist progress, thus well-connected and capital-rich boosters and business interests in western cities like Phoenix, Arizona methodically maneuvered to eliminate or lessen the burden of the welfare state, weakening labor unions and small businesses. With few exceptions, big business ideology became civic ideology. Profit for the few appeared to be the driving force of development.¹⁶

In California, boosterism was both a means to extract revenue and, according to historian Richard J. Orsi, a “social movement, consisting of many individuals or whole communities organizing to achieve mutual goals.” But, as Orsi critically notes, while communities tended to have a professionally diverse booster class, “California boosterism was predominantly a businessman’s affair.”¹⁷ Furthermore, boosterism was an overwhelmingly white endeavor. Thus, not only were non-whites usually not heard from in debates regarding the workings of

¹⁵ Elizabeth Tandy Shermer that Phoenix business and political elites, or “grasstops,” understood that long-term success (read: profits) was not guaranteed even with government aid, though it did greatly help. Thus, grasstops adapted their tactics and pleas for assistance as dictated by the times and ultimately fully embraced a neoliberal worldview which stressed state power be used to serve the interests of capital. Elizabeth Tandy Shermer, *Sunbelt Capitalism: Phoenix and the Transformation of American Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 3, 255.

¹⁶ In his analysis of American sunbelt cities, Murray Bookchin has argued that developers of these emerging municipalities viewed these locales as factories. The sole purpose of a community, then, was to maximize profit. Writing on the growth of the American West, historian Richard White contends that boosters “sought to make towns grow for a simple reason: they wanted to make lots of money.” Charles Postel’s study of the anti-corporate campaigns of the Populist Party at the close of the 19th century notes that the booster had acquired a “pejorative connotation of the shrewd speculator.” Some historians have claimed that boosterism was at times viewed as an inclusive and positive force. Elaine Naylor, for instance, argues that Port Townsend, Washington welcomed capitalist development, for it brought modern amenities to a relatively remote region. Murray Bookchin, “Toward a Vision of the Urban Future,” in *The Rise of the Sunbelt Cities*, eds. David C. Perry and Alfred J. Watkins (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1977), 260-261; Shermer, *Sunbelt Capitalism*, 13; Richard White, “*It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own*”: *A New History of the American West* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 417; Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 297; Elaine Naylor, *Frontier Boosters: Port Townsend and the Culture of Development in the American West, 1850-1895* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014), 10-12, 180-189.

¹⁷ Richard J. Orsi, “Selling the Golden State: A Study of Boosterism in Nineteenth-Century California,” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1973), vi, 44.

communities they lived in, but their civic importance went unacknowledged, as reflected in promotional materials. Boosterism exalted the pioneer – yeoman or businessman – for braving it on the Turnerian frontier, masking the reality of the American West: the difficult work required for growth was not completed by white frontiersman, but rather by female and male wage workers of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.¹⁸

California communities' promotional materials used exclusionary notions of race and civilization to make their "quasi-tropical domains" not simply tolerable, but enjoyable for whites. Produced at a time when white Americans were increasingly coming into contact with the so-called "barbarian" peoples of the world at home and abroad, such marketing ploys would have resonated with tourists, settlers, and investors concerned about the future of the nation. California boosters hinged their promotions on white Americans' desires to form homogenous white communities defined by self-directed labor and equal and virtuous citizenship. California, then, was no place for Mexicans, Chinese, or other racial minorities allegedly predisposed to servitude, despotism, and other un-republican conditions.¹⁹ Indeed, early 20th century Los Angeles boosters' marketing campaigns successfully diminished or altogether hid non-whites' presence in, and influence on, the region to better sell the city to white tourists and potential

¹⁸ Historian Sarah Deutsch has shown that on the frontier, women of color, particularly ethnic Mexican women, were often both valuable wage workers and family heads, as men left home villages to travel to work sites on the periphery. Carlos A. Schwantes, "Spokane and the Wageworkers' Frontier: A Labor History to World War I," in *Spokane & the Inland Empire: An Interior Pacific Northwest Anthology*, ed. David H. Stratton (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1991), 123-141; Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

¹⁹ In his study of boosterism in California and Florida from 1869 to 1929, Henry Knight explains that boosters, who were almost always white, purposely muted Mexicans, Chinese, Indians, recently emancipated blacks, and other minorities. Additionally, boosters had to prove to their white audiences that their states were not heavily populated by the "tropical" (read: inferior) peoples of the world. Henry Knight, *Tropic of Hopes: California, Florida, and the Selling of American Paradise, 1869-1929* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida), 3; see also Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000).

residents. Mexican and Chinese residents, long racialized as both non-white and foreign, were portrayed as pacified relics of the past, or workers far removed into the hinterlands.²⁰

Perhaps because it did not fit the republican and democratic narratives of the country, California booster campaigns generally made no mention of racialized labor management.²¹

Used by business interests to drive a wedge between ethnoracial groups and to reproduce colonial hierarchies of domination, racialized labor management allowed for easier exploitation

²⁰ In California, the racial hierarchy was predicated not solely on the Black-White binary of the American eastern seaboard, but rather on a more complex racial classification system that, to borrow from political scientist Claire Jean Kim's study on the racialization of Asians in the United States, "triangulated" racial groups in a "field of racial positions" operating along two axes: superior/inferior and insider/foreigner. Asians were viewed as perpetual foreigners who could degrade American (read: white) civilization, and thus they were repeatedly persecuted. During the 1870s, boosters and business interests – with the support of white workers – proposed squeezing Chinese out of the state. Similarly, ethnic Mexicans occupied a social space inferior to Anglo Americans, who since the mid-19th century had, according to Stephen J. Pitti, successfully "grafted a new top rung to the pre-existing" racial hierarchy first introduced by the Spanish. Historian Ramón Gutiérrez has noted that in the northernmost reaches New Spain, the complex *casta* system was reduced to five categories: Spaniards, Indians, blacks, *mestizos* (mixed Spanish and Indian blood), and *mulattoes* (mixed Spanish and African blood). After the Mexican conquest, even Mexican elites slowly descended down the social ladder as Anglo Americans gained control of political and economic levers over the course of the 19th century. Tom Zimmerman, "Paradise Promoted: Boosterism and the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce," *California History* 64 (Winter 1985), 32; Clair Jean Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans," *Politics & Society* 27 (Mar. 1999), 106; Natalia Molina, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 73; Orsi, "Selling the Golden State," especially chapters six and seven; Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Stephen J. Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 2; Ramón Gutiérrez, "New Mexico, Mestizaje, and the Transnations of North America," in *Mexico and Mexicans in the Making of the United States*, ed. John Tutino (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012), 273-275; Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-speaking Californians, 1846-1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979). Notable studies on the decline of San Diego *californios* include Mario T. García, "Merchants and Dons: San Diego's Attempt at Modernization 1850-1860," in *Mexicans in California After the U.S. Conquest* (New York: Arno Press, 1976), ed. Carlos E. Cortés, 52-80; Richard Griswold del Castillo, ed. *Chicano San Diego: Cultural Space and the Struggle for Justice* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007); and Rudy P. Guevarra, *Becoming Mexipino: Multiethnic Identities and Communities in San Diego* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012), especially introduction and chapter two. For a comparative study of race and racial formation in California, see Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California*, 2009 Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009). An excellent analysis on the racialization of whites, blacks, and Mexicans in southeast Texas can be found in Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

²¹ Historian David E. Nye argues that "foundation narratives" were stories told by white Americans of continental expansion as civilizing and democratizing processes. Republican rebirth was made possible by technologies like the axe, the railroad, and the irrigation canal. Foundation narratives made no room for non-whites, many of whom were believed to have impeded progress. David E. Nye, *America as Second Creation: Technology and Narratives of New Beginnings* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 1-20; Knight, *Tropic of Hopes*, 10-11.

of the working class.²² The historical segmentation of the working class contributed to what scholar George Lipsitz has identified as a “possessive investment in whiteness”: white identity carried with it a range of privileges and benefits – social and legal – not extended to non-whites. In the workplace, such privileges and benefits manifested in the form of better positions, safer conditions, and higher wages for white males.²³ Because whiteness was elastic—both relational and situational – especially in the decades 1840 to 1920, immigrant groups such as the Irish, Italians, Greeks, Slavs, and other southern and eastern Europeans immigrants held a “probationary white” status and were often in positions where they could either reinforce ethnoracial lines of division or potentially help render them less important.²⁴ Particularly in the first three chapters, this dissertation traces how certain working class “probationary whites” imbued with the ideologies of the IWW, the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM), or other leftist groups, rejected the language of race and nationalism to ally with working class ethnic Mexicans. Booster San Diego viewed these alliances as evidence of deviance, subversion and, for some, foreignness, which ultimately subjected leftists to incarceration or deportation.

²² In his dense study of black radicalism from antiquity to the mid-20th century, *Black Marxism*, Cedric J. Robinson contends that capitalism is dependent on race and gender to continuously create seemingly natural divisions of labor. Said divisions allowed for the exploitation of the working class. David R. Roediger and Elizabeth D. Esch, *The Production of Difference: Race and the Management of Labor in U.S. History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 86-97; Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, Reprint (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

²³ George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*, Revised Edition (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006). Roediger was one of the first historians to examine the “wages of whiteness,” arguing that poor whites rejected potentially advantageous alliances with blacks. Whites chose racial identity over class. David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991); for a provocative interpretation on the whitening of the Irish, see Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

²⁴ Here I borrow from historian Matthew Frye Jacobson, who notes that between the 1840s and 1920s, color lines had yet to be concretely determined. Indeed, it was not “altogether clear just where that line [of whiteness] ultimately *would* be drawn” (author’s emphasis). Because of shifts in the white racial category, I consistently interchange my use of “white” and “Anglo” (persons of western and northern European heritage), although as my narrative ventures into later years I use the former more frequently since the whiteness was becoming more inclusive to persons of European descent. Nevertheless, I make a faithful effort to refer to persons by their self-identification when known. When not known, I categorize them as accurately as possible. Finally, when quoting a source that specifies a race or ethnicity, those are the words of the author and not mine. Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 7.

It was in this context that early 20th century boosters and business interests in Greater San Diego strove to erect their everlasting monument to the Pilgrim Fathers of the West. Its close proximity to the hardening U.S.-Mexico international border set Greater San Diego apart from most other booming towns of the American West. Although other locales on the border were in some fashion connected to Mexico and ethnic Mexicans, few staked their futures to the narrow, all-American dreams pursued by boosters and business interests in Greater San Diego during the first half of the 20th century. Booster San Diego simply had to attract peoples who agreed with their rather inflexible vision. Dissent would not be tolerated, especially when it emanated from across the international line or from within local ethnic enclaves, or from the mouths of non-whites. It is in these acts of resistance where an alternative history of Greater San Diego is told.

Competing Visions

In *Under the Perfect Sun: The San Diego Tourists Never See* (2005), Mike Davis, Kelly Mayhew, and Jim Miller have argued that San Diego businessmen, land developers, and politicians have historically desired to make the border city “a utopia of patriotism and free enterprise” designed to both entertain and personally enrich through private government the middle and (especially) upper classes.²⁵ Indeed, initially led by property magnate and *San Diego Union* publisher John D. Spreckels, Booster San Diego moved to make the border region an economically profitable and comfortable community for a white middle and upper class, with little to no regard for the non-white working class who had made the booster dream possible. A few boosters and business interests conveyed some concern for the plight of non-white workers,

²⁵ Mike Davis, Kelly Mayhew, and Jim Miller, “Introduction,” in Mike Davis, Kelly Mayhew, and Jim Miller, *Under the Perfect Sun: The San Diego Tourists Never See* (New York: The New Press, 2005), 3; Jim Miller, “Just Another Day in Paradise? An Episodic History of Rebellion and Repression in America’s Finest City,” in *Under the Perfect Sun*, 160-161. Davis has offered similar, but more thorough analysis of Los Angeles. See Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

but most viewed non-white laborers as inferior, exploitable, and expendable. Ethnic Mexicans and other non-white workers were left little choice in how they lived their lives.

The pursuit of a model enterprise necessitated not only the denial of workers' rights, but also the denunciation of any criticism leveled by more progressive members of the community. Thus Spreckels, in a caustic speech denying the charge that he was the leader of "hungry wolves" (i.e. banks and "big merchants and manufacturers") who preyed on the working class, accused his chief publishing rival in San Diego, E.W. Scripps, of being a "vulture" who used his "vile newspapers to tear society to pieces" by "pandering to the envy and jealousy of the man in the street." Spreckels insisted that he was the true ally of labor because he created many jobs through his various investments "in buildings or industries or enterprises."²⁶

Other boosters and business interests shared similar sentiments, as they believed that by developing Greater San Diego and bringing industrial and service jobs to the region, they were pro-labor. Prosperity, they claimed, would always trickle down to the working class. Thus, any businessman who did not attempt to grow his fortunes through profit-seeking ventures, and who did not enthusiastically champion capitalist growth, was no friend to labor and deserved ostracism. Uncompromising boosters like former San Diego mayor James E. Wadham, for example, declared his political rivals, including department store owner and philanthropist George W. Marston, anti-development and anti-labor. According to Wadham, Marston cared

²⁶ During a banquet held in 1923, Spreckels dismissed the notion that he was a local dictator bent on wielding unquestioned political power over all locals; rather, he claimed that he was a businessman who simply wanted to grow his personal wealth, and for that reason he invested heavily in many Greater San Diego business ventures. Spreckels added that if he "developed" his own fortunes, San Diego would benefit as well, since he would only re-invest in the community. The influential businessman charged that Scripps could not make such a claim, as the latter was responsible for only "stirring up discontent [and] arousing suspicion" among workers. For this reason, Spreckels believed, Scripps was, as noted above, a "vulture." It is worth noting that the self-anointed "friend of labor" also declared in the same speech that he was "no Santa Claus" and re-invested solely to grow his profit margins. Untitled Spreckels speech delivered on 13 June 1923, Folder 8, Box 27, Ed Fletcher Papers, Special Collections & Archives, University of California, San Diego (UCSD).

little for San Diego and the working class, simply because the latter had no desire to establish any other business beyond his lone department store. The accusation later haunted Marston when he ran for mayor in 1917, and forced him to declare his unwavering allegiance to capitalist progress: “I am in favor of all things that make for commerce, manufacturing, for all business activity... It is absurd to say that I am not in favor of industrial development. I believe in a Greater San Diego.”²⁷

Indeed, Marston, though politically progressive in many ways, was always pro-development and played an important role in the California-Pacific Exposition of 1915-1916 – a fair organized by leading boosters and business interests to showcase to the U.S. military, bankers, and other potential (re-)investors that Greater San Diego was a place of great economic promise.²⁸ Fair organizers and participants promoted not only the region’s natural beauty and technological and industrial advancements, but also, critically, its ability to manage labor and eliminate union organization and activity deemed subversive, un-American, and detrimental to capitalism’s onward march. The exposition’s Wild West show, which featured former Wobblies

²⁷ Like his progressive peers across the country, Marston favored rational, expertly planned development that did not entirely treat workers like commodities. He also did not want to lay waste to the environment in the pursuit of profit. Thus, while championing the construction of factories, the railroad, and the development of San Diego’s harbor, he also called for the creation of public “green” spaces. His desires for the latter compelled him to use his own funds for a large public park: Balboa Park. Years later, Balboa Park hosted the Panama-California Exposition, which drew rave reviews from many visitors. Booster and business interest solidarity on display during the exposition gave way to a bitter mayoral race between “smokestacks” and “geraniums” in 1917. Marston, the “geranium” candidate, lost the election. Marston quoted in Richard F. Pourade, *Gold in the Sun* (San Diego: Union-Tribune Publishing Co., 1965), 224; Uldis Portis, “Geraniums Vs. Smokestacks: San Diego’s Mayoralty Campaign of 1917,” *Journal of San Diego History* 21 (Summer 1975), <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/1975/july/geraniums/>, accessed 14 November 2017; Gregg R. Hennessey, “George White Marston and Conservative Reform in San Diego,” *Journal of San Diego History* 32 (Fall 1986), <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/1986/october/george-white-marston-conservative-reform-san-diego/>, accessed 14 November 2017; see also Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Free Press, 2003).

²⁸ “Plan World’s Exposition for San Diego in Year 1915,” *San Diego Union*, 28 August 1909; “Committee Named to Boost for World’s Fair,” *San Diego Union*, 2 September 1909; “Businessmen Approve of Exposition,” *San Diego Union*, 7 September 1909; William Clayton, “Outlines Plan for Fair and Defines its Scope,” *San Diego Union*, 16 September 1909; Gregory Montes, “Balboa Park, 1909-1911: The Rise and Fall of the Olmsted Plan,” *Journal of San Diego History* 28 (Winter 1982), 18.

(as IWW members were known as) re-enacting scenes from the defeated anarcho-syndicalist Baja California revolution of 1911, conveyed to audiences that all dangers, including the leftist activities of previous years, had been eliminated. Vigilant boosters and business interests who monitored radical labor organization along the U.S.-Mexico line had helped make Greater San Diego, in the words of fair attendee and Marine colonel Joseph H. Pendleton, a “picture of peace with preparedness.”²⁹ The Wild West Show, then, suggested that comfort and financial security were reserved for those who did not question the booster dream.

Despite the industrial and service jobs created by the exposition, many leftist workers were unconvinced by the Booster San Diego worldview of prosperity for the simple fact that, for them, Greater San Diego was far from peaceful and plentiful. The socioeconomic gains championed by boosters and business interests did not trickle down from top to bottom as promised. Wobbly Caroline Nelson understood that fairs were a window into a particular vision for society: one that did not portend well for the labor and civil rights of the skilled and unskilled working class. California fairs in particular, Nelson wrote in the newspaper *Industrial Worker*, were “a bait to run suckers and workers into California,” who would then “be worked to the limit” since the capitalist boss determined that the mild climate allowed workers to live on lower wages. “That is why,” she perceptively noted, “he [the businessman] begins to look to this state as a paradise to investment and marvelous manufacturing possibilities. That is the chief reason for that frantic free speech fight in San Diego... That kind of terror was to scare all the workers in every city into silence.”³⁰

²⁹ Joseph H. Pendleton, “Forward,” in *Army and Navy Review 1915: Being a Review of the Activities of the Officers and Enlisted Men Stationed in San Diego during the Exposition*, ed. Arthur Aronson (San Diego: Panama-California Exposition, 1915), np.; Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014), 371.

³⁰ Caroline Nelson, “The Workers in California,” *Industrial Worker*, 12 September 1912. The *Industrial Worker*, first published in 1906 in Joliet, Illinois under a different name, was the official newspaper of the IWW west of the Mississippi River (*Solidarity* was the official “Eastern Organ”). In 1909, the *Industrial Worker* moved its

Keeping Nelson's assessments in mind, this dissertation analyzes a central feature of capitalist development in Greater San Diego: boosters and business interests' use of questionable and undemocratic methods, such as disinformation, austere legal restrictions, and extralegal terror, to secure power and control over all workers in order to build a model, profitable American community. During the San Diego Free Speech Fight of 1912, Booster San Diego not only called for federal intervention, but also spread alarmist anti-labor sentiment in the press; passed restrictive public speaking ordinances; and, as the cases of Goldman, Reitman, and Mikolasek illustrate, used vigilante violence and deportation to control, if not outright stop, the circulation of leftist ideas amongst the growing and diverse working class. The violent free speech fight and reactions to the Baja California revolution that preceded it were not anomalies, but rather early manifestations of the struggle between Booster San Diego and leftist workers from both sides of the border.³¹

During the first two decades of the 20th century, members of the IWW, the PLM, and several other associated groups organized around internationalist, egalitarian, and democratic ideals to counter the segmentation of the working class and combat capitalist hegemony in both the United States and Mexico. For ethnic Mexicans and other non-white workers who built Spreckels' border-traversing San Diego & Arizona Railway, or toiled in the massive irrigated agricultural fields of the Imperial and Mexicali valleys, late 19th and early 20th century

publication to Spokane, Washington. Microfilmed copies of *Industrial Worker* are available at several university libraries (on-site or via interlibrary loan), though holdings are often incomplete. Digital and open access reproductions of the first seven years of the western paper have been made available by Marty Goodman of the Riazanov Library Project via the website Marxists.org.

³¹ One of the first and few to study the San Diego Free Speech Fight of 1912 was Rosalie Shanks, a local historian who labeled the struggle an anomaly in San Diego history. Although Shanks' article engages with excellent primary sources, the analysis of leftist objectives is lacking. In a way, her final assessment of the significance of the months-long incident – that public speaking restrictions endangered everyone's freedom of speech – diminishes some of the Wobblies and other unionists' harshest critiques of capitalist development in Greater San Diego and the United States. Rosalie Shanks, "The I.W.W. Free Speech Movement: San Diego, 1912," *Journal of San Diego History* 19 (Winter 1973), <https://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/1973/january/speech/>, accessed 1 September 2017.

modernization and development under the regime of Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz differed little from the land reclamation and colonization schemes of the California Development Company or other American corporations. If any differences between “bosses” on either side of the international border existed, the differences were in degree and not kind.³² Indeed, I show how certain business interests operated on both sides of the border, and while they may not have always used excessive force north of the line (though they often did), to the south they did not hesitate to unleash the repressive *rurales*, or the Díaz regime’s rural police force, to discipline workers constructing irrigation canals that were to be used for Imperial Valley farms.

The shared experience of want and repression provided Greater San Diego workers with a foundation on which to cross racial, ethnic, national, and linguistic lines. Leftist ideology tenuously bound together diverse groups. A central claim of this dissertation is that ethnoracial and national differences did not automatically preclude working class solidarity, especially since whiteness did not always provide many of Greater San Diego’s white wage workers the stability and security they long dreamed of having. Crucially, white workers recognized, at least temporarily, that they were a part of a broader working class that had been left behind or marginalized by capitalist progress. Since their circumstances were in many ways materially similar, the anarcho-syndicalist principles of the IWW and PLM united the disinherited of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands in the early 20th century. Ethnic Mexicans could and did forge alliances with Anglos, Italians, Greeks, and local indigenous groups, among others, first on the

³² David M. Struthers argues that Los Angeles leftists recognized that the capitalist system derived its power from a united business class which had transcended racial, national, and linguistic lines of division. Radicals thus argued that they, too, needed class solidarity to ultimately defeat capitalism and, its enforcer, the state. David M. Struthers, “‘The Boss Has No Color Line’: Race, Solidarity, and a Culture of Affinity in Los Angeles and the Borderlands, 1907-1915,” *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 7 (Fall 2013): 61-92; David Marshall Struthers, “The World in a City: Transnational and Inter-Racial Organizing in Los Angeles, 1900-1930” (PhD diss., Carnegie Mellon University, 2010). For studies of how the IWW’s anti-racist ideologies and tactics were applied throughout the world, from the American Southwest, to South Africa, to Maori New Zealand, see Peter Cole, David Struthers, and Kenyon Zimmer, eds. *Wobblies of the World: A Global History of the IWW* (London: Pluto Press, 2017).

battlefields in Baja California, and then after Francisco I. Madero's more conservative revolutionary army defeated the PLM-IWW coalition, across the border in San Diego County and the Imperial Valley, much to the consternation of boosters and business interests, who appealed to state and federal authorities to help crush discontent.³³

While the Mexican Revolution provided an opening for drastic social change in Mexico, it also caused much destruction, disruption, and disillusionment, pushing many Mexicans northward to the United States. Movement into the United States was facilitated by the fact that the international border remained essentially open to Mexican nationals even after the passage of the restrictionist Emergency Quotas Act of 1921 and Immigration Act of 1924, the latter of which created the U.S. Border Patrol. Both laws implemented national origins quotas designed to curtail undesirable immigration from southern and eastern Europe, and re-shape the racial and ethnic composition of the country, and limit foreign-born political influence within it.³⁴ The

³³ The character of the Mexican Revolution has been a subject of debate amongst historians. A regionally distinct and loosely centralized country, Mexico's revolution meant different things to the many different factions which fought both the Díaz regime and each other. Capitalists, leftists, land reformers, and nationalists, among others, struggled to implement their visions for their local communities, and the nation. The result of the revolution has colored Mexicans' (and historians') assessments of it. Alan Knight's multivolume work, *The Mexican Revolution*, persuasively argues that the revolution, which he identifies as lasting from 1910 to 1920, was "a genuinely popular movement" where the masses "profoundly influenced events" and helped ultimately establish a socially conscious and pro-labor state. It was not until the 1940s, he contends, that the radical influences of the revolution faded. Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Vol. II (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), xi; Alan Knight, "The Mexican Revolution: Bourgeois? Nationalist? Or Just a 'Great Rebellion'?" *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 4 (1985), 1-37; Alan Knight, "Frank Tannenbaum and the Mexican Revolution," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 77 (Spring 2010), 134-153; John Womack, "The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920," in *Mexico since Independence*, ed. Leslie Bethell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 125-200.

³⁴ After extensive studies by the Dillingham Commission, legislators passed the Emergency Quotas Act, which temporarily restricted annual immigration from a given country to 3% of said country's resident population in the United States as of the Census of 1910. Three years later, Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1924, which placed quotas at 2% of a country's population in the United States as of 1890, thereby severely curtailing southern and eastern European immigration. These two quotas laws followed a series of immigration restriction laws targeting anarchists, the poor, and Asians. The most infamous of these older immigration laws was the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which aided boosters and labor by barring most Chinese from entry into the country. The Geary Act of 1892 extended the 1882 exclusion law, while also making requirements for Chinese entry far more stringent. Furthermore, the law required all Chinese to carry proper documentation within the United States, as all Chinese were presumed to be unauthorized immigrants. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*, 2002 Edition (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002); Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Paul R.

exemption of Mexico from the quotas did not indicate a positive shift in whites' perceptions of Mexicans but, rather, the economic necessity to have some supply of cheap labor for industries.

Agribusiness interests lobbied for Mexican exemptions understanding that Mexican nationals could not make claims on them or the state. It was an acknowledgment that American prosperity was dependent on a vulnerable, racialized underclass.³⁵ With irrigation waters, an ever-present scorching sun, and sufficient capital and technology at their disposal, Imperial Valley boosters and business interests moved to advance their large-scale agricultural kingdom by importing cheap labor, including colonial subjects such as the Filipinos, since doing so would allow for larger harvests and larger shipments to domestic and international markets. Thus, the importation of brown bodies from the colony of the Philippines and from Mexico, coupled with the implementation of a grower-friendly contract labor system that made it difficult for impoverished farm workers to leave the fields prior to the completion of the harvest, guaranteed vast profits.³⁶ As scribes for the New Deal's Federal Writers' Project concluded, industrial farms in the valley were exploitative.³⁷ Journalist, lawyer, and historian Carey McWilliams went a step

Spickard, *Almost All Aliens: Immigration, Race, and Colonialism in American History and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

³⁵ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 103; Molina, *How Race is Made in America*, 9-10.

³⁶ In *The Blood of Government*, historian Paul A. Kramer perceptively distinguishes between the competing racial ideologies white Americans held in the Philippines and in the United States. After establishing political control of the island, American colonial officials adopted an "inclusionary racism" which allowed them to socialize and work with Filipino elites, though not on equal footing, as Filipinos were still considered subordinate to the white colonists. In the United States, whites, familiar with domestic racial hierarchies, often sought to exclude Filipinos, with varying degrees of success since Filipinos were U.S. nationals. Immigration historian Mae N. Ngai has examined how this legal classification allowed Filipinos to enter the United States to work although they were eventually subject to quota, like other immigrants. White anxieties, however, persisted, particularly when Filipino men (who comprised a significant number of early migrants) socialized with white women. Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 192; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 91-126.

³⁷ Federal Writers' Project, "Organization of Mexican Agricultural Workers," in *A Documentary History of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, ed. Raymond P. Barry (Oakland: Federal Writers Project, 1938).

further, remarking that the “red-baiting” practices of Imperial Valley boosters and business interests (the harassment and persecution of unionists and leftists) personified “farm fascism.”³⁸

While this dissertation examines how the Imperial Valley’s boosters and business interests, with the assistance of the federal government and the local Mexican consul, secured and maintained power and control over farm workers, it also presents a “counterscript” detailing the ways in which workers crossed lines of division to overcome their collective crises of capitalism.³⁹ Historians Devra Weber, Benny J. Andrés, and Elizabeth E. Shine have demonstrated how the flexible “radical tradition” of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands did not cease existing even after concerted efforts by agribusiness interests to eradicate leftist politics. Indeed, former Wobblies and Liberals (as PLM followers were called) contributed to the labor activism in the Imperial Valley during the 1920s and later.⁴⁰

This dissertation acknowledges the critical importance of farm workers’ use of “infrapolitics” and “everyday” subtle acts of resistance to counter grower and state power, but it

³⁸ During the 1930s and 1940s, many of California’s leftists and liberals who promoted economic reform and racial equality labeled anti-worker groups and companies “fascist.” McWilliams was one such person, as he consistently lobbied for the civil and labor rights of immigrant groups, particularly ethnic Mexicans. McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1939), 231; Daniel Geary, “Carey McWilliams and Antifascism, 1934-1943,” *Journal of American History* 90 (Dec. 2003), 912.

³⁹ Natalia Molina coined the term “racial scripts” to “highlight the ways in which the lives of racialized groups are linked across time and space and thereby affect one another, even when they do not directly cross paths.” Racial scripts note how racialized groups are acted upon by institutions and ordinary citizens. Counterscripts challenge dominant racial scripts. Molina, *How Race is Made in America*, 6-7.

⁴⁰ Devra Weber, “Keeping Community, Challenging Boundaries: Indigenous Migrants, Internationalist Workers, and Mexican Revolutionaries, 1900-1920,” in *Mexico and Mexicans in the Making of the United States*, ed. John Tutino (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012), 208-235; Benny J. Andrés, *Power and Control in the Imperial Valley: Nature, Agribusiness, and Workers on the California Borderland, 1900-1940* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2015); Elizabeth E. Sine, “Grassroots Multiculturalism: Imperial Valley Farm Labor and the Making of Popular Front California from Below,” *Pacific Historical Review* 85 (May 2016): 227-254; Cletus E. Daniel, *Bitter Harvest: A History of California Farmworkers, 1870-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981); Gilbert G. González, *Mexican Consuls and Labor Organizing: Imperial Politics in the American Southwest* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999); Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976); Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States: Imperial Valley*, Vol. 6 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1928). Richard Griswold del Castillo has also offered a cursory analysis of ethnic Mexican activism in the Imperial Valley during the Great Depression. See Richard Griswold del Castillo, “From Revolution to Economic Depression” in *Chicano San Diego: Cultural Space and the Struggle for Justice*, ed. Richard Griswold del Castillo (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 81-84.

also posits that overt and collective acts of resistance by ethnic Mexicans and their allies were key to enacting change (albeit fleeting), especially during and after the Great Depression.⁴¹ Without much assistance or attention from more conservative labor unions like the American Federation of Labor (AFL) or the federal government, ethnic Mexican farm workers logically and willingly turned to communist and communist-aligned organizations, such as the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU) or other pro-labor groups with roots in the Mexican Revolution. Historians have cited agribusiness vigilante terror, the shortcomings of the federal government and the New Deal, the Mexican consulate at Calexico, and even the tactics of the CAWIU for the defeat of farm workers' movement during the 1930s. I argue that all these factors played a role, but so too did the "possessive investment in whiteness." Many poor whites who had been caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place took on jobs for lesser pay and collected relief unavailable to ethnic Mexicans, and thus undermined efforts to create a unified multiracial working class that could effectively challenge growers.

A theme that runs through this dissertation is white workers' difficulties relinquishing the privileges that whiteness bestowed. Not only did a white racial identity open workers to better jobs and higher wages, it also could save them from long jail sentences, exorbitant court fees, and for the foreign-born, deportation. This not to suggest that whites escaped serious reprisal, as evidenced by the lengthy prison sentence handed to "Big" Bill Haywood, a founding member of the IWW, in 1921. What I do contend, however, is that leftism was differentially punished

⁴¹ Borrowing from anthropologist and political scientist James C. Scott, who has argued that peasants in Southeast Asia have countered the power of the state through "everyday" acts of resistance, or "infrapolitics," Shine shows how ethnic Mexicans and other marginalized farm workers subtly countered agribusiness hegemony in the 1920s, setting the stage for later labor organization and protest that called not for reform. Shine, "Grassroots Multiculturalism," 227-254; James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). For an application of Scott's "infrapolitics" to the African American experience, see Robin D.G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

depending on the racial body. Thus, a white labor activist in the Imperial Valley could be jailed and set free, while for a similar crime, an ethnic Mexican organizer could be jailed and years later deported, as was the case with Mike Gutiérrez, whom I discuss in chapter three.

Differential punishment of leftists took on added importance at the dawn of the Cold War, when anti-communists began their campaign to punish persons deemed un-American. In Greater San Diego, striking tuna fish cannery workers, a significant majority of who were ethnic Mexican women, attracted hostile attention from boosters, powerful cannery owners, and the conservative AFL.⁴² Ethnic Mexicans who organized faced repatriation and deportation, particularly after the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952, which granted the federal government the power to deport residents and naturalized citizens suspected of subversive activities. Prominent white leftists secured the moral and financial support of colleagues and allies, but ethnic Mexicans like Roberto Galván, a faithful union leader and pillar of the ethnic Mexican community in San Diego who had briefly been a member of the Communist Party USA, withered in federal detention for years. He was eventually jettisoned over the border to Tijuana, back to the site Booster San Diego long considered a hotbed of radical leftism.

Chapter Outline

This dissertation consists of four chapters organized in rough chronological order. The first chapter revolves around the anarcho-syndicalist Baja California revolution of 1911, and the hopes and concerns it fostered. Placing it in the context of the developing American West and Porfirian Mexico, I show how the itinerant workers of ethnoracially diverse backgrounds came

⁴² My work draws heavily from the classic work of historian Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives*, as well as the more recent study produced by San Diego native and historian, Rudy P. Guevarra, Jr. Ruiz's study in particular works with the concept of the radical tradition, as her use of a "cannery culture" strongly suggests a localized union politics with roots in a leftist activist past. Indeed, several of the labor organizers discussed in *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives* were connected to leftists of the past. Vick L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Guevarra, *Becoming Mexipino*, especially chapter four.

together at the California-Baja California border to overthrow the Díaz regime and curtail the influence of business corporations, many of which were American-owned. Leftist newspapers, such as the PLM's *Regeneración* and the IWW's *Industrial Worker*, "capitalist" dailies, including the *San Diego Union*, American customs records, congressional reports, and the published correspondence of anarchist Ricardo Flores Magón, are some of the primary materials used to analyze PLM-IWW efforts to establish a new non-hierarchical and democratic order, as well as booster and business interest opposition. Boosters and business interests understood that the survival and success of capitalism depended on exploiting what they considered to be natural or biological inequalities. As such, during the Baja California revolution Booster San Diego began to use the international line to their advantage, using it to mark Mexico and ethnic Mexicans as alien to American values.

Chapter two traces the successful creation of an anti-worker and anti-leftist community through a vigorous campaign of disinformation in the press (particularly Spreckels' *San Diego Union*), restrictive public-speaking ordinances, vigilantism, and deportations of Wobblies and other unionists. The Free Speech Fight of 1912 was a tipping point in San Diego County, as Booster San Diego was able to convince the public that their community faced imminent danger from destructive leftist ideologies. The ongoing Mexican Revolution, the outbreak of war in Europe, and the Bolshevik Revolution added emphasis to campaigns that denounced leftist politics and stripped leftist activists of their civil rights. This wartime footing, coupled with the cooptation of the local AFL, solidified business interests' position in the region and safeguarded their ability to advance capitalist development completely at their discretion. The resultant political economy left unskilled workers, particularly ethnic Mexicans, with little room for advancement and constrained their life choices.

Using primarily congressional records, engineers' memoirs, oral histories, and archival material left by economist Paul S. Taylor and other principals, chapter three shifts focus away from the city of San Diego to the Imperial Valley to trace how agribusiness became dominant and lucrative in a relatively remote and harsh desert. Countering romanticized narratives of visionary engineers and hardworking farmer-bankers who brought water and agricultural life to the "desert of death," this chapter notes that Imperial Valley boosters and business interests were the beneficiaries of a combination of state ineptitude and negligence, corporate welfare, small farmer misfortune, colonial practices and relations, and luck. Industrial farmers also benefitted from the use of extralegal intimidation tactics and repatriation drives during the 1930s, the latter of which signified the hardening of citizenship and national borders. Conversely, the thousands of ethnic Mexican (im)migrants who did move into the valley under the promises of a better future were ultimately buoyed by a radical tradition, a will to live, and strategic alliances with leftists and progressives from Los Angeles and San Diego. Pursuing reform and not revolution, ethnic Mexican farm workers and their allies nevertheless drew the ire of growers, as calls for a livable wage and periodic respite from the scorching sun were considered dangerous impediments to growth. Demands for basic necessities, like the provision of potable water, had become revolutionary.

Chapter four examines leftist activism in San Diego's lucrative fish canneries during the late 1930s to 1950, the year in which a former United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA) organizer, Luisa Moreno, was ordered by the Immigration and Naturalization Service to leave the United States. As analyses of labor and city newspapers, state-level hearings on un-American activities, personal correspondence, and other primary source materials reveal, Moreno's removal from the country was the culmination of years of

struggle between cannery owners and the ethnic Mexican cannery women vital to the operation of the waterfront factories. The struggle reveals the extent to which the anti-leftist character of San Diego had grown and become entrenched, as in early years of the Cold War boosters and business interests found a ready ally in the AFL. The more conservative union joined anti-communists in the public and private sectors to purge the working class of leftist influences, leaving non-whites and non-citizens like Moreno and her San Diego friend, Roberto Galván, open to deportation. To the dismay of Latina/o workers' activists, former white allies retreated into their racial privilege and refused to assist them in staving off their expulsion from the nation.

Ultimately, the goals of this dissertation are, first, to overcome the historical amnesia that has served to distance Greater San Diego from Mexico and ethnic Mexicans and create an “unreal spectacle” for the comfort and material gain of a predominantly white upper and middle class; second, to demonstrate the ways in which boosters and business interests often violently maneuvered to create a model business region especially hostile toward labor and civil rights; and third, to offer an example of the power of a unified working class. Despite their many defeats, the leftists who appear in the pages that follow provide useful insights on how to enact meaningful social change for the working class.

1

Dreams of an Army: *Revolution and the Making of Anti-Leftist San Diego*

The movement here is still alive. That is saying a whole lot for a town in which you find practically nothing except “Bourgeois” sentiment in the ranks of the workers as a whole. Still, among the workers there are a few in whose minds is the spark of rebellion, waiting only to be fanned into action.

- S.F. McGee, 1910

[T]he I.W.W. have cast languishing glances at Lower California, and in their ostensible fight for free speech, which the private communications of their own leaders have indicated to us was not a real free-speech fight at all, they have really been fighting to establish a center for some sort of a revolution... to break out in a general uprising of the unemployed and the laboring classes of the United States, or else they would make their own sally into Lower California and there establish a separate government of their own.

- Dudley W. Robinson, 1912

For S.F. McGee, a member of the revolutionary and multiracial Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the chance for radical labor agitation in sunny and picturesque San Diego, California appeared faint, but not impossible. His union local, after all, had just been re-established four years after IWW organization and activity had waned in the small city. Now in 1910, McGee witnessed the number of Wobblies – as card-carrying IWW members were called – in San Diego quickly rise, with other local workers willing to entertain the “spark of rebellion.” McGee, who like many other Wobblies of the early 20th century could see beyond racial, ethnic, national, and linguistic lines, reported in the IWW’s western newspaper, *Industrial Worker*, that

a vocal Spanish-speaking migrant worker would likely organize a “good, wide-awake Mexican local before long.”¹

Following his attempted assassination of Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz and his subsequent escape from Mexico to Los Angeles, where he was briefly editor for a Spanish workers’ weekly, Wobbly Fernando Palomares arrived in San Diego sometime in 1910 and immediately provided a “spark” among the generally “bourgeois” local working class.²

Although the Mexican of Mayo Indian ancestry was often fired by San Diego bosses for his labor agitation, Palomares rallied fellow workers and inspired them to agitate on the streets, which ultimately led to a multiracial strike to end the San Diego Consolidated Gas & Electric Company’s use of the increasingly common dual wage system – a system adopted by employers which paid Mexican workers less than Anglo workers for equivalent work.³ Strikers believed that the end of the dual wage system was the first step in fundamentally changing both the racially stratified, business-oriented Greater San Diego – the region encompassing San Diego County and the Imperial Valley to the east – and the world.

Looking to continue their anti-capitalist campaign, Greater San Diego’s multiracial leftist workers crossed the U.S.-Mexico international border to take part in the Baja California

¹ S.F. McGee, “From San Diego,” *Industrial Worker*, 16 July 1910; S.F. McGee, “Organizers Needed in Southern California,” *Industrial Worker*, 16 July 1910.

² On Mexico’s independence day in 1908, Palomares (alias Francisco Martínez Palomarez) attempted to assassinate Díaz as he walked up the steps of the National Palace to deliver the traditional Grito de Dolores. However, the assassination attempt was unsuccessful, as Díaz, fully aware of his unpopularity, was protected by a bulletproof vest. In an letter to *Solidarity*, Palomares explained that prior to his arrival in San Diego, where he was the secretary for the IWW local, he edited the short-lived *Libertad y Trabajo*. McGee, “From San Diego”; F. Martínez Palomarez, “Help Madero’s Victims,” *Solidarity*, 24 February 1912; Ethel Duffy Turner, *Ricardo Flores Magón y el Partido Liberal Mexicano* (Morelia: Editorial Erandi del Gobierno del Estado, 1960), 169; Mitchell Cowen Verter, “Biographical Sketch,” in *Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magón Reader*, eds. Chaz Bufe and Mitchell Cowen Verter (Oakland: AK Press, 2005), 67; see also Alfonso Torúa Cienfuegos, *El magonismo en Sonora, 1906-1908: historia de una persecución* (Hermosillo: Universidad de Sonora, 2003), 99.

³ Ethnic Mexicans were joined by Greeks, Italians, and “Americans” (whites) in striking against the San Diego utilities company. To combat the strike, the San Diego Gas & Electric Company hired “several Americans” to fill the vacated positions, but these workers, too, ultimately joined the multiracial strike. Mexican Strike Committee, IWW Local No. 13, “San Diego on the Map,” *Industrial Worker*, 27 August 1910.

revolution of 1911. The revolution in Baja California, which was led by the anarcho-syndicalist Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) and a part of the broader Mexican Revolution, afforded multiracial and multi-ethnic workers an opportunity to obtain not only the freedom from the alleged oppression of capitalism and the state, but also the freedom to live in a horizontally-organized, anarcho-syndicalist worker's community where people could have an equal voice.⁴ In response, Dudley W. Robinson, assistant U.S. attorney for the southern district of California, warned senators in Washington D.C. of the dangers posed to Greater San Diego and the U.S. by the *insurrectos*, as the revolutionaries of the Baja California revolt were called. *Insurrectos*, Robinson testified, had hoped northern Baja California would become "a center for some sort of [international and social] revolution" of disinherited workers of all backgrounds.⁵ These details were not lost on Booster San Diego, or the loose collection of politicians, businessmen, realtors,

⁴ There has been much debate on the sociopolitical orientation of the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920. Many historians, such as Barry Carr and John Tutino, have rightly demonstrated that the Mexican Revolution differed by region, and even within regions. The north, for instance, produced a conservative to moderate (nationalist-capitalist) Sonoran dynasty that ruled Mexico until 1934, but it was also home to the complex populism of Villismo, which at times overlapped with some of the general principles of Zapatismo, which called for a return of lands to peasants. Other historians conclude that the Mexican Revolution was, in the end, far from social. John Womack asserts: "For all of the violence, this is the main historical meaning of the Mexican Revolution: a capitalist tenacity in the economy and bourgeois reform of the state." However, to look solely at the main outcome of the Mexican Revolution – a capitalist-oriented state – occludes the social currents of the revolution. As Alan Knight highlights, many Mexicans fought not for the centralization, corporatism, and bureaucracy that resulted, but rather for fundamental changes to their everyday lives. Some of these revolutionary changes called for a reversion to conditions existent prior to the arrival of the (international) market, while others called for a completely new system of relations. Barry Carr, "The Peculiarities of the Mexican North, 1880-1928: An Essay in Interpretation," Institute of Latin American Studies, Glasgow University Occasional Papers No. 4 (1971); John Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico: Social Bases of Agrarian Violence, 1750-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); John Womack, "The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920," in *Mexico since Independence*, ed. Leslie Bethell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 129; Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Vol. I & II (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); for another example of a work which notes the social dimensions of the Mexican Revolution, see Daniel Nugent, *Spent Cartridges of Revolution: An Anthropological History of Namiquipa, Chihuahua* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Revolutions in Mexico*, 62nd Cong., 2nd Sess. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913), 249.

land developers, and others desirous of making Greater San Diego a comfortable and profitable community.⁶

In this chapter I examine the PLM-IWW Baja California revolution of 1911 and its impact on early 20th century Greater San Diego. Specifically, I contend that leftist, cross-border organizing and *insurrectos*' revolutionary activity in neighboring Baja California challenged and threatened the capitalist progress dream championed by Booster San Diego. Unlike the *insurrectos* operating in Mexican border towns like Tijuana, which was directly across the U.S.-Mexico border from San Diego, Booster San Diego measured progress in part by their ability to extract profit. As such, to achieve their lucrative dreams, boosters believed they had to keep picturesque and "sleepy" San Diego free from the labor and social strife that, in their view, haunted and plagued the United States and many other countries, including Mexico. As a result, Booster San Diego would take any and all steps necessary to ensure their presumed destiny as one of the country's model communities – a model business enterprise. Indeed, the purpose of the community, Booster San Diego reasoned, was to turn a profit.⁷

⁶ As several historians have demonstrated, the Mexican Revolution profoundly shaped American relations with, and conceptions about, Mexico and ethnic Mexicans across the American Southwest. The revolution's impact on Greater San Diego, however, has received scant attention. For examples of the Mexican Revolution's impact in the American Southwest, see Charles H. Harris, *The Secret War in El Paso: Mexican Revolutionary Intrigue, 1906-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009); Sonia Hernández, *Working Women into the Borderlands* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014); Gerald Horne, *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Benjamin Heber Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Arnoldo de León, ed., *War Along the border: The Mexican Revolution and Tejano Communities* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2011); Paul J. Vanderwood and Frank N. Samponaro, *Border Fury: A Picture Postcard of Mexico's Revolution and U.S. War Preparedness, 1910-1917* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988); Devra Weber, "Keeping Community, Challenging Boundaries: Indigenous Migrants, Internationalist Workers, and Mexican Revolutionaries, 1900-1920," in *Mexico and Mexicans in the Making of the United States*, ed. John Tutino (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012); Elliott Young, *Catarino Garza's Revolution on the Texas-Mexico Border* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

⁷ Murray Bookchin writes that modern capitalist society has "completely degraded the [modern] city into a mere business venture to be gauged by monetary rather than social or cultural criteria." He added: "Urban ideology is business ideology." I contend that such was the case in early 20th century Greater San Diego, where the purpose and success of the city, and its accompanying countryside, was not measured by its ability to make a well-educated, informed, and engaged citizenry, but in its ability to create a profit-making machine for its business interests.

During the Baja California revolution the community's leading newspaper and prime source of boosterism, the *San Diego Union*, circulated fears of leftist labor unrest – and what such unrest meant for Greater San Diego – while elites like D.C. Collier, a real estate developer and former head of the San Diego Chamber of Commerce, sent a telegram to U.S. Secretary of State Philander C. Knox, imploring the federal government to in some way silence *insurrectos* and end their “Utopia.”⁸ Such efforts by boosters had profound consequences for Greater San Diego and its border with Mexico, as the U.S. military, much to the delight of boosters, established a larger economic, political, and social presence in the community. Additionally, Booster San Diego's fearmongering, whether exaggerated or not, had ramifications for Mexico and Mexicans. In the minds of many San Diegans, Mexico became a breeding ground for leftist agitation, while Mexicans themselves became, at least temporarily, key soldiers in the subversive “floating army” of itinerant workers. Consequently, the border's militarization intensified.

Before delving into the Baja California revolution and how it inadvertently helped give rise to an anti-leftist culture in Greater San Diego, it is critical to first understand the world which Wobblies Palomares and McGee inhabited. That world, often exploitative and hostile to the working classes, ultimately brought the two Wobblies to embrace a democratic and egalitarian vision they hoped to implement in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands.

On the Wage Workers Frontier

On 8 December 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt delivered a message to Congress warning of the dangers posed by political extremists. “Both the preachers of an unrestricted

Murray Bookchin, “Toward a Vision of the Urban Future,” in *The Rise of the Sunbelt Cities*, eds. David C. Perry and Alfred J. Watkins (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1977), 260-261.

⁸ “It's Time to Act,” *San Diego Union*, 8 April 1911; Mr. D.C. Collier to the Secretary of State, 20 June 1911, U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States with the Annual Message of the President Transmitted to Congress December 7, 1911* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918), 506.

individualism, and the preachers of an oppression which would deny to able men of business the just reward of their initiative and business sagacity,” he stated, “are advocating policies that would be fraught with the gravest harm to the whole country.”⁹ The president reflected an uneasiness with unrestrained capitalism, but he also believed that the actions of organized labor over the last three decades needed to be reined in and purged of its more radical elements. The Great Railroad Strikes of 1877, the Haymarket Massacre of 1886, the Pullman Strike of 1894, and the assassination of President William McKinley by a Polish anarchist in 1901, to name but a few examples of extreme labor actions, caused alarm among not just business interests, but the American public at large.¹⁰

Such incidents spurred Congress into action. For example, federal legislators responded to McKinley’s assassination with the passage of the Immigration Act of 1903, a nativist and anti-leftist law requiring an inspection of the political opinions of immigrants from Europe.¹¹ By doing so, congressmen conflated leftist politics with criminality. Thus, when Roosevelt stated, “Every far-sighted patriot should protest first of all against the growth in this country of that evil thing which is called ‘class consciousness’,” the president was more concerned about the common bonds and organization developed by the country’s leftist working class, and not those

⁹ Theodore Roosevelt, “Message of the President.” U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States with the Annual Message of the Transmitted to Congress December 8, 1908* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912), xii.

¹⁰ Labor historian Jerry M. Cooper notes that the Great Railroad Strikes of 1877, which occurred despite the absence of union activity, were put down by federal troops after they threatened railroad strikers back to work. Jerry M. Cooper, *The Army and Civil Disorder: Federal Military Intervention in Labor Disputes, 1877-1900* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), 76-78. For an overview on the relationship between the state and private businessmen, and their reaction to American labor demands, see Melvyn Dubofsky, *The State and Labor in Modern America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

¹¹ In 1901 Roosevelt proposed the exclusion of “all persons who are known to be believers in anarchistic principles or members of anarchistic societies.” His influence, along with the general anti-immigrant sentiment of the U.S., led to the enactment of the Immigration Act of 1903, which was also known as the Anarchist Exclusion Act. The law toughened deportation laws in general, as any “subversives” were subject to removal from the country. Paul Spickard, *Almost All Aliens: Immigration, Race, and Colonialism in American History and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 470; Roosevelt quoted in William Preston, Jr., *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals, 1903-1933* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 31.

ties formed by businessmen.¹² Roosevelt expressed a common anti-leftist sentiment held in the U.S. – one which Booster San Diego not only shared, but would come to exploit. Boosters and Roosevelt, then, disregarded workers’ concerns brought on by capitalist development.

Indeed, the leftists whom Roosevelt considered detrimental to the United States were responding to the significant socioeconomic changes that took place in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Industrial and technological progress, along with the harsh labor conditions implemented by bosses, resulted in extreme gains in income and wealth for only a select few.¹³ In the United States of this period the upper one percent of the population possessed a quarter of the nation’s total wealth; the top five percent owned half; and the bottom two-thirds claimed but a tiny share.¹⁴ Due in large measure to federal policies designed to promote capitalist progress, the American West, including Southern California, experienced some of the greatest industrial and technological achievements in the growing country, such as the expansion of the railroad and, following the completion of expansive irrigation projects, the rise of large-scale agribusiness in some of its harshest terrains; yet the multiracial and multi-ethnic women and men who made industrialization and urbanization possible on the “wageworkers’ frontier” reaped little of the rewards.¹⁵

¹² Quoted in Dubofsky, *State and Labor*, 40.

¹³ In a scathing critique of “lifestyle anarchism” and “antitechnologism,” Murray Bookchin reminds that technology in and of itself is not to blame for the exploitation and denigration of labor; rather, the loss of jobs and the intensification of exploitation are rooted in the social relations of capitalist exploitation. Technology alone does not exploit; it is the “avaricious bourgeoisie” which chooses how to use technology that exploits. By fixating on the evils of technology, as antitechnologists have done, criticism moves away from the capitalist system, thereby facilitating capital accumulation and the further exploitation of labor. Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* (Oakland: AK Press, 1995), 28-34. For discussion on primitive or “green” anarchism, see John and Paula Zerzan, “Industrialism and Domestication,” in *Questioning Technology: Tool, Toy, or Tyrant?*, eds. John Zerzan and Alice Carnes (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1991), 199-207. For an overview of both Bookchin and Zerzan, see Uri Gordon, “Anarchism and the Politics of Technology,” *Working USA* 12 (Sept. 2009), 489-503.

¹⁴ “Workers in a Maturing Industrial Society, 1877-1914,” in *American Labor: A Documentary Collection*, ed. Melvyn Dubofsky and Joseph A. McCartin (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 92.

¹⁵ Carlos A. Schwantes, “Spokane and the Wageworkers’ Frontier: A Labor History to World War I,” in *Spokane & the Inland Empire: An Interior Pacific Northwest Anthology*, ed. David H. Stratton (Pullman: Washington State

For some communities and peoples, such as ethnic Mexicans, the latest technological advancements served to push them further down the social ladder. In California, the decline of the *californios*, or Mexican elite, began in earnest following the end of the Mexican-American War of 1846-48 and the subsequent Mexican cession of most of the present-day American Southwest to the United States. Anglo Americans like Richard Henry Dana, Jr., the author of the highly influential *Two Years Before the Mast* (1841), described prominent San Diego resident Juan Bandini as rich in manners and decorum, but poor in finances. Bandini's situation, according to Dana, was due to "misfortune, extravagance, and the want of any manner of getting interest on money."¹⁶

Tapping into the negative stereotypes of the day held by Anglo Americans and some Europeans, Dana concluded that Bandini's "extravagance" and lack of business acumen was due to his Spanish background, which had failed to instill in him and his fellow *californios* what Max Weber later identified as the "Protestant ethic" of hard work, frugality, and money saving.¹⁷ The

University Press, 1991), 123-141. Building on Frederick Jackson Turner's work, David R. Roediger and Elizabeth D. Esch trace the importance of immigrant labor in railroad construction and mining. They note how in both industries management was crucial to the racialization of peoples and labor. While railroads sought specific groups to perform specific tasks, in the American West's mines companies actively attempted to create divisions within the workplace along racial lines. David R. Roediger and Elizabeth D. Esch, *The Production of Difference: Race and the Management of Labor in U.S. History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 86-97.

¹⁶ Juan Bandini was born in Peru in 1800 to José Bandini and Ysidora Blanca y Rivera. The Bandinis moved to California around 1820, when the elder Bandini fought with Mexican rebels to help Mexico gain its independence from Spain; however, Dana was incorrect when he wrote that Bandini was the governor of Alta California. (It is possible that Dana confused the Bandinis with another, even more prominent *californio* family, the Argüellos.) Soon thereafter José and Juan built a house in San Diego, where the family settled. Juan Bandini took a keen interest in politics and held his first of many public offices in 1827 as a member of the California Territorial Assembly. Next he became the commissioner of revenue at San Diego. A handful of years before he sailed with Dana, Bandini led a successful rebellion against the administration of Governor Manuel Victoria. Over the next decades Bandini held several other national and local political positions, in addition to involvement in a colonization and commercial company. He also acquired more land in Greater San Diego, some of it by way of marriage into the Argüello family. Dana, *Two Years before the Mast* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1899), 256; H.D. Barrows, "Juan Bandini," *Annual Publication of the Historical Society of Southern California and Pioneer Register*, *Los Angeles* 4 (1899), 243.

¹⁷ According to Weber, the advanced and modern capitalist societies of the West reached their preeminence through a shared belief of hard work, frugality, and saving. By not living for only the moment and by conducting one's self honestly, adherents of the Protestant work ethic (derived specifically from Calvinism) were able to build capital and ultimately financially prosper. Financial security was "the result and the expression of virtue and prosperity."

“misfortune” was due in part to land loss. In spite of the legal protections provided by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), beginning in 1850 and beyond *californios* lost land – most which had been granted to them by Spanish and Mexican authorities in the previous decades – through the invalidation of land titles, to Anglo squatters, or through forced sale of property to settle exorbitant legal fees incurred in the defense of said land titles.¹⁸ In Southern California, land loss through encroachment, while an issue, was less so than in the north; rather, mortgages, taxes, and personal expenses ate into *californios*’ wealth, which had been largely tied to the ownership of land and the sale of cattle and some consumer goods to locals and Northern Californians. When gold booms passed and thus diminished demands for *californio* goods, Southern California’s old landed class was hurt financially. This in turn made it more difficult for *californios* to hold on to their property.¹⁹ José María Estudillo, a member of one of the more prestigious *californio* families of San Diego, owned \$10,000 worth of real estate in 1860, which was down by more than two-thirds from only a decade before. The Argüello family, which had

Though Dana himself expressed some form of pity for *californios*, many of his Anglo American contemporaries held no such beliefs; rather, they reasoned that this lack of a profit-making spirit were signs of deficiency in the *californios*. For some, like Timofeevich Khlebnikov, a Russian chief of the Russian-American Company’s possessions in North America from 1814 to 1832, openly claimed that in relation to Europeans and Anglo Americans, *californios* were children who would possibly never mature to engage in meaningful commerce. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2003), 53-57; K.T. Khlebnikov, “Memoirs of California,” in *Documentary Evidence for the Spanish Missions of Alta California*, Vol. XIV, ed. Julia G. Costello (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991), 226-227.

¹⁸ Historian Richard Griswold del Castillo has written that though the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo protected the landholding rights of Mexicans living in the ceded lands, these rights, along with many other of the treaty’s provisions, were continuously violated. Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 93; Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking Californians, 1846-1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

¹⁹ The records and correspondence left behind by *californios* are saturated with discussion revolving around cattle. In one letter, for example, Leonardo Cota writes his cousin Francisco López, asking him to count the number of cattle present at the San Diego ranch so that he can plan accordingly and eventually merge the herd. Although Cota does not mention what he was going to do with the cattle, it is likely he was setting up a transaction. Leonardo Cota to Francisco López, 4 May 1856, Folder 1, Box 1, Amador, Yorba, López, and Cota Families Correspondence, Special Collections and Archives, UC Irvine Libraries, University of California, Irvine (UCI).

long been associated with California's elite and had led, along with Pío Pico and Juan Bandini, Alta California's revolt against the tyrannical governor in 1831, lost \$24,000 worth of property.²⁰

Disputes over property continued throughout the latter 1800s, and into the following century. For instance, legal disputes over the Argüello family's Rancho Tia Juana in "Lower California" lasted well into the first few decades of the 20th century, as descendants sought to reclaim what they believed to be theirs. As the Anglo surnames listed in the Rancho Tia Juana case suggests, Anglo Americans and local Mexican elite intermarried. Historians have demonstrated that this was quite common throughout the American Southwest and Mexican North.²¹ In fact, it was a prime avenue by which Anglo Americans could attain social standing and, perhaps more importantly, title to land (which in turn bestowed social prestige). Greater San Diego was no exception. Bandini, the *californio* both pitied and scorned by Richard Henry Dana, Jr., for being a relic of a bygone era, died in 1859 with no land to his name, as his vast landholdings had long transferred to his Anglo American sons-in-law.²² María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, who had been born in Baja California and later married an U.S. military officer who commanded the Army stationed at Mission San Diego, waged her own legal battle to keep her property in Greater San Diego following her husband's death. Her struggles, as well as those of

²⁰ Mario T. García, "Merchants and Dons: San Diego's Attempt at Modernization 1850-1860," in *Mexicans in California After the U.S. Conquest* (New York: Arno Press, 1976), ed. Carlos E. Cortés, 71.

²¹ Mark Wasserman, *Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution: The Native Elite and Foreign Enterprise in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1854-1911* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

²² Court filings from the American-Mexican Claims Commission document the landowning history of the Argüello family, as well offer a glimpse into the family's social history. The many Anglo names listed illustrate the degree to which Anglos intermarried with local ethnic Mexican elite. "Complaint for Declaratory Relief No. 506921," Folder 14, Box 1, Sayre Macneil Papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA; "Pronunciamiento de San Diego contra el Gefe Político y Comandante General de California, Don Manuel Victoria, en 28 de Noviembre, y 1 de Diciembre de 1831," in H.D. Barrows, "California Revolution of 1831: A Notable Manifesto," *Annual Publication of the Historical Society of Southern California and of the Pioneers of Los Angeles* 6 (1904).

other *californios*, became the focus of *The Squatter and the Don*, her historical novel which detailed the experiences of ethnic Mexicans in San Diego following Mexican cession.²³

If *californios* struggled in the second half of the 19th century, the landless ethnic Mexicans and Kumeyaay Indians who helped the old pastoral economy function fared no better.²⁴ Mercantilist incursions into Southern California by Anglo Americans like “New Town” San Diego founder Alonzo Horton, San Diego merchant Ephraim W. Morse, and Civil War general-turned-Southern Pacific Railroad investor William Rosecrans, had a profound impact on

²³ Ruiz de Burton, a proud *californio* who found the portrayal of her kind in popular literature disturbing, wrote her novel under the penname C. Loyal, which was the Anglicized version of a common Mexican abbreviation for “Ciudadano Leal,” or “Loyal Citizen.” As Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita explain, this was not so much a rejection of her American citizenship, but rather an embrace of her *californio* – not necessarily Mexican – heritage. National identity, after all, was still weak during this period. Richard Griswold del Castillo, “The American Colonization of San Diego,” in *Chicano San Diego: Cultural Space and the Struggle for Justice*, ed. Richard Griswold del Castillo (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 63; María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, *Conflicts of Interest: The Letters of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton*, ed. Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2001), 15; see also C. Loyal, *The Squatter and The Don: A Novel Descriptive of Contemporaneous Occurrences in California* (San Francisco: n.p., 1885).

²⁴ The local Indians of Greater San Diego – comprised mostly of Digueño (Ipia), Digueño Kumeyaay (Tipia, and collectively with the Digueño known as the Kumeyaay), Luiseño, and Cupeño – did not always willingly supply the Mission of San Diego nor the ranchos with their labor. Especially in regard to the mission’s subsistence economy, Indian labor was coerced and brutal. Yet Indians were not passive. If they did not outright rebel, they resisted Spanish coerced labor by working slowly and/or sloppily, feigning sickness, and running away into the nearby hills. The latter strategy of resistance was often met with harsh rebuke. Runaway neophytes, as the newly converted Indians were called, who usually ran away due to hunger, exhaustion and abuse, were regularly pursued by Spanish soldiers, which brought trouble not only to themselves but to other Indians in nearby and independent villages (runaways often sought refuge in these locales). According to historian Joel R. Hyer, the oral tradition of Luiseños describes instances when Spanish soldiers stationed at the nearby presidio seized innocent native babies from the village of Rincon (present-day El Cajon in San Diego County) and threatened to throw the crying babies into a nearby cactus field if parents did not cooperate and divulge the whereabouts of runaways. As one clergymen admitted, when a runaway was captured, soldiers whipped or placed shackles on the offending neophyte as a reminder of their duty as converts to remain and labor at the missions. In other instances, runaway Indians were executed. In spite of such punishments, Indians continued to attempt escape. Richard Griswold del Castillo finds that up until 1817, Mission San Diego had the second highest number of runaways (316). Spaniards tracked runaway Indians with such determination because the mission was heavily dependent on the latter’s labor. Hyer writes that indigenous workers made “bricks, shoes, candles, saddles and other goods,” as well as tended to livestock herds, spun wool, and tanned leather.” As another historian documents, mission Indians lived a regimented life most Spaniards would have rejected for themselves. Joel R. Hyer, “*We Are Not Savages*”: *Native Americans in Southern California and the Pala Reservation, 1840-1920* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001), 29-33; Richard Griswold del Castillo, “Natives and Settlers: The Mestizo Heritage,” in *Chicano San Diego: Cultural Space and the Struggle for Justice*, ed. Richard Griswold del Castillo (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007)24-25; Kent G. Lightfoot, *Indians, Missionaries, and Merchants: The Legacy of Colonial Encounters on the California Frontiers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 82-113; for a brief discussion on the diversity of Greater San Diego Indians’ language groups and culture, and how such customs continued in syncretic ways, see Lisbeth Haas, *Saints and Citizens: Indigenous Histories of Colonial Missions and Mexican California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 2-5 and 27-32.

all of these groups.²⁵ While Horton and Morse attempted to attract investment for both railroad construction and the development of San Diego Bay for commercial shipping and the harboring of U.S. naval ships, *californios*, Mexican and Indian farmhands, and more recent Sonoran migrants had to adjust to the new market-oriented order which had no place for the old, paternalistic relations between don and peon.²⁶

After the 1860s Mexican and Indian women looking to supplement their household's income were generally employed as domestics in Anglo American homes, while their male counterparts worked on public building projects, the railroad, and on the docks. In an early indication that Greater San Diego boosters were going to partially stake their community's image to the world to a "Spanish Fantasy Past" that had little room for either ethnic Mexicans or Indians, civic leaders occasionally expelled Indians from the city limits.²⁷ Greater San Diego

²⁵ In 1867, Alonzo Horton moved San Diego's city center from "Old Town," which was located near San Diego's mission and the presidio, south and closer to San Diego Bay; he named the new settlement "New Town." Morse, inspired by Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast*, moved to San Diego in 1850, where he became a civic leader and avid booster. Morse initially opened a store with Thomas Whaley, but beginning in 1861 he started a new business and became a Wells Fargo express agent. As he grew in prominence, Morse successfully courted railroad investment (from the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad) and helped develop sections of San Diego. Morse was central to securing a sizeable portion of the town for a city park. Rosecrans was a Union general during the Civil War and later became a notable figure in Californian business and politics, owning stock in the Southern Pacific and later serving as a Congressman. H.C. Hopkins, *History of San Diego: Its Pueblo Lands & Water* (San Diego: City Printing Co., 1929), 195-199; Florence Christman, *The Romance of Balboa Park*, 4th Edition (San Diego: San Diego Historical Society, 1985), 12; "Rosecrans Is Dead," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 12 March 1898.

²⁶ Morse formed the San Diego & Gila Southern Pacific Railroad Company to help court railroad investment in Greater San Diego. According to financial records and notes from the 1870s, Horton, along with other prominent early San Diego elites from C.L. Carr to Whaley, invested in the venture. Spanish surnames are absent from company documents like liabilities sheets, suggesting that *californios*, at least by the 1870s, were no longer key players in San Diego's growth. Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 25-32; "Liabilities of the San Diego & Gila Southern Pacific Railroad - 1970, 1972," Folder 22, Box 390, Ephraim W. Morse Papers, California State Library, Sacramento, CA (CSL).

²⁷ With Indians largely killed off by disease and/or displaced by European and American incursions, Greater San Diego boosters of the late 19th century were able to begin the promotion of a "Spanish fantasy heritage." Used in the 1940s by journalist, lawyer, and historian Carey McWilliams, the "Spanish fantasy heritage" described how ethnic Mexican elites of California stressed their Spanish ancestry, thereby denying any lineage to the region's Indian past. By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, McWilliams wrote, Los Angeles boosters used this fabricated Spanish colonial past to transform their city and county into a cultural and economic capital. As historian William Deverell adds, the maturation of metropolitan Los Angeles rested in part on the "institutional racial prejudice" Los Angeles' Anglo American elites erected with their embrace of the fictional Spanish past. Expanding on these ideas, Phoebe S. Kropp explains that white prejudices toward ethnic Mexicans was not confined to the City of Angels; rather, the

boosters were undoubtedly mindful of past skirmishes with local Indian groups. Influential businessman William Heath Davis recalled that as recently as 1837 “savages” had threatened “civilized” San Diego through their constant “plundering” and murder.²⁸ By the late 19th century, boosters reasoned that all Indians were “remnants of a degenerate age” that had no place in the community.²⁹

The removal of Kumeyaay Indians, however, was no easy task. As had been the case since the Spanish had first permanently settled in San Diego in 1769, natives continued to enter into intimate, although certainly not always consensual, relationships and marriages with Europeans and *mestizos*, which in many cases made them, at least socially, ethnic Mexican.³⁰ In the decades after the U.S.-Mexican war, ethnic Mexicans lived scattered throughout Greater San Diego and coped with the regions many booms and busts.³¹ Some lived in the city proper, while

Spanish Fantasy Past was used throughout California in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to make the Europeanized state amenable to Anglo Americans and their dollars. Carey McWilliams, *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincot Co., 1949); William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of Its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Phoebe S. Kropp, *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

²⁸ Davis’ memoir on California’s history, *Seventy-Five Years in California*, carefully draws distinctions between so-called civilized Indians living on Greater San Diego ranchos and “savage” mountain Indians, the latter of which were allegedly guilty of rampant raiding and murder. The Indian rebellion of 1837 ended when heavily armed San Diego citizens cornered the Indian conspirators and, without any trial, were taken to the outskirts of the city and shot dead into a ditch. Thirteen years after the 1837 rebellion Davis attempted but failed to make what became Horton’s “New Town” the new city center. William Heath Davis, *Seventy-Five Years in California: A History of Events and Life in California, Personal, Political and Military, under the Mexican Regime, during the Quasi-Military Government of the Territory by the United States, and After the Admission of the State to the Union* (San Francisco: J. Howell, 1929), 167-172.

²⁹ Florence Connolly Shipek, *Delfina Cuero: Her Autobiography; An Account of Her Last Years and Her Ethnobotanic Contributions* (Menlo Park, CA: Ballena Press, 1991), 72.

³⁰ In order to foster “civilization” in the Spanish North American frontier, Spaniards encouraged intermarriage between themselves and Indian women. In Greater San Diego, early Spanish missionaries like Father Junipero Serra, the architect for the Spanish mission system in Alta California, actively promoted such unions, but soon realized that Spanish soldiers were not ideal civilizers. Spanish soldiers’ rape of Indian women was commonplace, blurring the line between “barbarous” and “civilized.” Rather than respond with violence, Kumeyaay men instead kept away from Spanish settlers or tried to broker peaceful relations, which was not lost on Spanish priests. Father Luis Jayme wrote: “I burst into tears to see how these gentiles [non-Christianized Indians] were setting an example for us Christians.” The tense and uneven relationship between Spaniards, Mexicans, and Indians continued well into the latter stages of the 19th century. Lightfoot, *Indians, Missionaries, and Merchants*, 73-74; Maynard Geiger, ed., *Letter of Luis Jayme, O.F.M., San Diego, October 17, 1772* (Los Angeles: Dawson’s Book Shop, 1970), 42.

³¹ Griswold del Castillo, “American Colonization of San Diego,” 67.

others lived in small, semi-transient *colonias* in the countryside. In some of these areas farm work offered a source of income, although the type of work done on farms had shifted. Historian Greg Hall notes that mechanization on farms in the American West necessitated an increase in the amount of migrant and seasonal labor hired by farmers. Indeed, as the case of Greater San Diego's disinherited ethnic Mexican class illustrates, permanent farmhands on family-operated farms decreased, as did the number of family farms themselves. Industrial farming had transformed into a profit-making endeavor dependent on the seasonal migrant worker, regardless of that worker's background.³²

Thus, in general the imperatives of capitalism from the mid-19th century onward led to new and possibly greater forms of exploitation and marginalization of the multiracial and multi-ethnic workforce on the "wageworkers' frontier." Indicative of this is the case of Delfina Cuero, a Greater San Diego woman who identified as Kumeyaay. Cuero recalled her experiences as a little girl in the early 20th century: "Lots of people moved around then... Sometimes we found [food]. Lots of times we did not and we went hungry." Unfortunately for Cuero, the struggles of her youth became the struggles of her adulthood. Unable to escape poverty and desperately hungry in a time of capitalist progress, Cuero sold her child to a better-off Mexican family.³³

A Way Out

While 19th century pro-capitalist economists and reformers like Henry George recognized the drawbacks of capitalist development, leftists provided the most scathing remarks on its

³² With the advent of corporate farming, not only did farm workers lose a more stable wage and living situation, but also to on the opportunity to develop expertise in running a farm. The combined lack of saving and opportunity to learn further destabilized farm work. As a result, farmhands disappeared. Greg Hall, *Harvest Wobblies: The Industrial Workers of the World and Agricultural Laborers in the American West, 1905-1930* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2001).

³³ More precisely, the sudden death of Cuero's husband plunged the mother deeper into destitution. Shipek, *Delfina Cuero*, 55; Griswold del Castillo, "American Colonization in San Diego," 64-65.

narrative and definition of progress.³⁴ Anarchists Emma Goldman and Max Baginski wrote in *Mother Earth* that the once glorious U.S. republic over the course of the 19th century evolved “into an arbitrary state which subdued a vast number of its people into material and intellectual slavery.”³⁵ Like Goldman and Berkman, the IWW concluded that reformist measures and operation within the prevailing political system were insufficient in eliminating inequality and the exploitation of the masses. Formed in 1905 in Chicago, the IWW came to embrace the ideologies of anarchism and syndicalism, which aimed to create a democratic, egalitarian, and socialist order through social revolution, thereby abolishing capitalism, landlordism, and the state.³⁶ As leftist intellectual Justus Ebert wrote in 1908: “Industrial unionism aims to organize the working class for its own emancipation from capitalism. Its purpose is not only reformatory but revolutionary, as it would change the entire system of private ownership of capital for a system of social ownership.”³⁷

³⁴ George’s treatise “Progress and Poverty” proposed several solutions to minimize or eliminate inequality in an industrial economy. He settled on a single tax – a tax on land value – as the best remedy. Such a tax would have been high enough to render all other taxes unnecessary. All who chose to participate in such a society, George postulated, would benefit. Land owners would continue to reap the rewards of full production and development, while workers would earn a livable wage. Henry George, “Progress and Poverty: An Inquiry into the Cause of Industrial Depressions and of Increase of Want with Increase of Wealth,” in *The Writings of Henry George*, Vol. I (New York: Doubleday and McClure, 1898), 6.

³⁵ Emma Goldman and Max Baginski, “Mother Earth,” *Mother Earth*, March 1906. For a brief but excellent work on the history of Emma Goldman, her paper *Mother Earth*, and several of the key figures connected to said publication, see Peter Glassgold, ed., *Anarchy!: An Anthology of Emma Goldman’s Mother Earth*, xi-xxxviii.

³⁶ Syndicalism, a variant of anarchism, stipulates that the means of production have to prefigure the ends, and daily struggle can generate counter-power. Prominent socialist Eugene V. Debs was one of the founders of the IWW, but left the organization three years later when the organization began to champion anarchism and syndicalism. At the convention, however, the disparate factions came together to condemn the conservatism of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), then the dominant labor union of the United States. Convention-goers attacked Samuel Gompers, the AFL’s leader, for his willingness to work with captains of industry, labeling him and his organization “labor fakirs.” In spite of the common ground, personal and ideological differences split the IWW. Daniel De Leon, a leftist who was willing to use the state ballot to achieve the emancipation of the working class, moved his Wobbly faction to Detroit, while the more radical leftist wing remained in Chicago and continued to advocate for agitation and the dissolution of the state. Because the Chicago wing became the dominant faction, I use it as representative of the IWW. De Leon’s IWW was renamed the Workers’ International Industrial Union in 1915. Lucien van der Walt and Michel Schmidt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism*, Vol. I (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), 33; Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1989), 136-137; Melvyn Dubofsky *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World*, Abridged Edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 33-47.

³⁷ Justus Ebert, “May First – International Labor Day,” *Industrial Union Bulletin*, 2 May 1908.

To accomplish their goals, Wobbly leadership cast a wide net, accepting workers of all races, ethnicities and nationalities, and in all lines of work, for they reasoned that the working class was only as strong as its weakest member. Initiation fees were kept low and union dues even lower, which served to strengthen Wobbly membership among the most marginalized of workers in the United States.³⁸ Leader “Big” Bill Haywood recognized that since traditional political avenues were closed to blacks, immigrants, women, and children, participation in elections was futile. Alternative strategies were needed – revolution was required. The worker, in Haywood’s estimation, would rise against business interests once experience or socialist education exposed the “truth”: the worker would forever remain enslaved if the rules of businessmen, codified by the state, remained intact.³⁹

Some workers in Southern California took extreme measures to send a message to business interests. For example, on 1 October 1910 two militant trade unionists, the brothers James and John McNamara, bombed the Los Angeles Times Building, killing 21 employees and injuring many others, in retaliation for publisher Harrison Gray Otis’s virulent anti-labor stance in the influential newspaper. The morning after the bombing, the *Los Angeles Times* wasted little time in branding unions as opponents of progress. On its front page, it printed a letter of solidarity from one San Francisco publisher, who wrote: “[The bombing] is a blow struck by dastardly hands against The Times for its defense of freedom in industry... This incident should arouse the country to the situation created by the pretensions of organized labor in its aggressive

³⁸ Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 85.

³⁹ Haywood believed any action taken by the radicalized laborer was positive. “[The worker] knows that whatever action advances the interests of the working class,” Haywood asserted, “is right, because it will save the workers from destruction and death.” William D. Haywood and Frank Bohn, *Industrial Socialism* (Chicago: C.H. Kerr, 1911), 52; Schmidt and van der Walt, *Black Flame*, 162.

development.”⁴⁰ The *Los Angeles Times* declared: “Nothing has been accomplished except to give the world one more example of the insane, murderous folly of the rabid labor unions.”⁴¹

Leftists generally supported the actions of the McNamaras. In 1911, as their trial came to a close, Emma Goldman claimed in *Mother Earth* that the bombing was the unionists’ last option, and that while the McNamara’s did not understand anarchism, anarchism understood them.⁴² In the same issue of *Mother Earth* Alexander Berkman, an anarchist sentenced to 14 years in prison for his failed assassination attempt on a prominent businessman, declared the bombing justified, for violence against workers begot violence.⁴³ It was tyranny and exploitation that enabled the few to live comfortable, even decadent, lives while workers suffered. The McNamaras, in Berkman’s estimation, were courageous for acting on their convictions and bringing attention to the “hypocritical horror” of the businessman, the labor leader, and the politician, all of whom upheld capitalist tyranny and its use of terror. Berkman, a firm proponent of propaganda by the deed – generally the use of violent actions to strike against the state and capitalism – concluded: “As long as the world is ruled by violence, violence will accomplish results.”⁴⁴

The incendiary rhetoric of anarchists and Wobblies was shaped not so much by the declarations of ideologues (though this did help), but rather by their own day-to-day lives in the

⁴⁰ “By Dastardly Hands: Alfred Holman Horrified,” *Los Angeles Times*, 2 October 1910.

⁴¹ “Twenty-One Killed and More Injured in the Dynamited ‘Times’ Building,” *Los Angeles Times*, 2 October 1910.

⁴² Emma Goldman, “Observations and Comments,” *Mother Earth*, December 1911.

⁴³ The Black International of 1881 in London proved popular among insurrectionary anarchists. The convention produced a manifesto declaring, “A deed performed against the existing institutions appeals to the masses much more than thousands of leaflets and torrents of words.” Eleven year later Berkman attempted to kill Henry C. Frick of the Carnegie Company. Berkman was deeply impacted by his incarceration; at times the scars of his detention led him, to the dismay of Goldman, to thoughts of suicide. Berkman believed the prison system to be a barbaric institution despite its reformist facade. In 1912 he published his thoughts on the American prison system in *Mother Earth*. Berkman also explained how he became radicalized and why he chose to attack Frick. Schmidt and van der Walt, *Black Flame*, 132; Alexander Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970).

⁴⁴ Alexander Berkman, “The Source of Violence,” in *Anarchy!: An Anthology of Emma Goldman’s Mother Earth*, ed. Peter Glassgold (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2012), 316-317.

United States, as predicted by Haywood. Although radicalized workers did not always preach violence, they did call for an awakening. University of California researcher Frederick C. Mills chronicled his experiences and observations during his months-long immersion into California's hobo culture in 1914, when he rode the rails, rustled fruit, and attended hobo meetings and rallies.⁴⁵ Mills encountered what famous Wobbly songwriter Joe Hill captured in "The Tramp": rejection and abuse as a result of their hobo status.⁴⁶ Although he stopped short of condoning "direct action," or the use of (usually non-violent) strikes, boycotts, and propaganda to disrupt and bring attention to the issues posed by capital and the state, Mills came to understand the plight of the itinerant worker and noted the latent power held by the disinherited. Mills wrote: "I.W.W.ism is simply one attempt to find a way out. Many others on the road feel that something is wrong... [most workers] feel the need of change, be what it may. No change, of course, can make their position worse."⁴⁷

On one California summer night in 1914 Mills observed firsthand the power of the Wobbly message. Different groups had gathered at the town square to preach their message, including the evangelical "Jesus Screamers" and "sky pilots."⁴⁸ A man named Smoky Jones emerged from the crowd shouting "high-sounding phrases, words of learned length and rumbling

⁴⁵ Mills' study was prompted by increased labor strife in the state's agricultural sector, especially after the IWW-led August 1913 hop fields riot on Ralph Durst's Wheatland ranch. It should be mentioned that the IWW in California remained predominantly in urban centers, but by 1909 local chapters were established in agricultural districts, thus widening membership and increasing the likelihood of radical worker agitation. Gregory R. Woirol, *In the Floating Army: F.C. Mills on Itinerant Life in California*, 1914 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 115-116.

⁴⁶ Hill's "The Tramp" chronicled the constant rejection of the hobo looking for work. The chorus rang: "Tramp, tramp, tramp, keep on a-tramping. / Nothing doing here for you; / If I catch you 'round again, / You will wear the ball and chain, / Keep on tramping, that's the best thing you can do." Even death did not bring the hobo joy, as "Santa Peter... Slammed the gate right in his face." Hill himself met an untimely death. He was sentenced to death by firing squad in Utah in 1915. Joe Hill, "The Tramp," in *Songs of the Workers: To Fan the Flames of Discontent*, Thirty-Second Edition (Chicago: Industrial Workers of the World, 1968), 50-51.

⁴⁷ F.C. Mills, journal entry on 30 June 1914. Woirol, *In the Floating Army*, 121; Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism*, 136.

⁴⁸ It was symbolic that radicalized workers often drowned out Christian evangelicals by using the latter's tunes but with altered lyrics. While some evangelicals were critical of the rampant inequality present in the United States, ultimately they preached the poor were to endure their condition – the disinherited were to wait for better days. Radicals did not agree with such beliefs and advocated for immediate change.

sound” to express his concerns regarding the condition of the non-skilled working class. Although allegedly inarticulate, Jones effectively discussed the “idiocy of the A.F. of L.” of Northern California, which had welcomed the open shop. Jones was followed by another speaker who urged white workingmen – who constituted all of the few hundred in attendance – to consider whether or not their socioeconomic circumstances allowed them to truly live. He asked those that were married to raise their hands. When not a single hand was lifted, the speaker said, “Well, do you call that living? Even the black chattel slave had a chance to propagate his race. You men don’t know what it is to have a home, a wife, a child, and yet you think you live. Think of that the next time you go up to Annie’s room [the local prostitute] to buy yourself a home on the installment plan.”⁴⁹

Laura Payne Emerson, an active San Diego Wobbly, echoed similar beliefs and observations in her poem “The Hobo.” After a hard day Emerson’s protagonist, an itinerant worker, lay under the star-glittered sky and thought to himself, “There’s room in this world and plenty / For all except me and my kind.” After falling asleep the hobo dreamed of a world where flowers bloomed and neither tramps nor poor existed. He had a wife and child and worked hard, giving “To a world with no soldiers, no shackles, / No prisons, no master or slave.”⁵⁰ Emerson’s poem, like Smoky Jones’ speech, reveals a highly gendered image of manhood and class (Jones’ words also reveal a highly racialized view of manhood and class); yet the two also demonstrate a fundamental understanding that what unskilled workers received did not match what they contributed to capitalist progress.⁵¹ Their wages and, more importantly, their entire lives were controlled by bosses.

⁴⁹ Woirol, *In the Floating Army*, 124-125.

⁵⁰ Laura Payne Emerson, “The Hobo,” in *Laurels*, Third Edition (San Diego: Self-Published, 1918), 57.

⁵¹ Frank T. Higbie cites this same speech in his work and correctly notes the problematic nature of the speaker’s remarks. However, as I claim above, this particular episode underscores the point that despite the IWW

Workers may have failed to articulate their thoughts and desires with as much eloquence as the leading American and European intellectuals, yet they sensed through experience and observation that they constituted a particular group, a particular class within the capitalist order. Their very difficult reality helped forge solidarity.⁵² At times the hobo culture helped Wobblies in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands overcome, even if only tenuously, the native/non-native divide that characterized the more conservative factions of American labor. Wobbly Joe Foley could thus sing, “It makes no difference what your color, / Creed or sex or kind, / If you’re a worker, then it’s kick right in and join.”⁵³

“Our Cause is Yours”

On 8 April 1911, as PLM forces – in tandem with other disenchanted and impoverished groups, ranging from itinerant laborers and fellow workers to “soldiers of fortune” to Indians – gained and lost strategic towns in Baja California and neighboring Sonora, *Regeneración*, the PLM’s publication, declared to its Spanish and English readers that the revolution in Mexico was not solely against Díaz, nor was it specifically Mexican in nature. The struggle in Mexico was between two social classes: that of “the well-fed and that of the hungry.” While the first wanted

membership’s general lack of an explicit articulation of a “class consciousness,” they did think in those terms. Moreover, the white hobo orator did not think himself above the African slave; rather, his point was that the wage slave was worse off than a chattel slave. Wage workers, in his view, were led to believe by capitalist bosses that they were free, when in reality they were not, as they could not even have a family. Frank Tobias Higbie, *Indispensable Outcasts: Hobo Workers and Community in the American Midwest, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 111-116.

⁵² In the American West shared experience at times helped diminish racial, ethnic, and national lines. For instance, in the harsh coal mines of Colorado immigrant and native miners from all parts of the world recognized that their condition was a result not of foreign worker competition, but rather exploitative bosses. Journalist John Reed, for instance, recognized that among Colorado workers, “living together” eroded “petty race prejudices” which had been fostered between them by mining companies. Roediger and Esch, *Production of Difference*, 89; for an excellent study on the creation of interracial alliances in Colorado’s coal mines see Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America’s Deadliest Labor War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008). Italian immigrants in the Midwest quietly rejected American-style racism as well. For instance, Italians in Chicago did not always support racist practices utilized in the city, in part because they recalled the harsh treatment of blacks in the South. See: Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁵³ Foley clearly placed class above race, as he believed that wage slavery could end only if all workers joined together to make their demands and strike. Joe Foley, “Are You a Wobbly?,” in *Songs of the Workers*, 49.

to preserve its class interests, the latter sought to abolish class privilege in favor of a system that guaranteed to all peoples bread, land, and liberty. “This formidable fight of the two social classes in Mexico,” the new manifesto proclaimed, “is the first act of the great universal tragedy which will soon have for its stage the surface of the whole planet, and whose final act will be the triumph of the noble formula, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity,” which the bourgeois political revolutions had yet to turn into physical reality.⁵⁴ The manifesto’s author, Ricardo Flores Magón, thought the Mexican Revolution – specifically the PLM-led Baja California revolution – would catalyze a worker’s movement that transcended borders because all workers desired similar basic gains. Flores Magón’s worldview, which many Greater San Diego workers would embrace, were shaped by his upbringing in southwestern Mexico.

Born in 1873 in the state of Oaxaca, Ricardo Flores Magón was the son of political liberals who were once ardent supporters Benito Juárez.⁵⁵ Three years after Flores Magón’s birth, General Porfirio Díaz assumed the presidency and began what was an almost uninterrupted oppressive reign of *pan o palo* (“bread or the club”) that lasted until 1911.⁵⁶ In his campaign to industrialize and modernize Mexico, Díaz ruled with a tight grip. He pitted Mexicans against each other; created personal loyalties through political appointments; and used imprisonment and assassination to silence dissent. Despite these policies of intimidation, the small peasant

⁵⁴ Flores Magón’s adoption of language from the French Revolution was no accident, as anarchism was the more radical version of the liberalism of the French Revolution. “Manifesto to the Workers of the World,” *Regeneración*, 8 April 1911.

⁵⁵ Flores Magón’s mother was Margarita Magón, a *mestiza*, and Teodoro Flores, possibly a full-blooded Zapotec Indian. Verter, “Biographical Sketch,” 30.

⁵⁶ After overthrowing President Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, Díaz declared he would preside only temporarily. However, save for a four-year break, Díaz remained president into the early 20th century. The Díaz regime oppressed all Mexicans, but none more so than the indigenous and rural peoples. Alan Knight, “Racism, Revolution, and Indigenismo: Mexico, 1910-1940,” in *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940*, ed. Richard Graham (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 82.

uprisings that were common before Díaz continued under his rule in response to the policies that were drastically altering the traditional agrarian ways of life.

Indeed, during this period much of the Mexican peasantry experienced sharp declines in wage earning. The modern capitalist market was fundamentally changing Mexico, and not always for the better. Threats to their most basic necessities catalyzed peasant revolts across Mexico, which troubled Díaz and his American investors.⁵⁷ As John Kenneth Turner's *Barbarous Mexico* (1910) highlighted, the Díaz regime, with the encouragement of foreign – often Anglo American – business interests, responded to peasant and working-class insurrections with fury. Turner concluded the Díaz regime and complicit foreign businesses were responsible for the murder, destitution and enslavement of Mexico's people.⁵⁸ Turner's work proved critical in the formation of working class solidarities across national and racial lines.

⁵⁷ Historian John Tutino explains that security, material conditions, autonomy, and mobility are the four variable characteristics that help to highlight important differences in agrarian ways of life and to explain complex social exchanges. Depending on the peasant, laborer, or farmer, a serious threat to any of the latter three characteristics (autonomy, security, and mobility) could inspire insurrection. One such revolt was carried out by Emiliano Zapata of Oaxaca. John Womack demonstrates that Zapata's home state of Morelos was steeped in capitalistic practices. Landlords in this region continued to enlarge their landholdings in order to grow more sugar cane and compete against other domestic producers, especially American-financed Veracruz. The planters transformed the social relations of Morelos and made the plantation the dominant institution of the state. Sharecropping escalated once villagers were dispossessed and impoverished. Eventually villagers began to hire themselves out as field hands, thereby securing a dependent labor force for Morelos landlords. Zapata, a relatively well-off small farmer and skilled politician, viewed such changes and attempted to reverse them. Similarly, in Mexico's northern and southern lowlands, where railroads and export-oriented dependent development were more severely negatively impacting the lives of workers, insurrections were slowly morphing into revolution, too. Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico*, 17-24, 217; John Womack, *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1969), 44-49.

⁵⁸ Turner visited Mexico, where he observed many of the deplorable work and living conditions Mexicans were subjected to. Turner noted how the Díaz government supported slave-like conditions throughout much of Mexico, especially in the Yucatán. Hostile Yaquis from northern Mexico were forcibly taken south to work in the highly profitable, American supported henequen industry. Of the general slavery of Mexicans Turner wrote: "I aver that there are plenty of Americans who are prepared to prove that slavery is profitable in Mexico. Because it is considered profitable, these Americans have, in various ways, had a hand in the extension of the institution. Desiring to perpetuate Mexican slavery, and considering General Diaz a necessary factor in that perpetuation, they have given him their undivided support." John Kenneth Turner, *Barbarous Mexico: An Indictment of a Cruel and Corrupt System* (New York: Cassell and Co., 1912), 214; for a work focused on the role played by foreign interests in the Mexican Revolution see Gilbert M. Joseph, *Revolution from Without: Yucatán, Mexico, and the United States, 1880-1924* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

As Díaz's tactics grew ever more despotic, even the wealthy classes, including the powerful Madero family of Coahuila, grew disenchanted with Don Porfirio.⁵⁹ Mexican liberals were imprisoned or executed. Flores Magón, who contributed to the growing liberal movement in Mexico City by co-founding *Regeneración*, was no exception.⁶⁰ Flores Magón increasingly turned to the works of leading anarchists like Peter Kropotkin and Mikhail Bakunin for guidance. Tired of the Mexican radical's incessant print assaults, Díaz declared that any further acts of libel would result in death. Since he viewed the situation in Mexico too dangerous to continue, Flores Magón, along with his brother Enrique and another colleague, trekked north and crossed the relatively open U.S.-Mexico border into Laredo, Texas, where they took on jobs as farm workers and dishwashers.⁶¹ Soon the three realized that even in the liberal democracy of the United States, their dreams of freedom remained just that: dreams. Their experiences as itinerant wagers helped lead them to the conclusion that the differences between the United States and Mexico were in degree, not in kind.

In Mexico's urbanizing north, land concentration predated Díaz. Following the liberal land reforms of 1856-1857 the vast landholdings of the Catholic Church and corporations were transferred to private individuals and families, such as the Terrazas and Creel families of Chihuahua. Although a small rural middle class formed, it was under Díaz's rule when extreme exploitation and inequality – racial and economic – grew in the region's mines and American market-oriented agricultural estates.⁶² The region's middle and upper class, and some among the

⁵⁹ Wealthy northerners like Madero were compelled to revolt once it became apparent that Díaz was not going to relinquish power. For elites like Madero, the Mexican Revolution was political and not social, therefore perhaps not at all revolutionary. See Barry Carr, "The Peculiarities of the Mexican North, 1880-1928."

⁶⁰ *Regeneración* was founded in 1900 by Flores Magón, his brother Jesús, and Antonio Horcasitas. Verter, "Biographical Sketch," 33.

⁶¹ Juan Gómez-Quíñones, *Sembradores, Ricardo Flores Magón y el Partido Liberal Mexicano: A Eulogy and Critique*, Revised Edition (Los Angeles: University of California, Chicano Studies Center, 1977), 27.

⁶² Several scholars of Mexican and Borderlands history note how Mexico's north was more closely tied to the United States and its markets than to Mexico City. Nevertheless, the north was not Americanized, but rather

working class, viewed Francisco Madero as their catalyst for change, but many others sought other political alternatives that both facilitated modernization and freedom from Anglo-domination.⁶³ Certainly this had been the case in places like Greater San Diego, where *californios* like Bandini later regretted aligning with Anglo American modernizers.⁶⁴ In the early 20th century, Flores Magón and the PLM tapped into this dissatisfaction when they violently rebelled against first the Díaz regime, and later the reformist Madero government.

The PLM was well attuned to the condition of the itinerant worker, especially Mexican workers. Because of this the PLM was able to actively organize working class Mexicans throughout the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, and in particular along the Arizona-Sonora border and in Southern California. They fostered a transnational social base which consisted of laborers, peasants, and the poor of Mexico and the United States.⁶⁵ According to historian Juan Gómez-Quíñones, the PLM appealed to Mexicans on both sides of the border for three reasons: 1) the PLM rejected the present order and offered a different and better world as a hope and possibility; 2) Flores Magón, through *Regeneración*, supplied a coherent set of beliefs and values for denying the legitimacy of the existing order; and 3) the PLM provided not only a means for

represented a fusion of the two cultures. Carr, "Peculiarities of the Mexican North," 6; Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Miguel Tinker Salas, *In the Shadow of the Eagles: Sonora and the Transformation of the Border during the Porfiriato* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

⁶³ Catarino Garza's 1891 multi-class revolt against Díaz and American business interests was one example of this desire to escape American domination. Garza's rebellion was bracketed by Juan Cortina's raids on Texas beginning in 1859 and lasting through the 1870s, and the radical Plan de San Diego of 1915, which called for a multi-racial violent uprising to liberate Texas from Anglo domination. Although not as radical, Maderismo appealed to many in the ethnic Mexican working class because it offered a path to improve their lot. Elliot Young, *Catarino Garza's Revolution on the Texas-Mexico Border* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 20-21; Benjamin Heber Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); for a study on the significance of corridos and their valorization of resistance against oppression and discrimination, see Américo Paredes, *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958); Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Vol. I, 63-69.

⁶⁴ In 1855, only five years after New Town was founded by Alonzo Horton, Bandini commented that *californios* had been made strangers in their native land. Their property was "turned to strangers" and now they faced constant persecution from Anglo American creditors. Bandini lamented: "We labor and we have no rest." Quoted in García, "Merchants and Dons," 71.

⁶⁵ James D. Cockcroft, *Mexico's Revolution Then and Now* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010), 23.

achieving the overthrow of the existing order, but also had a plan for administering the new order, chiefly fraternal communal cooperation.⁶⁶

In the first decade of the 20th century the PLM was highly active in the strikes that broke out in the mines of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, chief of which were “Colonel” William Greene’s Cananea copper mines in Sonora. On 1 June 1906 self-organized workers – many of them Mexican – agitated for better wages and working conditions, but their strike was met by a contingent of Arizona Rangers and Mexican *rurales*, two groups which historian Samuel Truett has referred to as “the less than enlightened handmaidens to order and progress.”⁶⁷ In an exclusive dispatch to the *Los Angeles Times*, E.E. Edgington, principal of the American schools at Cananea, reported that striking Mexicans were armed, dangerous, and ready to kill (and allegedly had already done so). He stated: “Five thousand Mexicans are out on strike. They are very defiant, marching the streets and awaiting the appearance of only an anarchist flag to attack every Mexican and American in Cananea who do not join them. They are making threats that they will destroy the entire camp and exterminate every American in it.”⁶⁸ As the conservative Southern California newspaper suggested in its reprinting of Edgington’s dispatch, race war threatened the existing order.

Neither striking workers nor PLM officers advocated the murder of Anglo Americans. Although the pages of *Regeneración* suggest a distinctly anti-American stance, a more nuanced reading of the paper reveals not so much an anti-American view, but rather one that was anti-

⁶⁶ Gómez-Quíñones, *Sembradores*, 6

⁶⁷ Although the PLM supported the strike, they did not organize the strike. Prominent Wobbly-Liberal Fernando Palomares, who had been working at the Cananea company store, was surprised by the June strike. John Mason Hart, “The Evolution of the Mexican and Mexican-American Working Classes,” in *Border Crossings: Mexican and Mexican-American Workers*, ed. John Mason Hart (Wilmington: SR Books, 1998), 16; Samuel Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 104-119, 138-156; Torúa Cienfuegos, *El Magonismo en Sonora*, 76.

⁶⁸ “Americans Killed in Mexican Race War,” *Los Angeles Times*, 2 June 1906.

capital. While the radical paper certainly railed against the same dual wage system which Fernando Palomares and other Greater San Diego workers rejected in the early 20th century, it also noted the “tyranny” the “government and capital exerts over the poor.”⁶⁹ *Regeneración* attacked unequal wages and the bosses that implemented them, not Anglo American workers. The enemies of the Mexican worker, the paper declared, were American business interests like Greene and their Mexican accomplice, Díaz.

Further evidence that Flores Magón and the PLM rejected notions of race war can be found in their internationalism, which as Flores Magón readily admitted, was grounded largely in his still private anarchist beliefs. Although always mindful of the particular condition of the Mexican worker in the United States, Flores Magón and PLM Liberals tended to attribute exploitation and inequality to capitalism. For example, in response to the brutal murders of Mexicans in Texas by “American semi-savages” in late 1910, Flores Magón identified capitalism as the root cause of the violence and demonstrations. He wrote: “[I]t is capitalism – the voracious octopus that sucks the life of the people – that is the cause of all of these disturbances, of all of these crimes, because capitalism foments racial hatred so that the peoples never come to understand each other, and so it reigns over them.”⁷⁰ Flores Magón, the son of a Zapotec Indian and *mestiza*, never forgot the importance of race, but he, like many of his closest PLM associates, ultimately privileged class over race in his vision.

After the suppression of workers at Cananea by American and Mexican capitalists, government officials, and militaries, Flores Magón continued to press for the circulation of *Regeneración* in the camp.⁷¹ He reasoned that Cananea did not exist in isolation; capital’s

⁶⁹ “Los disturbios de Cananea,” *Regeneración*, 15 June 1906.

⁷⁰ “La repercusión de un linchamiento,” *Regeneración*, 12 November 1910.

⁷¹ Ricardo Flores Magón to Gabriel A. Rubio, 27 July 1906. Ricardo Flores Magón, *Correspondencia (1899-1918)*, Vol. I, ed. Jacinto Barrera Bassols (Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2000), 181-182.

dominance of labor went beyond the copper mines of Sonora. Thus, Flores Magón pushed for the organization of revolutionary cells across the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands.⁷² However the PLM's efforts, which were continuously aided by the IWW, proved premature and revolts they did support and carry out from 1906 to 1908 were summarily put down. In spite of repeated defeats, the itinerant, temporary workers who comprised the backbone of the revolt were successfully inculcated in leftist ideology provided by the PLM and their U.S. partners.⁷³ Workers in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands carried this radicalism with them into the 1910s and beyond.⁷⁴ As deplorable working and living conditions worsened, in part due to an economic downturn in Mexico in 1907, the working poor living along the international line drew on leftist ideals and their lived experience and erupted, at least on the Mexican side, in full-scale revolution.⁷⁵

Conversely, as historian W. Dirk Raat argues, the specter of Cananea aroused fears among elites in both the United States and Mexico, and catalyzed a movement to suppress any rebellion. Mexican and American business interests and government representatives saw the episode as a radical leftist conspiracy. For them the solution was simple: jail or execute leftist

Flores Magón expressed some confusion as to the situation in Cananea, as correspondence between himself and those in Arizona was inconsistent. Nevertheless, he remained confident that the workers of the mine would not forget the violence inflicted upon them by business interests.

⁷² "La segunda Cananea," *Regeneración*, 15 June 1906; Ricardo Flores Magón to Tomás D. Espinosa, 2 August 1906, *Correspondencia*, Vol. I, 185-187; Ricardo Flores Magón to Bruno Treviño, 18 August 1906. Ibid., 194-196.

⁷³ Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 91.

⁷⁴ Emilio Zamora notes that some ethnic Mexicans in Texas remained radical into the 1920s and 1930s. In an effort to quell such views, the AFL attempted to organize special units of Mexican workers in Federal Labor Unions, which were segregated from other more conservative units. By the 1920s and 1930s AFL leadership warned Mexicans to avoid "Communist organizers" such as the IWW, for participation in said group would result in deportation. Emilio Zamora, "Labor Formation, Community, and Politics: The Mexican Working Class in Texas, 1900-1945," in *Border Crossings: Mexican and Mexican-American Workers*, ed. John Mason Hart (Wilmington: SR Books, 1998), 165.

⁷⁵ On the American side of the international border, battles between capital and labor continued. In some instances capitalists used race to split the working class, thereby ensuring their dominance and, in time, labor peace. See Katherine Benton-Cohen, *Borderline Americans: Racial Division and Labor War in the Arizona Borderlands* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); James W. Byrkit, *Forging the Copper Collar: Arizona's Labor-Management War of 1901-1921* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982).

leaders; extradite, deport, kidnap, and harass the PLM in the U.S.; and enlist the aid of the U.S. government in halting Flores Magón, in particular.⁷⁶ The Díaz regime did its part by hiring the Furlong Secret Service Company of St. Louis, which had been contracted by Chihuahua governor Enrique C. Creel, and other agents to follow Flores Magón and the PLM in the United States, ultimately pushing several PLM leaders to migrate further north to Toronto and Montreal, Canada, where they stayed for a brief period until eventually settling in Los Angeles.⁷⁷

The Mexican federal government constantly protested to Washington that the PLM violated neutrality laws. Throughout 1906 American authorities investigated Flores Magón and his associates, detaining them on several occasions and charging them with robbery and even murder. Although the Díaz administration called for his extradition, Flores Magón's multiracial and multi-ethnic leftist network aided him in his legal defense, eventually ensuring their Mexican ally was not transferred to Mexican authorities.⁷⁸ In August 1907, Flores Magón and associates were arrested in Los Angeles on the charges of being "fugitives from justice." The following year a federal grand jury charged the men with conspiracy to violate neutrality laws, which even the more moderate leader of the AFL, Samuel Gompers, vocally protested, citing the brutality of the Díaz regime and the labor conditions it allowed in Mexico.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ W. Dirk Raat, *Revoltosos: Mexico's Rebels in the United States, 1903-1923* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1981), 91.

⁷⁷ Palomares went into hiding and eventually tramped to St. Louis in the hopes of meeting up with Ricardo Flores Magón. Unfortunately for Palomares, by the time he arrived in Missouri Flores Magón had fled for Canada. Thomas Furlong, *Fifty Years a Detective* (St. Louis: C.E. Barnett, 1912), 138-148; Torúa Cienfuegos, *El Magonismo en Sonora*, 77.

⁷⁸ Mexican Ambassador to the U.S., Balbino Dávalos, to the Mexican Consul at San Antonio, Texas, Enrique Ornelas, 19 December 1906, in *Documentos históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, Vol. 10: Actividades políticas y revolucionarias de los hermanos Flores Magón*, eds. Isidro Fabela and Josefina E. de Fabela (Mexico, D.F.: Editorial Jus, 1966), 76.

⁷⁹ Gompers' power is demonstrated in this correspondence, as he appealed directly to President Roosevelt. Even for the relatively conservative labor leader, the Díaz administration proved too draconian. U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Rules, *Hearings on H.J. Res. 201, Providing for a Joint Committee to Investigate Alleged Persecutions of Mexican Citizens by the Government of Mexico, 61st Cong., 2nd sess., 1910, 12-14*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910), 12-14; Colin M. MacLachlan's investigates the trials of Flores Magón in detail, cogently identifying the significance of the Mexican anarchist's legal battles: Flores Magón was an

Ultimately leftist activity in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands ushered in the foundations of a modern binational espionage structure. Detective work – both legal and illegal, financed by the Díaz regime and consulted by U.S. federal authorities in their own investigations – coupled with the U.S. government’s willingness to use existing immigration and neutrality laws to suppress leftists, erected a surveillance system which violated the civil and political rights of immigrants. Indeed, according to Turner, the U.S. federal government’s use of deportations proved effective in not only helping the Díaz regime, but also in suppressing leftists within their borders. Turner wrote: “The immigration laws [the Anarchist Exclusion Act of 1903], provide that, if it be discovered that an immigrant is a criminal or an Anarchist... provided that such discovery is made within three years of arrival here, [the state] may deport him.”⁸⁰ In spite of the persecution, Flores Magón and his working-class allies pressed on. Their dreams, they believed, were close to becoming reality.

1910

After they fended off their most recent extradition and deportation threat and secured release from federal prison in Arizona, Flores Magón and his closest PLM associates, with the help of Turner and members of the leftist Western Federation of Miners, returned to Los Angeles in August 1910, warmly greeted by a crowd of Mexicans and white Americans.⁸¹ A few days

internal threat to the U.S.’s social order because of the political support he marshalled against the capitalist class. American radicals and labor leaders, from Goldman to Mother Jones to Gompers, all at various times supported Flores Magón either ideologically, financially, or both. Colin M. MacLachlan, *Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution: The Political Trials of Ricardo Flores Magón in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

⁸⁰ A fuller explanation from Turner’s *Barbarous Mexico* read: “The scheme to deport political refugees through the Immigration Department was more successful. The immigration laws provide that, if it be discovered that an immigrant is a criminal or an Anarchist... provided that such discovery is made within three years of arrival here, the immigration officials may deport him. The question of the ‘undesirability’ of the immigrant is not a subject for review by the courts, the immigrant may not appeal, and within two or three restrictions the immigration agent’s word is the law.” Raat, *Revolutosos*, 168-170; Turner, *Barbarous Mexico*, 230.

⁸¹ Bufe and Verter, “Biographical Sketch,” 73.

after his return more than 1,500 ethnic Mexicans continued the friendly relations at the Italian Hall in the city's downtown. The solely Mexican affair gave way to an international and multiracial event when the unions of Los Angeles, the Socialist Party, and still more ethnic Mexicans held a reception at the Labor Temple, where according to Flores Magón, "more than three thousand sympathizers for the Mexican revolutionary cause" attended. The pro-PLM sentiment was reflected in the *Los Angeles Herald* and *Los Angeles Daily Record* as well. Flores Magón believed the Southern California community genuinely sympathized for the PLM's campaign for social justice.⁸²

Invigorated by their release from prison and their warm reception, Flores Magón and the Liberals resumed their revolutionary campaign from their Los Angeles office and began the fourth incarnation of *Regeneración* on 3 September 1910 with a call to arms.⁸³ However, as always, financial difficulties plagued their operations. In contrast, Madero, the son of a wealthy family and champion of a far less radical revolution, as outlined in the Plan de San Luis Potosí, was able to continue his revolutionary activities by drawing on a wider and deeper-pocketed following.⁸⁴ The PLM figurehead expressed annoyance with Madero's successful "Effective Suffrage – No Re-election" platform – the very same slogan used by Díaz in 1876 – as it converted some PLM supporters to the more conservative, seemingly more pragmatic, cause.⁸⁵

⁸² Ricardo Flores Magón to Jesús Flores Magón, 17 August 1910, *Correspondencia*, Vol. I, 519.

⁸³ "Regeneración," *Regeneración*, 3 September 1910; "Mexicano: tu mejor amigo es un fusil," Ibid. The English version of the article "Regeneración" instructed its Anglo American readers to understand why the PLM was fomenting revolution. The PLM, it reported, always operated within the law; in fact, their calls for a revolution were within legal bounds. The piece ended by directing readers to English language magazines that had admirably covered conditions in Mexico, notably the socialist *Appeal To Reason*.

⁸⁴ The Plan de San Luis Potosí called for the Mexican people to violently rise up against Díaz on 20 November 1910. U.S. Senate, *Revolutions in Mexico*, 730-736.

⁸⁵ In a letter to Manuel Leal Escamilla, Flores Magón wrote that Madero deceived some Liberals by declaring that the anarchist's cause was his cause. Flores Magón then condemned those Liberals who were not misled by Madero, but rather willingly and knowingly joined the bourgeois project. He added: "But the loyal Liberals, those that struggle for the benefit of the proletariat, they remained true to the party." Ricardo Flores Magón to Manuel Leal Escamilla, 1 December 1910, *Correspondencia*, Vol. I, 525.

Flores Magón, then, hinted at an increasing inflexibility in his ideology; he reasoned that those that were not fighting for the PLM or its leftist partners were against the working class – a belief which in time proved costly, as allies became enemies.⁸⁶ Despite the growing mistrust and splintering of the PLM and revolutionary-leftist network, optimism remained for Flores Magón: in Mexico the revolution of the poor was near. While Madero was allowed to prepare in Texas his strictly political revolt against Díaz, the persecuted Flores Magón brothers carefully navigated the neutrality laws, and in late December 1910 sent instructions to Camilo Jiménez, who was based in Calexico, California, a Greater San Diego town directly across from Mexicali, Baja California.⁸⁷ Jiménez, along with Fernando Palomares, was to cross into Mexico to organize a movement against Díaz; if Jiménez wished to join the general violence initiated by Madero, he could do so, otherwise he could create a larger fighting contingent by uniting with allies already set on attacking lightly populated, little-guarded, and isolated Tijuana. Regardless of the decision, Flores Magón was adamant about the principles Jiménez was to follow: those of the PLM – of the collectivist poor – and not the individualist, capitalist principles espoused by Madero.⁸⁸

The latter's dreams for Mexico, Flores Magón increasingly noted, would change nothing in Mexico. Flores Magón argued that market economy states "gradually produced the slums, the overflowing prisons and all the mass of misery that accompanies modern life." In fact, all of

⁸⁶ Many of Flores Magón's associates either turned on him (for various reasons, but generally due to the anarchist's unwillingness to accept a less radical position) or were rejected by the PLM's ideological head. Among those who morphed into adversaries were the Sarabias, John Kenneth Turner, Jesús Flores Magón, and Antonio I. Villarreal. Military commanders in Baja California became enemies, too.

⁸⁷ Enforcement of the neutrality laws by U.S. authorities varied depending on the revolutionary in question, hence the Flores Magón brothers' cautiousness and secrecy, and Madero's open agitation. Friedrich Katz, *Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 670.

⁸⁸ Ricardo Flores Magón to Camilo Jiménez, 20 December 1910, *Correspondencia*, Vol. I, 529; Torúa Cienfuegos, *El Magonismo en Sonora*, 79. Práxedes Guerrero, an incredibly loyal member of the PLM, and 22 comrades had already crossed the border into Chihuahua to initiate the organization's martial involvement in the Mexican Revolution. Bufe and Verter, *Dreams of Freedom*, 355.

these institutions operated in Mexico “with the swiftness of a cyclone,” leaving “the great mass of the Mexican people homeless and hapless.” Standard Oil owned significant swaths of land in Mexico; two “Los Angeles men own[ed] a sea frontage of over 400 miles in length”; and everywhere in the country foreign business interests controlled land and industry. Indeed, *Los Angeles Times* publisher Harrison Gray Otis and his son-in-law, Harry Chandler, owned large portions of land in northern Mexico, including a substantial stake in the Imperial-Mexicali Valley California-Mexico Land and Cattle Company (C&M Ranch), which was a sprawling, 15,000 acre cattle ranch and “cotton-making factory.”⁸⁹

The two were not the only Southern California businessmen to invest in Baja California, as they were joined by the wealthy and powerful real estate and transportation mogul, *San Diego Union* publisher, and friend John D. Spreckels, a man who arrived in San Diego in 1887 and soon thereafter became “the dark star around which all of early-twentieth-century San Diego revolved in subservience, resentment, or both.”⁹⁰ In discussing the foreign business interests’ stakes in Mexico, Flores Magón rhetorically asked, “Will Madero help the Mexicans to get back their own?” The PLM head answered his own question with a “no,” for he believed Madero’s allegiance was, like Díaz’s, with the “money power.”⁹¹ Thus Flores Magón reasoned that the

⁸⁹ The venture, which was created in 1902 by an Otis-led group, spanned across the international border, hence its official name, the California-Mexico Land and Cattle Company. Benny J. Andrés, Jr., *Power and Control in the Imperial Valley: Nature, Agribusiness, and Workers on the California Borderland, 1900-1940* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2015), 43.

⁹⁰ This description of Spreckels was made by present-day political scientists, who arrived at this conclusion after noting that Spreckels, a scion of Hawaiian sugar interests, held considerable sway in the city since he owned many of its vital industries and large swaths of real estate in Greater San Diego and beyond. He owned all of Coronado Island (now a well-to-do island off of San Diego’s shore), the San Diego-Coronado Ferry System, the San Diego Electric Railway, Mission Beach, the Southern California Mountain Water Company, and beginning in 1890, the *San Diego Union*. He built several buildings throughout San Diego County, too. Steven P. Erie, Vladimir Kogan, and Scott A. MacKenzie, *Paradise Plundered: Fiscal Crisis and Governance Failures in San Diego* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 34.

⁹¹ Ricardo Flores Magón to M.H. Woolman, 2 June 1911, *Correspondencia*, Vol. I, 600-601.

PLM and its allies had to fight a related, yet distinct revolution from that waged by the more conservative Madero.

In addition to sending instructions to Jiménez and the small PLM band in Calexico on how to distinguish themselves from the Maderistas, Flores Magón prepared for revolt in Baja California by instructing John Kenneth Turner, author of *Barbarous Mexico* and husband of *Regeneración*'s English section editor, Ethel Duffy Turner, to purchase arms and ammunition in Los Angeles. From there the weapons were to be shipped to Mexicali. Finally on 29 January 1911, after he received word from Flores Magón, José María Leyva, along with Simón Berthold – a veteran Liberal who had been active in Los Angeles labor's fights against Otis – a group of about 30 mostly Mexican men crossed from an IWW local's headquarters in the Imperial Valley town of Holtville into Mexico and opened a siege on Mexicali.⁹² Although the rebels were in Mexicali only temporarily, their actions were significant, for it represented the beginnings of a leftist, multiracial experiment at Greater San Diego's doorstep.⁹³

Colors of the Baja California Revolution

Of the few studies devoted to the Baja California revolution of 1911, most have dismissed the importance of the excursion to the Mexican Revolution and the development of San Diego. One such critique can be traced to the early 20th century: Flores Magón never

⁹² Holtville was a few miles west of Calexico, and a strong center for IWW organization. Leyva and Berthold, along with Wobbly Stanley Williams (sometimes referred to as William Stanley), planned their attack in the IWW's Holtville headquarters. Antonio Fuertes, a Liberal, relayed information between these three men and Jiménez. Eventually Leyva and Berthold moved south to Laguna Salada, a dry lake southwest of Mexicali and waited for word from Los Angeles. "Derrota tras derrota sufre la dictadura," *Regeneración*, 4 February 1911; Lowell L. Blaisdell, *The Desert Revolution: Baja California, 1911* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1962), 39; Richard Griswold del Castillo, "The Discredited Revolution: The Magonista Capture of Tijuana in 1911," *Journal of San Diego History* 26 (Fall 1980), <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/1980/october/revolution/>, accessed 4 November 2017.

⁹³ E. de la Sierra to David S. Packard, 12 February 1911, Folder 4, Box 1, RG 36, Records of the U.S. Customs Service, Calexico Customs Office – Incoming Official Correspondence 1902-1916, National Archives and Records Administration Pacific Region at Riverside, Perris, CA (NARA-R). De la Sierra was the Mexican consul at Calexico, and Packard was the U.S. Deputy Customs Collector of the same town.

actually put his body in physical battle. The Mexican anarchist's contemporaries and, later, local San Diego historians criticized him for never travelling down from his Los Angeles base to Baja California, neither to observe nor much less fight.⁹⁴ In short, the PLM's ideological head was no Francisco "Pancho" Villa, Emiliano Zapata, or even Madero. Others dismiss the campaign because it ultimately failed both as military endeavor and as social project. Still other historians have dismissed the events in Baja California as a mere filibustering expedition rather than a revolutionary movement. The motley makeup of the *insurrectos* testified to the "foreignness" of the entire episode. The Mexicans that fought against the ragtag *insurrecto* army of ethnic Mexicans, Anglos, Chinese, Indians, blacks, "soldiers of fortune," adventurers, and Wobblies were considered the true *Mexican* revolutionaries who fought for the Mexican nation.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Anarchists of the day criticized Flores Magón's lack of military fighting, as many applauded and favored "propaganda by the deed," exemplified by their resounding approval of Berkman's physical attack on Flick. However, Berkman and Goldman defended Flores Magón's personal decision to advance the anarchist cause via the written word and education. Kropotkin, too, supported Flores Magón, writing that anarchism was more than simply fighting on the front lines. Later critiques of the Mexican anarchist's revolutionary credentials differ from those that were put forth by early 20th century anarchists. Present-day local historians' fetishization of combat duty has served two purposes: 1) to discredit the importance of the PLM cause; and 2) to render Flores Magón a coward. Elisabeth Cobbs Hoffman's review of Mike Davis, et al's *Under the Perfect Sun*, which first appeared in the *San Diego Union-Tribune* and was reprinted in the *Journal of San Diego History*'s roundtable of the aforementioned book, serves as an example. She writes: "At times, this praise [of San Diego labor] goes over the top, considering what was achieved. Miller spills considerable ink on Ricardo Flores Magon (sic), a Mexican revolutionary who (from the safety of Los Angeles) preached to his countrymen that 'the dissolution of organized government would create real human freedom.'" MacLachlan, *Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution*, 38-39; Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, "Muffled Muckraking: 'Sun's' Claims of Wide-Scale Corruption and Caustic Criticisms of San Diego Are Perfectly Unconvincing," *Journal of San Diego History* 55 (Winter/Spring 2009), 55.

⁹⁵ In *Nacionalismo y revolución*, Marco Antonio Samaniego is careful to note that not all of the *insurrectos* were filibusterers; however, these combatants were often viewed as *annexationists* precisely because many of the fighters were not ethnic Mexicans, but rather Anglos. Samaniego adds that not all participants in the Baja California revolution were Magonistas/Liberals (Flores Magón could not control the *insurrectos*), which perhaps added to the belief among locals that the *insurrectos* were indeed there to conquer Mexico – a point which was made by the first Mexican historians of the Baja California campaigns. Writing on the topic decades after these Mexican historians, Lowell L. Blaisdell does not contend that the *insurrectos*' expeditions were filibusters, but he does write that the PLM leadership's failure to counter the claims made by the Mexican federal government that their endeavors were filibustering attempts ultimately doomed the cause. Marco Antonio Samaniego, *Nacionalismo y revolución: los acontecimientos de 1911 en Baja California* (Mexicali: Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Universidad Autónoma de Baja California; Tijuana: Centro Cultural Tijuana, 2008); Blaisdell, *Desert Revolution*; for an overview of the very partisan historiography on the PLM's impact on Baja California during the Mexican Revolution, see Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2014), 330-336; see also Rómulo Velasco Ceballos, *¿Se apoderara Estados Unidos de America de Baja California? (La invasion filibustera de 1911)* (Mexico City: Imprenta Nacional, 1922); Ethel Duffy Turner, *Revolution in Baja*

Such points, while underscoring the complexity of identities and allegiances found in the Baja California revolution, serve to occlude a critical aspect about the skirmishes along the California-Baja California border. As historian David Struthers notes, the strength and significance of the Baja California revolution rested in its international and interracial character. Influenced by and building on previous efforts in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, for a brief moment workers of the world formed a tenuous alliance in Baja California for a variety of reasons, one of which was to achieve liberty as defined by the PLM and other leftist labor organizations.⁹⁶ For Booster San Diego, the leftist and multiracial dreams of the *insurrectos* contradicted their own vision for Greater San Diego. As a result, they monitored the situation down south, ready to help turn the tide against the hobo army.

For Human Liberty

Support for Flores Magón's movement in Baja California transcended Mexico and the United States, but far more worrisome to American capitalists, however, were the declarations and demonstrations of solidarity between radical leftist American labor and their Mexican counterparts, the two united by a belief that the age of capital's domination had reached its end, and that the floating army of itinerant workers would be central to bringing about capital's demise.⁹⁷ Precisely for this reason the U.S. federal government enforced neutrality laws when the revolutionaries in question were anti-capital. Evidence presented before the U.S. Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations highlighted American concerns regarding leftist workers.

California: Ricardo Flores Magón's High Noon (Detroit: Blaine Etheridge Books, 1981); Diego Abad de Santillana, *Ricardo Flores Magón; el apóstol de la revolución social Mexicana* (Mexico City: Antorcha, 1988).

⁹⁶ David Struthers, "'The Boss Has No Color Line': Race, Solidarity, and a Culture of Affinity in Los Angeles and the Borderlands, 1907-1915," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 7 (2013), 78-79.

⁹⁷ One example of transnational support is *¡Tierra!*, an anarchist newspaper published in Havana, Cuba, which declared that the Baja California revolt was the world's first truly social movement. "A todos los camaradas," *¡Tierra!*, 10 April 1911, 1. See also Jacinto Barrera Bassols and Alejandro de la Torre Hernández, *Los rebeldes de la bandera roja: textos del periódico anarquista ¡Tierra!, de la Habana, sobre la Revolución Mexicana* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2011).

Materials gathered by federal investigators and shown to the committee linked American workers and sympathizers to the PLM's struggle in Baja California.⁹⁸ Other allies on the Left aided the *insurrectos* financially, with Anglos and ethnic whites from all parts of the U.S. sending cash, usually in small increments, to PLM headquarters in Los Angeles. The money was either payment for subscriptions to *Regeneración*, which topped out at a circulation of about 30,000, or a donation for general support.⁹⁹

Many American sympathizers may have supported the definite defeat of the Díaz regime, or even the notion that Baja California was simply the opening act to a grander worker's movement. The leftists in Flores Magón's American intellectual network stressed both notions. Articles in *Mother Earth* declared that the Mexican Revolution, as embodied by the PLM, was at its most basic level a revolt not only against Díaz's dictatorship, but also an effort to emancipate the country's subjugated majority from the chains of capitalism. Like hobo-writer and Socialist Jack London, contributors to *Mother Earth* presented Mexicans as simple but noble.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ In one letter H.A. Crecelius of Hope, New Mexico volunteered his medical expertise to help wounded radicals participating in the Baja California revolution. H.A. Crecelius to Anselmo L. Figueroa, 7 February, 1911, U.S. Senate, *Revolutions in Mexico*, 193.

⁹⁹ A group of Italians from Torrington, Connecticut collected donations as small as 10 cents to give to the PLM. On the 29 May 1911, days after Díaz finally relinquished power, Sadie L. Bernstein of Seattle, Washington sent to the PLM one dollar for the "cause of human liberty." Antonio Giuliani to PLM, undated. Ibid., 192; Sadie L. Bernstein to R. Flores Magón (sic), 29 May 1911. Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ London was a member of the Socialist Party. In "How I Became a Socialist," an autobiographical essay included in the party's *The Comrade*, London told of his experiences on the road, in the floating army, and how he realized that society took able-bodied men and used them up and discarded them. Fearing that this would be his fate, he began to investigate possible alternatives to the "tooth and nail" existence present under capitalism, and thus he found socialism. His writings and thinking, however, still often took a racist tone, which explains why he often believed Mexican peasant revolutionaries simple; and yet he could still present Mexicans in positive lights. For instance, in the fictional short story "The Mexican," London tells the experiences of Felipe Rivera, a young Mexican living in Los Angeles. Rivera remains a mysterious, possibly untrustworthy, figure to the PLM Junta, as they do not know how Rivera, a poor boy who cleans the offices of the organization, is able to donate significant sums of money to keep the PLM operation running. It is revealed to readers that Rivera secures funds by boxing, by participating in the "hated game of the hated Gringo." London writes that, unlike his white opponents, Rivera did not fight for the money to live an easy life, but rather fought for the money to give back to the people, the workers, and the social revolution. Danny Ward, Rivera's final adversary, could not beat the Mexican boxer despite the odds in his favor; Rivera, once in the ring, turned into a heroic beast that would not lose. Philip S. Foner, "Jack London: American Rebel," in *Jack London: American Rebel*, ed. Philip S. Foner (New York: Citadel Press, 1947), 55-57; Jeanne Campbell Reesman, *Jack London's Racial Lives: A Critical Biography* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009);

“Ignorant peasants [are in rebellion],” one author wrote, “peasants who know nothing about the jargon of land reformers or of Socialists. Yes: that’s the glory of it!... Their minds are simple and direct; they act accordingly.”¹⁰¹

Albeit problematic, such a rendering had its purpose: to draw attention to the very fact that those from below were revolting against their oppressors to exact a “fundamental change in social life.” *Mother Earth* wanted readers to not only recognize that a social revolution was occurring in a neighboring country, but that they – the allegedly more advanced workers of the world – could in some way fight for the concept of “Land and Liberty,” too.¹⁰² London himself believed American workers could learn from their Mexican neighbors. In a meeting of leftists in Los Angeles, London circulated a manifesto which stated that he wished there were more fighters like those found in the “gallant band that took Mexicali.”¹⁰³

Colors

The composition of the *insurrecto* army that appeared in 1911 Baja California illustrates that some certainly found in the “desert revolution” something worth fighting for. The PLM-led military campaign drew insurgents from several locations on the “wageworkers frontier,” from many racial and ethnic groups. The *insurrectos* were comprised of three main contingents: Mexican Liberals and other leftists who hailed from Southern California and Arizona; white

Jack London, “The Mexican,” in *The Complete Short Stories of Jack London*, Vol. III, eds. Earle Labor, Robert Leitz, III, and I. Milo Shepard (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 1983-1985, 1995-2005.

¹⁰¹ Voltairine de Cleyre, “The Mexican Revolution,” in *Anarchy!: An Anthology of Emma Goldman’s Mother Earth*, ed. Peter Glassgold (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2012), 327.

¹⁰² One *Mother Earth* article read: “And whether they [the revolutionists] are victorious or defeated, I, for one, bow my head to those heroic strugglers, no matter how ignorant they are, who have raised the cry, Land and Liberty, and planted the blood-red banner on the burning soil of Mexico.” De Cleyre, “The Mexican Revolution,” 332.

¹⁰³ Although London at times drew distinctions between races, he could also see beyond color lines. For instance, in the same manifesto he noted that in the end there was no difference between White American workers and Mexican workers. He wrote: “We socialists, anarchists, hoboes, chicken thieves, outlaws and undesirable citizens of the U.S. are with you heart and soul. You will notice that we are not respectable. Neither are you. No revolutionary can possibly be respectable in these days of the reign of property.” Quoted in Richard F. Pourade, *Gold in the Sun* (San Diego: Union-Tribune Publishing Co., 1965), 145.

American sympathizers, chiefly Wobblies, from Greater San Diego and Los Angeles (some of whom Fernando Palomares helped organize and lead into Mexico); and a collection of privateers who had previously fought in the Spanish-American War and South Africa's Boer War (See Figure 1.1). In addition, a handful of Chinese, Kumeyaay, Cocopah, Papai, and Kiliwa Indians took part in the military campaign. Predictably tensions between the contingents arose – particularly when concerning Chinese participation – for not all participated for like reasons.¹⁰⁴ Likewise, some were not prepared or willing to put in the work necessary to live and operate in a non-hierarchical, horizontally organized community. Differences surfaced along racial lines, as illustrated by both the revolutionaries' Sinophobia and in the leadership struggles among *insurrectos*, who seemed unable to transcend deeply embedded notions of racial privilege.¹⁰⁵

Internal disagreement among *insurrectos* was always present, and changes in leadership only increased their frequency and raised their volume. One issue was the manner in which military leaders were chosen: while Wobblies and Liberals, true to their principals, believed leadership was democratically bestowed on an individual by the group, such positions were not always secured through these means. Less radical rebels did not follow the tenants of the PLM and IWW, and elections were either carried out impartially or not at all. The composition of the

¹⁰⁴ Sinophobia did not end with the outbreak of the revolution, as old negative stereotypes about them (i.e. they took jobs, they peddled harmful drugs like opium; they degraded the Mexican race by intermarrying) lingered. Chinese in Mexico were often the victims of a host of crimes, from looting to murder. Robert Chao Romero, *The Chinese in Mexico: 1882-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996), chapter six; Grace Peña Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), chapter four.

¹⁰⁵ It merits noting that Mexican Wobblies, although less active in the Baja California revolution, were quite prominent in other parts of Mexico. Although distinct from the PLM, which was also active throughout Mexico, the IWW in Mexico, like the PLM, partially impacted the shape and character of the Mexican state. Lomnitz-Adler, *Return of Ricardo Flores Magón*, 320; Weber, "Wobblies of the Partido Liberal Mexicano," 222; Norman Caulfield, *Mexican Workers and the State: From the Porfiriato to NAFTA* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1998).



Figure 1.1. Mexican Revolution. Courtesy of University of Michigan Digital Collections, Labadie Photograph Collection, University of Michigan.

leadership rank gradually changed, too. Leyva, the Mexican commander of the small PLM insurgent group that captured Mexicali in February, was sacked on 29 March 1911, and both Berthold and Stanley Williams, two highly respected leftists, were killed in action in April 1911; the latter was replaced by Caryl Ap Rhys Pryce, a Welshman of dubious motives.¹⁰⁶ While on duty as a Mountie in western Canada, the aristocrat Pryce, a veteran of the Boer War and other military service in South Africa and India, read *Barbarous Mexico* and headed south to

¹⁰⁶ Even between Leyva and Williams there was trouble. Berthold had informed Flores Magón that Leyva debated quitting the campaign once he read in the press that Williams had anointed himself supreme commander of *insurrecto* forces – an action which Flores Magón and the Junta did not support. Flores Magón assured Leyva of his superior position of Baja forces, with Berthold as his second in command, and Williams in charge only in Algodones, Baja California. But as noted, despite the assurances, a mere few weeks later Leyva was relieved of his duties. Curiously, in another message transmitted on the same day, Flores Magón instructed Ricardo C. Valdez to “under no circumstances admit Stanley. He is an enemy.” Ricardo Flores Magón to José María Leyva, 15 March 1911, *Correspondencia*, Vol. I, 546-547; Ricardo Flores Magón to Ricardo C. Valdez, *ibid.*, 548.

participate in the Mexican Revolution – or so was his story.¹⁰⁷ Although eventually elected by his now Foreign Legion-dominated constituency – taking over for Jack Mosby, an Anglo American Wobbly who had deserted the U.S. Army – Pryce’s ascent was unpopular among the other contingents, for not only was Pryce not Mexican, he was not a member of the PLM or IWW either.¹⁰⁸

Yet under Pryce the *insurrectos* achieved their best military organization. On 10 May 1911, after several days of bitter fighting against Mexican federal forces, the Pryce-led rebels captured their second prize: the town of Tijuana. The feat was remarkable not only because the ragtag army briefly came together to defeat Díaz forces, but they did so without drawing in the U.S. military. In March 1911 President Taft had sent 30,000 troops to the southern border to, as Flores Magón wrote to Samuel Gompers, “support [the] Wall Street inferno” and to “aid in stamping out the last spark of that freedom which is supposed to be the basis of [the American] Republic.”¹⁰⁹ In separate correspondence Flores Magón expressed to Emma Goldman similar views, claiming that “wilful [sic] misrepresentations” by “gigantic money interests” in the United States and the world compelled the U.S. military to mobilize.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ According to the British Foreign Service, which later fought Mexico’s demands for Pryce’s extradition (the Mexican government had charged the Welshmen for robbery and murder), the soldier of fortune headed to Baja California after seeing an ad in an American paper calling for volunteers in the revolt against the Díaz government. Pryce was eventually cleared of the charges on the grounds that the killing of Baja California Lieutenant Governor José Larroque in Tijuana “grew out of a state of war, for which Pryce was not responsible.” Lomnitz-Adler, *Return of Ricardo Flores Magón*, 322; “Adventurer is True to Blood,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 September 1914, 110.

¹⁰⁸ Blaisdell, *Desert Revolution*, 100.

¹⁰⁹ The PLM head continued to make the case that the Mexican and American laborer shared the same enemy: capital. He wrote: “The Standard Oil Co., the Guggenheims, the Southern Pacific Railway, the Sugar Trust – all that Wall Street autocracy against which you and the great masses of your nation are making such vigorous protest – are the powers against which we of Mexico are in revolt... It is time for effective protest, and it is you who can make it most effectively. The issue is clear, unmistakeable (sic), beyond evasion. We repeat that our cause is your cause, and we call on you to give it the voice promptly, clearly, and decisively.” Gompers response was reserved, as he simply asked for more information regarding the goals of the PLM. Ricardo Flores Magón to Samuel Gompers, 11 March 1911, *Correspondencia*, Vol. I, 541-542; Samuel Gompers to Ricardo Flores Magón, 18 March 1911. Ibid., 548-549; *Diccionario histórico y biográfico de la Revolución Mexicana*, Tomo I (Mexico, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1990), 146.

¹¹⁰ Ricardo Flores Magón to Emma Goldman, 13 March 1911, *Correspondencia*, Vol. I, 545-546.

The constant reporting of violations of neutrality laws by the Díaz regime played a part in securing border vigilance by American federal troops too. For example, in early March 1911 the Mexican consul at San Diego reported to the Mexican Embassy in Washington that 400 Springfield rifles were purchased for the invasion of Baja California. The Mexican ambassador, in turn, communicated to Secretary of State Philander C. Knox that these “filibusterers” intended to “turn the territory of Lower California into a field of action for criminal undertakings.” To the dismay of the Mexican diplomat, despite the monitoring of the border by American troops, the numbers of “filibusterers” increased. To curb the trend, the ambassador suggested the U.S. military instruct the general public on how to properly deal with would-be *insurrectos*.¹¹¹ Although he did not follow the recommendation, President Taft did strengthen the presence of American federal forces on the international line, declaring their deployment to be for “educational purposes” only and not for military action or invasion.¹¹² The first federal reconnaissance missions by airplane – a monoplane flown near Tijuana by millionaire Harry S. Harkness – gave way to a more robust naval and marine presence in neighboring San Diego, as all shore leaves were cancelled and additional Army brigades arrived by train from San Francisco. By mid-April 1911 San Diego, much to the delight of boosters who had long coveted

¹¹¹ Francisco León de la Barra to Philander C. Knox, 3 March 1911, U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States with the Annual Message of the President Transmitted to Congress December 7, 1911* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918), 412 (hereafter *FRUS 1911*); León de la Barra to Knox, 6 March 1911, *Ibid.*, 413-414.

¹¹² On 9 March 1911 Enrique C. Creel, the Mexican Minister for Foreign Affairs, relayed to the American Chargé d’Affaires, Fred Morris Dearing, Díaz’s expression of relief upon being informed that President Taft had no intentions of altering the “cordial international relations which now exist.” The American Chargé d’Affaires to Philander C. Knox, 9 March 1911, *Ibid.*, 420-421; “American Troops Are On the Move,” *San Diego Union*, 7 March 1911, 1; “Movement of Troops for Maneuvers Solely,” *San Diego Union*, 9 March 1911; “Washington Agog Over Movements,” *San Diego Union*, 9 March 1911.

a larger naval presence in the San Diego Bay, was for the first time fully militarized and the entire Pacific Fleet was in the city's bay.¹¹³

Although the U.S. military did not cross the international boundary, *insurrectos* had to remain careful for the duration of their campaign in Baja California. Infighting, coupled with the lack of arms and supplies, made it difficult to defeat one state's federal forces, thus two state armies would have effectively meant defeat. As leftists from Los Angeles to Baja California made every effort to keep the U.S. military on the American side of the border, *insurrecto* leadership in Baja California attempted to resolve the issue of the lack of arms and supplies in various ways. In Tijuana they mirrored what they had done in Mexicali: *insurrectos* took control of the town's customs house and also levied taxes on the businesses in the area, which were few.¹¹⁴ One San Diego resident recalled that during this period Tijuana had "a big curio store, a bar, and a couple of restaurants. On the main street... there wasn't ten buildings in the whole street. The town, I think, had about 1,200 people. It was just a village."¹¹⁵

Revenue from the taxation of conventional businesses, then, was limited. As a result, the rebels allowed in Tijuana a lucrative industry which had been prominent since the 1890s: vice.¹¹⁶ Since most military battles between *insurrectos* and Mexican federal forces in Baja California were violent, but relatively small and short-lived – an extreme contrast to martial struggles in

¹¹³ As early as 1850 city elites realized that San Diego's natural harbor, while adequate for light trade, needed extensive improvements in order to make the bay far more financially lucrative. Dredging, which would create an adequate shipping channel, was not undertaken until the 20th century. Only after the U.S. military noted the potential of the bay were the 14-mile long bay's depths and contours altered for heavier commercial and military use. Pourade, *Gold in the Sun*, 148; Linda A. Canada, "'Sitting on the Dock of the Bay': 100 Years of Photographs from the San Diego Historical Society," *Journal of San Diego History* 52 (Winter/Spring 2006), 1.

¹¹⁴ Lomnitz-Adler, *Return of Ricardo Flores Magón*, 322.

¹¹⁵ Clarence I. Harris, interviewed by Craig Carter, 10 January 1989, transcript, San Diego History Center Oral History Project, San Diego History Center, San Diego, CA (SDHC).

¹¹⁶ Joseph Poggi, Jr., a San Diego resident, recalled that even in the days of his youth in the 1890s and 1900s, it was well known that "Tia Juana" housed several saloons from which beer and tequila flowed liberally. Joseph Poggi, Jr., interviewed by Edgar F. Hastings, 26 March 1959, transcript, Oral History Project, SDHC.

other parts of revolutionary Mexico – closed businesses re-opened quickly, if they had closed at all. Tijuana, despite the battle between insurgents and federal troops, was no exception. San Diego resident James Russell Johnson recalled crossing the border as a teenager and purchasing a serape for 50 cents from the *insurrectos* running one of the town's stores.¹¹⁷ Gambling halls, opium dens, bars, and brothels once more flourished within days, re-awakening among Anglo Americans additional fears, this time of moral and racial degeneration.¹¹⁸ These activities, while an important source of revenue to those waging battle in Baja California, were not condoned by PLM officers in Los Angeles. Their wishes for an anti-vice community were not fulfilled until the second week of June 1911, when Mosby shut down bars and casinos in an effort to improve *insurrecto* discipline and combat readiness.¹¹⁹ As Johnson recalled, liquor was poured in the streets because *insurrectos* were apparently “a bunch of winos.”¹²⁰

The other problem – the constant internal struggle among the various contingents – was tackled squarely by Flores Magón and his closest associates. For him harmony among the *insurrectos* could be found in a common purpose: first, the overthrow of Díaz, and later the overthrow of business interests. Class and shared experience, it was reasoned, could overcome racial, national, linguistic, and even ideological divides. Undoubtedly, there were fighters in the Baja California revolution who were not adherents of Liberal or Wobbly principals; opportunists

¹¹⁷ James Russel Johnson, interviewed by Robert G. Wright, 30 August 1980, transcript, Oral History Project, SDHC.

¹¹⁸ Eric Michael Schantz, “From the ‘Mexicali Rose’ to the Tijuana Brass: Vice Tours of the United States-Mexico Border, 1910-1965” (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2001); Catherine Christensen, “Mujeres Públicas: Euro-American Prostitutes and Reformers at the California-Mexico Border, 1900-1929” (PhD diss., University of California, Irvine, 2009); Marlene Medrano, “Sexuality, Migration, and Tourism in the 20th Century U.S.-Mexico Borderlands,” *History Compass* 11 (March 2013), 235-246; Steven W. Bender, *Run for the Border: Vice and Virtue in U.S.-Mexico Border Crossings* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 57-78.

¹¹⁹ Lawrence D. Taylor, “The Wild Frontier Moves South: U.S. Entrepreneurs and the Growth of Tijuana’s Vice Industry, 1908-1935,” *Journal of San Diego History* 48 (Summer 2002), <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/2002/july/frontier-2/>, accessed 4 November 2017.

¹²⁰ Johnson, Oral History Project, SDHC.

certainly comprised part of the *insurrecto* ranks – a point which the Southern California press and the Díaz regime sometimes stressed. Aside from the dubious motives of Pryce, there were individuals like Dick Ferris, a one-time candidate for lieutenant governor of California, “theatrical manager and clubman,” and, as one historian terms him, “clown” who possessed no populist or leftist spirit and therefore did not fight in Baja California, but rather turned the region into a publicity stunt. Confidence man Ferris, always eager to affix his name to anything which might have garnered him money, advertised the campaign as a filibuster to establish a luxurious commercial republic for anyone who took him seriously.¹²¹ The PLM, then, deemed it imperative to eliminate such non-radical leftist, opportunist elements from the Baja California theatre. For this they relied heavily on their allies in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands: the IWW.

Despite the tension on the front lines, the IWW proved to be worthy partners of the PLM in Baja California. Flores Magón always welcomed the ideological and material support provided by American leftists. Indeed, the Mexican anarchist viewed Wobblies as fellow soldiers in the revolutionary struggle.¹²² As in Cananea and other parts of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, the IWW could help introduce the uninitiated to the two highly compatible leftist ideologies. Education, then, was once more of utmost importance. From the outset Flores Magón implored his comrades to make clear the PLM cause to would-be insurgents. For

¹²¹ Ferris the “clown,” as Blaisdell labels him, went so far as to introduce himself to readers of the *New York World*, the *American*, and the *Herald*, as “General Dick Ferris,” leader of a filibustering mission in Baja California. The charades did not end there, however, as Ferris even created a flag for his proposed nation; when someone attempted to hoist it over Tijuana on his behalf, *insurrectos* quickly confiscated it and tore it apart. Anthropologist Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, noting that Ferris’ contemporaries, like Ethel Duffy Turner, called the “general” a charlatan, links the promoter to the broader development of Tijuana’s tourist industry. Ferris publicized Baja California as both a “Countercultural Republic” and a “Sporting Republic.” As Ferris explained to the Senate’s Committee on Foreign Relations, he simply wanted to create a “commercial Utopia,” even if that meant establishing a “Republic of Díaz.” The Mexican dictator, who had been offered the land for his own personal use, emphatically rejected the preposterous idea. “Dick Ferris Candidate for Lieut. Governor,” *Los Angeles Herald*, 6 July 1910; Blaisdell, *Desert Revolution*, 60-61; Lomnitz-Adler, *Return of Ricardo Flores Magón*, 359-373; U.S. Senate, *Revolutions in Mexico*, 374-376.

¹²² Lawrence Douglas Taylor, *La campaña magonista de 1911 en Baja California: El apogeo de la lucha revolucionaria del Partido Liberal Mexicano* (Tijuana: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 1992), 39-44.

example, in January 1911 Flores Magón instructed Nemesio Tejeda to ready the people by first explaining that the PLM, unlike Maderistas, did not seek political office, nor did it support anyone in search of such a position. More importantly, Tejeda was to communicate the point that the PLM wished to return lands to the people so that they could be worked in common. Reflective of anarchist principals, the fruits of the land would then be distributed according to one's needs. Finally, Flores Magón believed the intellectual dissemination of values vital. "The people," he wrote, "need to lose respect for authority and capital." It was the only way, Flores Magón thought, to attain genuine freedom.¹²³

Flores Magón seemingly wanted the *insurrectos* to be comprised of individuals like Margarita Ortega – a woman so deeply devoted to the PLM cause that she abandoned her "unconscious" family, save for her equally dedicated daughter Rosaura.¹²⁴ Because of their radicalism, the two Mexican women were expelled from Mexicali in 1913, which by then was not controlled by *insurrectos*, and were forced to migrate to Yuma, Arizona, where they were captured by U.S. immigration officials. They would have been deported if not for the aid of Ortega's radical network, which helped the pair escape to Phoenix, where they assumed new identities. However, due to the arduousness of the dangerous journey through the unforgiving Arizona desert, Rosaura died shortly after arriving to their destination. Margarita, vowing to carry on the struggle, returned to Mexico and organized another revolutionary movement, this time in Sonora. She was captured by anti-PLM forces and taken to Baja California, where she

¹²³ Ricardo Flores Magón to Nemesio Tejeda, 28 January 1911, *Correspondencia*, Vol. I, 535.

¹²⁴ "Margarita Ortega," *Regeneración*, 13 June 1914. Ortega's family consisted of "bourgeois persons and proletarians who aspired to be bourgeois." When her "coward" husband refused to bear arms in 1911, she left him. Rosaura enthusiastically joined her mother, declaring: "Let's saddle the horses and launch ourselves into the battle for the redemption of the working class!"

was imprisoned and tortured by counter-revolutionaries. Since she was unwilling to identify her comrades, she was sentenced to death by firing squad.¹²⁵

During the Baja California revolution the number of *insurrectos* with the zeal of Ortega appeared small, but there was still hope for the leftist project. By May 1911, as the multiracial rebel force captured the town of Tijuana, the Wobbly *insurrectos* explicitly voiced their support for Flores Magón's internationalism. After they boasted of "keeping the Red Flag flying" in their Baja California "Utopia," three IWW leaders announced in the *Industrial Worker*: "Now, fellows, this Lower California is a very nice country to have control of. It's not too hot and it is also a very rich country in metals and otherwise, and if you fellow workers back us up with men and money we will surely take this country and will be able in various ways to help organization work in the U.S.A." The message closed, "There will be no peace in Mexico until the Red Flag flies over the working man's country and capitalism shall have been overthrown."¹²⁶

Such remarks could be construed as filibusterism, which the Díaz regime had always argued, but they could also be interpreted as internationalist and, ultimately, anti-statist.¹²⁷ For the Wobblies, the revolution was more than simply defeating the Díaz regime, which Mexican revolutionaries had recently done; the Baja California revolution was the opening stages to the overthrow of capitalism in all countries, and borders would fall. Mexico's cause became the world's cause, as the leftists in Tijuana believed the PLM banner of "Tierra y Libertad" would eventually arrive on U.S. soil. Berthold himself, when told of American troop mobilizations

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Quoted in Blaisdell, *Desert Revolution*, 101.

¹²⁷ At times the Díaz and Madero regimes attempted to portray PLM-led Baja excursions as American-backed filibustering. Efforts were made to link Liberals to Otis, American weapon manufacturers, American-owned railroads, and many other American capitalist ventures. Given Flores Magón's, and the Junta's, intense disdain for the capitalist class, such a charge merits no serious consideration. Also, as already noted, men like General Otis had little sympathy for plight of the working class, thus the IWW would not have rebelled for the interests of the *Los Angeles Times* publisher. Taylor, *La campaña magonista*, 117.

along the border, hinted that Mexico's revolution was the world's revolution: "The Washington government is as tyrannical as that of Diaz (sic)... We are fighting capital everywhere, and it will cost the lives of at least a few of the servants of American despots the moment they step off their territory."¹²⁸ Thus, during the Baja California revolution Booster San Diego – whose dreams were manifestly different from those envisioned by the red flag wavers directly across the international line – began their concerted campaign to distance the Greater San Diego community from actual leftist revolutionaries.

Nightmares of a Workers' Utopia

San Diegans had an intimate view of the proceedings immediately to the south. Although Lester G. Bradley did not visit the borderline or the Mexican town until after the Battle of Tijuana, he knew that many residents and tourists, much like in other sections of the border, did travel south to witness the fighting firsthand.¹²⁹ Teenager James Russell Johnson bought his serape after he watched a battle, crossed the borderline, and observed *insurrectos* burying the bodies of soldiers and Chinese civilians. Other San Diegans crossed the border and engaged in looting, some of whom entered homes and, according to Johnson, "took valuable stuff."¹³⁰ Meanwhile back in downtown San Diego John Kenneth Turner, now the editor of the English section of *Regeneración*, and PLM member Antonio P. Araujo held two meetings in the city's Germania Hall in March and April of 1911. In the first meeting the pair condemned President Taft for his collaboration with Díaz; the second meeting served as a fundraiser for the PLM cause in Baja California.¹³¹ In a separate event in San Diego, Emma Goldman spoke before a group of about 200 people to voice her support for the *insurrectos* operating south of the border.

¹²⁸ "Dissension Reigns in Rebel Ranks at Mexicali," *San Diego Union*, 9 March 1911.

¹²⁹ Lester G. Bradley, interviewed by Edgar F. Hastings, 11 February 1961, transcript, Oral History Project, SDHC.

¹³⁰ Johnson, Oral History Project, SDHC.

¹³¹ *San Diego Sun*, 27 March 1911; *San Diego Sun*, 7 April 1911.

Unlike the few workers in the city who supported the anarcho-syndicalist revolution, the powerful San Diego conservative press cast the Baja California revolution in a negative light.¹³² On 8 April 1911 Spreckels' *San Diego Union* reported that the time had come to send American troops across the border to protect American property and interests. The seizure of property and arrest of management of C&M Ranch, the transnational outfit owned by *Los Angeles Times* publisher Otis, likely caught the attention of Booster San Diego. According to Lieutenant Clarence Lininger, an U.S. cavalryman stationed at Calexico to protect American interests in the region, *insurrectos* had not only seized property, but had also jailed those in charge of overseeing American-held lands. In February 1911 Leyva "arrested the American manager of the C.M. ranch in Mexico and had him in jail for a couple hours," though the rebel general was quick to explain to U.S. military leadership that "the insurrectos have no desire whatever to stir up the U.S."¹³³

Spreckels himself had a direct stake in the fate of Baja California. After all the "dark star" of San Diego, like his Los Angeles counterparts, held property interests across the international border. Spreckels owned the only partially completed San Diego & Arizona Railway, a rail line which he originally presented to fellow boosters as not simply a tributary of the transcontinental railroad, but rather the beginning of an entirely new transcontinental line.¹³⁴

¹³² At one point the San Diego press did support the *insurrectos* – when Ferris was lobbying the U.S. government for Baja California's annexation. The *San Diego Sun* opined, "If Lower California should wake up some morning to find the Stars and Stripes floating over it, San Diego would suddenly become more than ever a City of Destiny." However, once it became clear that no such actions were going to take place, the city's press reversed. Pourade, *Gold in the Sun*, 147.

¹³³ Clarence Lininger to Ora Lininger, 14 February 1911, Folder 2, Box 2312, Clarence Lininger Letters from the California-Mexico Border, 1910-1911, CSL.

¹³⁴ In a 1907 letter to water works entrepreneur Ed Fletcher, William Clayton, vice president and managing director of the Spreckels kingdom, communicated that the completion of the San Diego & Arizona Railway would enhance the profitable possibilities of the Imperial Valley. The growth of the agribusiness-dominated region would necessitate, it was hoped, more rail lines and a thus a new transcontinental railroad; however, by 1913 Booster San Diego had abandoned such a lofty goal, stating that the San Diego & Arizona was a link to the already existing transcontinental railroad. Wm. Clayton to Ed Fletcher, 12 April 1907, Folder 8, Box 27, Ed Fletcher Papers, Special Collections & Archives, University of California, San Diego, (UCSD); "Imperial Prefers San Diego Market," *San*

Once completed the rail line would have accomplished a feat first dreamed by Morse, Horton, and earlier elites, and directly linked the San Diego Bay to the lucrative American markets of the east; however, in order to finish the project Spreckels had to overcome harsh terrain and minor land disputes, which he accomplished by diverting the San Diego & Arizona Railway into Baja California, where it ran trains to construction camps near Agua Caliente, a site that first functioned as a recuperation center for those afflicted with various health ailments, and later became a Mexican vice playground for the rich and famous of the U.S.¹³⁵ Aside from threatening rail lines and the fledgling leisure tourism industry, *insurrecto* activity endangered other money-generating industries, notably the Imperial Valley's burgeoning agribusiness. Greater San Diego suffered from a lack of freshwater, thus when they secured a reliable water source by tapping into the Colorado River, Booster San Diegans went to great lengths to keep it flowing.¹³⁶ Although *insurrectos* did not explicitly threaten water supplies to the Imperial Valley, in the view of business interests, the radicals' mere presence endangered the valley's irrigation system, which dipped into Baja California. Agribusiness could not flourish if *insurrectos* controlled or destroyed the region's vital water supply.

Another concern was the "looting," as *insurrectos*, still in desperate need of basic necessities, confiscated goods from the rail carts and railroad workers, at times by threatening

Diego Union, 1 January 1914; *San Diego City and County Directory, 1913* (San Diego: San Diego Directory Co., 1913), 20.

¹³⁵ Agua Caliente's hot springs were the initial attraction, but eventually a gaming resort was built nearby. See Paul J. Vanderwood, *Satan's Playground: Mobsters and Movie Stars at America's Greatest Gaming Resort* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

¹³⁶ Southern California was, and still is, prone to severe freshwater shortages; San Diego is especially susceptible. As a result, access to water has always been contested terrain. For example, Spreckels and Fletcher, the latter a Progressive member of Booster San Diego and thus somewhat of an adversary to the former, frequently feuded over water rights and thus power (Spreckels' wealth and influence, however, always put Fletcher at a distinct disadvantage). Aside from squabbling with each other, the community's wealthy boosters and builders battled the local working class and ethnic minorities over water issues, from land use to workers' rights at dam sites. Eliza L. Martin studies these conflicts, demonstrating the influence water has had on the development and politics of San Diego. Eliza L. Martin, "Growth by the Gallon: Water, Development and Power in San Diego, California 1890-1947," (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Cruz, 2010).

force.¹³⁷ Yet unlike the San Diegans who crossed the international line to pilfer the curio shops and few homes of Tijuana, *insurrectos* sometimes issued receipts for the items seized. For example, Pryce halted W.G. McCormick and C.E. Crowley, the San Diego & Arizona Railway's conductor and superintendent, respectively, to take vital goods. Perhaps indicative of the influence PLM-IWW education had on his thinking, Pryce stated, "Well, Mr. Crowley, war is war, and we must have supplies for man and beast, and I will not draw on you for more than is necessary and will receipt for everything taken, but as Spreckels has millions and large interests in this section, it is my intention to make him and other large holders contribute heavily to the support of my army."¹³⁸

The *Union* continued to denounce *insurrecto* activity. *Insurrectos*, according to the paper, were in Mexico doing what they wanted to accomplish in the United States: destroy infrastructure, abolish private property, and redistribute land. The daily echoed some of Porfirio Díaz's charges claiming that the "filibusterers" merely desired "the possession of the peninsula to establish a Utopia, a commonwealth."¹³⁹ Some Mexican nationals in San Diego made similar

¹³⁷ The Senate's Subcommittee on Foreign Relations heard testimony explaining that *insurrectos* "had threatened to blow up a [railroad] tunnel, and held them [the contractors] up at the point of their guns, and took what they wanted, even taking the supplies of underclothes that the workmen had there. That story was verified by others who had been there, men who were in the so-called army of the Mexican Liberal Party." U.S. Senate, *Revolutions in Mexico*, 233.

¹³⁸ Quoted in Pourade, *Gold in the Sun*, 149-150. James Robert Moriarty and Blaine P. Lamb argue that W.G. McCormick, conductor of the San Diego & Arizona, and C.E. Crowley, superintendent of the line, with the financial clout of Spreckels, were pivotal in keeping the line from falling into the hands of the *insurrectos*. The most men like Pryce could do was cause temporary disturbances and confiscate vital goods such as blankets. Nevertheless, Spreckels, much like many other American business interests, remained on alert. Taylor points out that Otis, his son-in-law Harry Chandler, William Randolph Hearst, Edward H. Harriman, the Southern Pacific Railroad, and the British Mexican Land and Colonization Company all owned significant tracts of land and property in Baja California, too. The Baja California revolution, then, deeply concerned them. James Robert Moriarty, III, and Blaine P. Lamb, "The Railroad and Revolutionaries," paper prepared for the University of San Diego, SDHC; Taylor, *La campaña magonista*, 76; Vincent Zachary C. de Baca, "Moral Renovation of the Californias: Tijuana's Political and Economic Role in American-Mexican Relations, 1920-1935," (PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 1991), 38.

¹³⁹ Díaz, in a desperate effort to save his regime, attempted to convince Mexican Congress that their nation was under attack by alien elements. He stated: "In Baja California another sort of movement began, caused by groups of communists among whom are many American filibusters, with the fantastic project of forming a Socialist State... I am sure that if necessary the Mexican people, always patriotic and jealous of their autonomy, will hasten to the

accusations of the *insurrectos*. The Mexican Defenders of National Integrity, a group of San Diego-based Mexicans organized by the Mexican consul at San Diego, bitterly opposed the revolutionaries. The men in the group believed *insurrectos* were foreign, “filibuster bandits” who had no desire to join a united Mexico.¹⁴⁰ Guadalupe L. Gonzáles, a Mexican national who lived in San Ysidro but worked in Tijuana for the San Diego & Arizona Railway, held similar beliefs and thus fought against the *insurrectos*, too. Gonzáles stated that the rebels wanted “to make a republica. Socialists living in San Francisco give them the money for it.”¹⁴¹ The San Diego press also portrayed the *insurrectos* as frauds and schemers, reporting that the revolutionaries were a “grotesque” group of foreigners who did not want to work or follow orders. Lininger agreed: In March 1911, he wrote that *insurrectos* would fail in achieving their goals because “they love their rest.”¹⁴²

The Spreckels press was not the lone wing of Booster San Diego which condemned left-leaning revolutionary activity across the border, as others expressed concern even after Madero gained control of Mexico City. D.C. Collier, the former president of the San Diego Chamber of Commerce and state politician who had sent a telegram to Secretary of State Knox warning of a leftist worker’s “Utopia” in Baja California, was one of the more vocal advocates for some form of U.S. intervention in Mexico. Collier warned that American railroads and other vital property

defense of national territory.” “It’s Time to Act,” *San Diego Union*, 8 April 1911; Message of President Diaz to the Twenty-fifth Congress, second session, 1 April 1911, enclosed in telegram from American Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson to Secretary of State Philander C. Knox, 5 April 1911, *FRUS 1911*, 445.

¹⁴⁰ Many crossed the international line and joined forces with Celso Vega, the Mexican general responsible for the eventual defeat of the *insurrectos*. Sociedad Mexicana. Defensores de la Integridad Nacional to C. Ministro de Gobernación, July 1911, *Actividades políticas*, 314-318.

¹⁴¹ Unlike the Defenders of the National Integrity, Gonzáles’ participation in the anti-*insurrecto* offensive was for nationalistic, not anti-radical, reasons. He revealed this point when he noted that he fought to simply expel the “English” from Baja; González openly defended Villa, whom he considered a true revolutionary genuinely interested in helping the poor, unlike “Callis” (Plutarco Elías Calles, a bourgeois revolutionary from the state of Sonora). Guadalupe L. Gonzáles and Theresa Solis Gonzáles, interviewed by Robert G. Wright, 21 February 1972, transcript, Oral History Project, SDHC.

¹⁴² Clarence Lininger to Ora Lininger, 11 March 1911, Folder 3, Box 2312, Lininger Letters, CSL.

in Mexico would be destroyed by *insurrectos* unless they were protected by U.S. troops or co-opted by the new business-friendly Madero administration in Mexico City.¹⁴³

Collier was not only concerned about *insurrectos*' impact on Baja California, but also on Greater San Diego itself. In the early 20th century Booster San Diego aggressively promoted its community as one ripe for investment and opportunity. To demonstrate this point, Collier, with the assistance of other city leaders like Spreckels and George W. Marston, renamed the massive and centrally-located City Park to Balboa Park. The businessmen then broke ground on the construction of new, Spanish-themed buildings, boulevards, and courtyards on the renamed park's grounds in preparation for the Panama-California Exposition of 1915. Boosters hired grafter Dick Ferris as the fair's promoter, and also began to distribute promotional literature noting the overall favorability of the region.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, boosters and business interests wanted to ensure the budding community received only positive press, which could be more readily possible if leftist revolution directly across the international border was stamped out. Within Greater San Diego local law enforcement did its part by rounding up suspected revolutionaries. In El Cajon, a small San Diego County town, police officers questioned an "unusual number[s] of Mexicans around the town," charging several with general disorderly violence.¹⁴⁵ Although

¹⁴³ Mr. D.C. Collier to the Secretary of State, 20 June 1911, *FRUS 1911*, 506; for a short article chronicling the life and activities of D.C. Collier, see Richard Amero, "Colonel D.C. Collier: 'An Inspiration to the Citizens of Today'," *Journal of San Diego History* 56 (Fall 2010): 203-216.

¹⁴⁴ Ferris, never known to miss an opportunity to inflate his importance or capabilities in making money, explained to inquisitive senators that he had been contacted by "The Panama-California Exposition Co." to "manage their celebration in San Diego." While Ferris was contacted by exposition officials to help in promotional and hosting matters, he did not actually manage anything. Decisions were made by a "Committee of One Hundred," a who's-who of San Diego businessmen and political figures, including, Collier, Marston, and Spreckels. U.S. Senate, *Revolutions in Mexico*, 377; Richard Griswold del Castillo, "From Revolution to Economic Depression," in *Chicano San Diego*, 73; Herbert Lockwood, *San Diego's Hysterical History: Fallout from the Skeleton's Closet* (Raton, NM: Coda Publications, 2003), 161.

¹⁴⁵ "60 Rebels Reported at El Cajon Ready to Attack Tia Juana," *San Diego Union*, 5 March 1911.

the *San Diego Union* reported that none of the itinerant men questioned carried arms or claimed to be *insurrectos*, they nevertheless were detained as possible participants in the revolution.

In the end, the U.S. federal government did not need to initiate military conflict, as divisions within the rebels' three main contingents were difficult to surmount. Their common enemy – the Díaz regime – was no longer present; try as they might, the PLM and IWW could not rally all groups for the more radical dream of worldwide worker revolt and the defeat of business interests. Equally as important, the lack of supplies and money dogged the military campaign, demoralizing and frustrating the *insurrecto* ranks. The cause was not helped by the fact that in late May Pryce absconded with vital PLM funds to team up with Ferris in yet another of the latter's self-enriching schemes.¹⁴⁶ Unfortunately for the once again Mosby-led *insurrectos*, Madero's Baja California army, comprised of federal forces left behind by Díaz, acted swiftly and began to dismantle the Baja Commune.¹⁴⁷ On 16 June 1911, two days after the Flores Magón brothers were yet again arrested (and later convicted) for violation of neutrality laws, *insurrectos* in Mexicali surrendered. Less than a week later Tijuana fell to Madero's federal army (See Figure 1.2).

Although some *insurrectos* remained in Baja California – notably Juan F. Montero, a Liberal who as late as November 1911 proclaimed that the struggle in the peninsula continued because “no government can give the poor what they need” – most scattered.¹⁴⁸ Some escaped

¹⁴⁶ For a study on the financial difficulties encountered by the *insurrectos* during the Baja Raids, see Lawrence D. Taylor, “The Magonista Revolt in Baja California: Capitalist Conspiracy or Rebellion de los Pobres,” *Journal of San Diego History* 45 (Winter 1999), <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/1999/january/magonista/>, accessed 4 November 2017.

¹⁴⁷ Lomnitz-Adler, *Return of Ricardo Flores Magón*, 323. Madero, mindful of the popularity of the PLM in the area, intentionally used Díaz's old troops and nationalist groups like San Diego's Defenders of the National Integrity. He was not certain if his own forces, which had earlier incorporated old Liberals and insurgents from Villa's Division of the North, would execute his orders in Baja California.

¹⁴⁸ Montero was adamant of Madero's and the U.S. government's motives: to crush the Mexican people, to crush the “grand mass of the disinherited.” The only solution, in his view, was to follow the red flag of the *insurrectos* and



Figure 1.2. General Mosby on his way to surrender. Courtesy of University of Michigan Digital Collections, Labadie Photograph Collection, University of Michigan.

Mexican federal troops by entering the United States, only to be greeted by American federal troops who quickly detained them. Insurgents were put in a “containment camp” within the prison camp at nearby Fort Rosecrans, which the *San Diego Union* celebrated since it meant that the San Diego & Arizona Railway could be completed without more disturbances.¹⁴⁹

Colonel George Ruhlen, the commanding officer at Fort Rosecrans who since Taft’s decree had been monitoring the border from San Diego to Calexico, remembered Wobbly arrivals, too:

“I.W.W.s came along right after [the Baja California revolution] and most of those fellows I

shout, “Death to slavery! Death to misery! Equality for all!” Juan F. Montero, “Proclama,” 29 November 1911, *Actividades políticas*, 402-403.

¹⁴⁹ Albert Bernardini, interviewed by Bob Wright, 12 September 1980, transcript, Oral History Project, SDHC; “Way Is Cleared for S.D. & A.,” *San Diego Union*, 23 June 1911.

think were in that gang [of *insurrectos*].” Yet despite their activities in Mexico, the U.S. federal government had no intentions of holding the *insurrectos*, save for Mosby and a few others. Therefore, Washington gave Ruhlen his next command: “We were ordered to release the people, so we just turned them loose on San Diego, which was a dirty trick.”¹⁵⁰

Sparks

The Baja California revolution of 1911 may have been short-lived, but the influence of the *insurrectos* on the character and development of Greater San Diego was palpable. For a short period of time, the multiracial and multi-ethnic army of the disinherited of the “wageworkers frontier” were able to build on leftist teachings and alliances forming at the turn of the 20th century to tenuously come together to combat the Díaz regime and install an anti-capitalist and anti-statist commune in Mexico. Yet the leftist principles of the PLM and IWW were not enough to keep their experiment in Baja California alive, as divisions within rebel ranks developed for a variety of reasons. Funding for the Baja California revolution, for example, always posed an issue since most of the PLM leadership, like its membership, hailed from the poor. The theft of *insurrectos*’ few finances by Carl Ahp Pryce and his accomplice, San Diego promoter and charlatan Dick Ferris, did not help matters.

The American and Mexican federal governments also factored into the collapse of the revolutionary movement in Baja California. Indeed, the defeat of the PLM and IWW in Baja

¹⁵⁰ Washington did want to keep 12 of the *insurrectos* captive, Mosby included. Like Mosby, the other *insurrectos* kept in detention were identified as deserters from the Army, Navy or Marines. After an eight month stay in the Los Angeles County jail, during which time the wound he received during the Baja California campaign developed into consumption, Mosby was transferred to Mare Island, where the former *insurrecto* general believed he would die. He lamented not dying on the battlefield like Stanley Williams, prompting *Regeneración* to comment: “Our civilization, with its jail and penitentiary hells, is a thousand times more cruel than the open fight, no matter what the peace advocates – usually comfortable plutocrats, well contented with things as they are – may say.” In one last effort at freedom Mosby attempted to escape custody, to only be shot dead by American federal troops. Colonel George Ruhlen, interviewed by Edgar F. Hastings, 12 April 1961, transcript, Oral History Project, SDHC. “Mosby Must Face Courtmartial,” *Regeneración*, 13 April 1912.

California's border towns was the culmination of the capital-state partnership which had monitored, persecuted, and jailed leftists during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, drastically shaping the sociopolitical bent of some communities in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, Greater San Diego included. Boosters and business interests of this region, who since the end of the Mexican-American War, had aimed to develop a profit-making municipality, used the Baja California revolution as an opportunity to advance their capitalist project, in part by lobbying Washington D.C. to monitor the southern international border. For San Diego, the militarization of the border not only initiated an even closer relationship to the United States military, but it also created a physical barrier from both the radical "hobo army" and Baja California. Booster San Diego could begin to reference a more visible boundary, patrolled by U.S. soldiers, to claim that dangerous and destructive leftist politics were alien to the burgeoning community.

Unsurprisingly, leftists assessed their actions differently and, despite the defeat of the PLM-IWW campaign in Baja California, the "spark of rebellion" continued to flicker, as leftists continued to challenge business interests on the border. Aside from reporting on "Big Bill" Haywood's guest appearance in San Diego in September 1911, in which the labor leader connected syndicalist movements in Barcelona, Wales, and other parts of Europe with workers' struggles in Southern California, Stanley M. Gue delightedly reported to fellow workers that Fernando Palomares had returned. Gue, who recognized the shared goals of all workers regardless of their place of origin, made the case to aid Palomares' agitation in San Diego: "The Mexican workers are an enthusiastic bunch of fighters once they are organized. They fear nothing and are always ready to act for the working class." Gue added that if Palomares' efforts were supported, a strong multiracial and multi-ethnic workers' movement in "both in America

and Mexico” would continue.¹⁵¹ In a few months’ time, Gue would get his fight, as leftist workers – some of whom had been released by Colonel Ruhlen on orders from the federal government – and Booster San Diego struggled over the freedom of speech and, by extension, the freedom to contest capitalist development.

¹⁵¹ “San Diego For Strike,” *Industrial Worker*, 7 September 1911; “Organize the Mexican Workers,” *Industrial Worker*, 7 September 1911.

2

Barbarous San Diego: *The Free Speech Fight of 1912 and Its Aftermath*

Indifference is our chain, and we ourselves are our own tyrants because we make no effort to destroy it. Indifferent and apathetic, we see ourselves file by earthly affairs with the same impassivity as if they were taking place on another planet; and as everyone is interested only in his own person, without concern for the general interest, for the common interests of all people, no one feels the need to unite with others to be strong in the struggle for the general interest. This results in there being no solidarity among the oppressed, that there are no limits on the abuses by government, and that the bosses of all types make prisoners of us, enslave us, exploit us, oppress us, and humiliate us.

- Ricardo Flores Magón, 1917

[D]ark forces have corrupted San Diego until it has come to be regarded, I find, as one of the least liberal, most timid of American cities.

- Lincoln Steffens, 1918

As national armies waged war in Europe in 1917, self-exiled anarchist Ricardo Flores Magón declared before a Los Angeles crowd one of his familiar refrains: He and the masses were imprisoned by a government and business alliance. Indeed, at the behest of business interests, agents and militaries of both the U.S. and Mexican federal governments had threatened and jailed Flores Magón and his allies who were in, or sympathetic to, leftist organizations like the multiracial and syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW); suppressed, among other popular movements, workers' strikes throughout the U.S.; militarily defeated the anarcho-syndicalist, multiracial and multi-ethnic Baja California revolution in 1911; and ultimately helped intimidate the working poor into silence.

Perhaps most frustrating for Flores Magón, the silence had morphed into division among the working class. The anarchist believed his dreams of communal and multiracial freedom and equality were threatened by a world of individualism and narrow visions, where “the oppressed” were once more divided by racial, national, and linguistic barriers.¹ The fractured working class, Flores Magón reasoned, contributed to the growth of an illiberal and conformist culture that denied free speech to those who rejected capitalism, imperialism and racism, all of which had increasingly marginalized workers, especially itinerant workers of the world. Greater San Diego – a region spanning from San Diego’s picturesque Pacific Coast beaches to the desert land of the Imperial Valley to the east – epitomized this trend.

Lincoln Steffens, the New York-based muckraker journalist best known for his early 20th century series of *McClure’s* exposés on municipal corruption, encountered this illiberal and conformist culture during his turbulent visit to Greater San Diego’s most populous municipality, San Diego, in 1918. Shortly after his two-day appearance in the growing town – the final stop on a nationwide public lecture tour – Steffens sent a private, scathing letter to the editor of the *San Diego Sun*, the city’s second leading newspaper, in which he called the Southern California community one of the least liberal in the country.² The treatment he received after his opening night’s speech prompted him to arrive at such a conclusion. On the night in question, Steffens delivered to a generally captivated, though not in agreement, crowd a lecture on the Russian Revolution, which seemed all too sympathetic. One attendee in particular was not impressed:

¹ Ricardo Flores Magón, “Speech in El Monte, CA, 1917,” in *Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magón Reader*, eds. Chaz Bufe and Mitchel Cowen (Oakland: AK Press, 2005), 282.

² “Letter to the Editor,” *San Diego Sun*, 28 May 1918. The editor of the *Sun* chose to publish the private correspondence. Trudie Casper has documented how Steffens’ now public observations troubled a handful of San Diego’s intellectuals, prompting them to in 1919 create the San Diego Open Forum, a lecture circuit which welcomed speakers of all stripes, from a “radical conscientious objector” of the First World War to a local Ku Klux Klan leader. While the Klan was vocally denounced by the small local black population among others, these denunciations paled in comparison to the abuse directed at “radical” anti-war proponents. Trudie Casper, “San Diego’s Open Forum – Birth and Death,” *Journal of San Diego History* 26 (Spring 1980), 126-132.

E.W. Scripps, publisher of the aforementioned paper. The following morning Scripps' *Sun* reported that Steffens' lecture promoted Bolshevism and "philosophical anarchism." "As far as I could make out," a baffled Steffens wrote to President Woodrow Wilson confidant Edward M. House, "it was the people who were not there, men who read [the *Sun*'s] report, that became excited, called up the Chief of Police and Federal authorities and, apparently, frightened them. At any rate, they were there to stop me."³ Steffens did not take the stage as planned on the second night. San Diegans never had the chance to hear his supportive views on pro-capitalist Wilsonian democracy.⁴

The reactions of local authorities and community members were undoubtedly due in part to anxieties raised by the specter of a global communism following the Russian Revolution of 1917. Such anxieties, however, were not solely caused by events in Europe, but also by increased leftist and "foreign" worker agitation along the U.S.-Mexico border. In this chapter, I focus on the IWW-led San Diego Free Speech Fight of 1912 and its aftermath up until the end of the decade. Along with the Baja California revolution of 1911, the San Diego Free Speech Fight of 1912 was formative in establishing in Greater San Diego, especially its most populated municipality of San Diego, an anti-leftist "essential character" where civil liberties for more "radical" workers were infringed upon.⁵ Although the Baja California revolution was viewed

³ Lincoln Steffens to Edward M. House, 8 May 1918, in *The Letters of Lincoln Steffens*, Vol. I: 1889-1919, eds. Ella Winter and Granville Hicks (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938), 426-427.

⁴ Erez Manela makes clear that U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points represented a capitalist alternative to the communism espoused by Russia's Vladimir Lenin, which at the time was viewed as a viable ideology for peoples who sought self-determination. Manela demonstrates that colonial elites in places like India and Korea could use the two competing visions to extract from their colonizers concessions favorable to them. Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁵ Jim Miller rightly refutes claims made by local historians that the San Diego Free Speech Fight was an anomaly in San Diego history that had no implications for future generations. In his work, Miller notes that the events of 1912 established an anti-labor "essential character" in San Diego hostile toward any meaningful labor organization. I build on this argument and place it within the context of the Mexican Revolution and "foreign" labor migration to Greater San Diego. Jim Miller, "Just Another Day in Paradise? An Episodic History of Rebellion and Repression in America's Finest City," in *Under the Perfect Sun: The San Diego Tourists Never See*, by Mike Davis, Kelly

with great unease, the Free Speech Fight proved even more terrifying for Booster San Diego – the loose collection of politicians, businessmen, realtors, land developers, and others desirous of making Greater San Diego a comfortable and profitable community – because IWW-led soapboxing, marching, jail-packing, and alleged threats of violence took place within San Diego.⁶ The deepest fears of Booster San Diego, then, had allegedly come to fruition: the leftist elements of the Mexican Revolution had jumped the international border, (re-)fused with the radical left of the United States, and more directly endangered San Diego’s presumed destiny as one of the country’s model, business-oriented communities.

Since rhetorical appeals to tranquility, clear blue skies, and sunshine did not secure their vision – and since state and federal governments proved ineffective or slow in responding – adherents of the Booster San Diego worldview took matters into their own hands and ultimately turned to torture and deportations to combat and defeat Wobblies and other so-called radicals. Greater San Diego fully entered a period of “wartime,” which Mary L. Dudziak writes is a cultural phenomenon where constitutional rights (i.e. the freedom of speech) are curbed or suspended by the state for an undetermined period of time in the interest of national security.⁷ Thus by the time the First World War edged to its close, many of Greater San Diego’s inhabitants, both those of the business class and working class, rejected not only the ideologies

Mayhew, and Jim Miller (New York: New Press, 2005), 182-183. For an example of a work on the San Diego Free Speech Fight Miller writes against, see Rosalie Shanks, “The I.W.W. Free Speech Movement: San Diego, 1912,” *Journal of San Diego History* 19 (Winter 1973), <https://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/1973/january/speech/>, accessed 1 September 2017.

⁶ As with the Baja California revolution, it is likely that boosters partially exaggerated the Free Speech Fight in order to serve its interests of securing a complacent, non-radical working class. “American” workers, it was claimed, did not rebel and question the capitalist class-defined status quo.

⁷ Dudziak notes, wartime allows for illiberal behavior at home and abroad, as constitutional rights are suspended, questionable and civil rights-violating surveillance methods are adopted, and torture is used. Minorities and non-citizens often bear the brunt of such practices. The true danger with wartime, according to Dudziak, rests in the fact that it can be invoked at any moment and, if accepted by the American public, can remain for an indefinite period of time, as it has done during the post-September 11th “War on Terror.” Mary L. Dudziak, *War Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

championed atop the worker's soapbox, but so too Steffens' speech regarding a slightly more equal and just, yet still business-friendly vision for the world and its peoples.

San Diego's Discontent

In early May 1912, John L. Schon, San Diego's Superintendent of Police and member of the city's Common Council, telegraphed to inform Senator John D. Works of California, the Attorney General George C. Wickersham, and the U.S. district attorney in Los Angeles that anarchists were unlawfully in the United States, near the southern international border. Schon wrote to Wickersham: "It is urgently desired to secure support of the Federal government in every possible way."⁸ On that same day Frank C. Spalding, trust officer of the Southern Trust and Savings Bank and President of the San Diego Chamber of Commerce, telegraphed Wickersham as well, noting that about "two hundred anarchists and members of the I.W.W." were already in his city, with an additional three hundred on their way from Los Angeles and other Southern California points. Spalding added that the men appeared to be armed with guns and revolvers, and had threatened to kill, among others, J. Keno Wilson, San Diego's Chief of Police.⁹

Spalding and other city elites alleged that besides planning to kill local civil authorities and destroy Greater San Diego infrastructure, Wobblies and their allies had designs to re-cross the U.S.-Mexico border to "take forcible possession of lower California where they may loot and murder with impunity" and "defy all governmental authority[,] their influence [great] upon weak members of society." The leftist revolution in Baja California, it seemed, had not ended. Because of such perceived danger, Spalding, on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce he presided

⁸ John L. Schon to George C. Wickersham, 4 May 1912, in U.S. Department of Justice, *Documents Relating to the IWW, 1910-1916* (Washington: National Archives and Records Service, 1975). Microfilm (hereafter DOJ).

⁹ Frank C. Spalding to George C. Wickersham, 4 May 1912, DOJ.

over, the San Diego Builders Exchange, and the San Diego Realty Board, pleaded for federal assistance. It was the only way, he believed, to maintain law and order.¹⁰ Works, a former resident of the San Diego, seemed to agree, as he urged Wickersham to intervene with federal support.¹¹

But leftists' presence in the region was not new to the federal government. By January 1912, high-ranking federal officials had been made aware of the re-emergence of anti-business activities along the westernmost strip of the U.S.-Mexico border.¹² Although concerned, Washington once again proceeded cautiously, at best. Cognizant of the federal government's reticence to eliminate rebellious workers outright, Booster San Diego reasoned that to save their largest city from the floating army, as the mass of itinerant Wobblies and leftist workers were known, they would have to handle the situation themselves. Ultimately, they were going to be the ones, they believed, to save not only their model business-oriented community but the entire United States.

Progress

Since its founding in Chicago in 1905, the multiracial IWW was an anarchist-influenced "industrial union" that, according to Wobbly Justus Ebert, aimed "to organize the working class

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Included with Works' correspondence is a telegram sent to him by Sehon two days previous, in which the latter recounts many of the same details given to Wickersham. In Sehon's message it is clear he views not only San Diego in danger, but also the U.S. and Baja California, for the Wobblies and "anarchists" in San Diego did not support Madero (who was viewed by Booster San Diego as a legitimate revolutionary), nor the U.S. government; rather, they "claim allegiance to the red flag" of anarchism; Margaret A. Secor, "San Diego Looks at the Maderista Revolution in Mexico, 1910-1911," *Journal of San Diego History* 18 (Summer 1972), 1-5. John D. Works to George C. Wickersham, 4 May 1912, DOJ.

¹² Secretary of State to the Attorney General, 3 January 1912, U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States with the Annual Message of the President Transmitted to Congress December 3, 1912* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1919), 708-709. Concerned with its authority over the people, the Madero administration sought to stamp out subversives, thus it reported that "adherents of Flores Magón" were near the international border in Arizona and California, "ready to support or cover up any movement against the Mexican Government." Their main concern, then, was the violation of the U.S.'s neutrality laws. The broader point to be drawn from this correspondence between Knox and Wickersham, however, is the continuance of leftist activities in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands.

for its own emancipation from capitalism.” Its purpose was “not only reformatory but revolutionary, as it would change the entire system of private ownership of capital for a system of social ownership.”¹³ It is precisely for this reason why Wobblies crossed the U.S.-Mexico international border to take part in the PLM-led Baja California revolution of 1911. Within the United States, Wobblies adopted tactics of revolt, too. Anarcho-syndicalist writer Rudolf Rocker writes that in order to achieve their “Socialist reorganization of society,” within the U.S., the IWW practiced direct action – chiefly the collective withdrawal of efficiency, or sabotage – to disrupt and bring attention to the issues posed by capital and the state.¹⁴ As noted by Frederick C. Mills, the student-turned-hobo who rode the rails and lived in the “hobo jungles” of California during the mid-1910s, Wobblies used their mobility and itineracy to help spread their worldview and denounce capitalist progress. They argued that the latter impoverished a clear majority of the world’s peoples, prevented family living, curbed workers’ and civil rights, and essentially precluded any form of meaningful life.

To bring attention to these problems of “progress,” Wobblies engaged in “free speech fights” throughout the American West, most notably in Spokane, Washington from 1909 to 1910 and Fresno, California from 1910-1911. In these locales, Wobblies organized a floating army, or collection of disinherited workers they reasoned were left behind by capitalism’s onward march. Their message, which was strikingly similar to that advocated by their anarchist ally Flores Magón, was that by joining and accepting the ideals of their One Big Union, they could help

¹³ Justus Ebert, “May First – International Labor Day,” *Industrial Union Bulletin*, 2 May 1908.

¹⁴ Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism*, 136; see also Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *Sabotage, The Conscious Withdrawal of the Workers’ Industrial Efficiency* (Cleveland: IWW Publishing Bureau, 1916).

overthrow capitalism and the state, and subsequently improve their lot by establishing a free and equal society. This democratic and egalitarian order would ensure their individual liberty.¹⁵

But the possibility of militant activity in the San Diego of 1912 may have appeared unlikely for several reasons, chiefly because of its lack of industry and, thus, its small workforce. San Diego Bay, though no longer the small, cowhide trading port of call encountered by Richard Henry Dana Jr. in the 1830s, still required much dredging for it to not only move beyond its relatively light shipping and commerce, which had been anchored by a small fish canning industry, but to attract more U.S. Navy ships and military operations.¹⁶ Adding to San Diego's problems with industrialization, powerful railroads continued to underserve San Diego, favoring Los Angeles instead. Nevertheless, a working class did exist in San Diego. According to San Diego's Chamber of Commerce, as of the year 1911 a peaceful relationship between labor and business interests existed in their city and county.¹⁷ In fact, before the delegates of the American Federation of Labor's (AFL) California wing, the California State Federation of Labor, Rufus Choate and Percival Woods, members of San Diego's Chamber of Commerce and the Common Council, went so far as to encourage and welcome the AFL's next annual convention in their city. James E. Wadham, San Diego's mayor, added: "[I]t would be a great pleasure to have your members come to this southern city that they might personally see the wonderful progress that is being made in and about San Diego."¹⁸ Local residents agreed with the Chamber of Commerce's

¹⁵ The IWW's Free Speech Movement lasted from 1909 to 1914. See Matthew S. May, *Soapbox Rebellion: The Hobo Orator Union and the Free Speech Fights of 1909-1916* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2013); Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World*, Abridged Edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 99-113.

¹⁶ Linda A. Canada, "'Sitting on the Dock of the Bay': 100 Years of Photographs from the San Diego Historical Society," *Journal of San Diego History* 52 (Winter/Spring 2006), 7.

¹⁷ In 1911 the Chamber of Commerce of San Diego County stated that a "good feeling" existed between labor and capital. *San Diego City and County Directory, 1911* (San Diego: San Diego Directory, Co., 1911), 7.

¹⁸ California Labor Federation, *Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual Convention of the California State Federation of Labor, Held at Hill's Theater, Bakersfield, October 2,3,4,5, and 6, 1911*, 14. California Labor Federation, AFL-

assessment regarding labor relations, as one San Diegan recalled that prior to the Free Speech Fight there “had been no labor trouble [in San Diego] and everybody was contented and had their own way of life.”¹⁹

Greater San Diego, like the rest of the American West, particularly Southern California, experienced a dramatic surge in its population from 1880 to 1910 as result of capitalist progress and modernization. According to the U.S. Census of 1910, San Diego trailed only Northern Californian cities in close proximity to San Francisco, which had been destroyed in 1906 by a massive earthquake and fire, in manufactures growth in the Golden State.²⁰ San Diego County’s total population astoundingly increased from 35,090 to 61,665 from 1900 to 1910 alone; over the same period the city of San Diego’s numbers climbed from 17,700 to 39,578.²¹ Although a boom-and-bust phenomenon was common in San Diego history, by the early 20th century the region’s dramatic population fluctuations had given way to constant population growth.

Of particular note, racial and ethnic minorities, brought to Southern California by generous immigration laws, and the violence of both Mexico’s revolution and the Jim Crow South, were now constituting a larger percentage of newcomers. Thus, although a majority of the county remained native-born white, minorities constituted a small but important segment of the population: in 1910 there were 2,467 Asians, 684 blacks, and 2,224 Mexicans. Although over half of the latter group’s population was found in the San Diego neighborhood of Logan

CIO, Proceedings and Publications, Institute for Research on Labor and Employment Library, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA (IRL).

¹⁹ George Waddell Brooks, interviewed by Edgar F. Hastings, 7 September 1961, transcript, San Diego History Center Oral History Project, SDHC.

²⁰ The business interests of Berkeley, Alameda, and Oakland all benefitted from the great San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910*, Vol. IX (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912), 78.

²¹ According to the 1910 Census, both the total and urban populations of San Diego and Imperial counties increased by over 50 percent from 1900 to 1910 (in a few instances the census of 1910 treated the two as one county). U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910*, Vol. II (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912), 142, 148.

Heights, they constituted only 3.1% of the city's population.²² The foreign-born, notably those from Germany and England, and their children comprised almost 40 percent of San Diego County.²³ Non-whites and some immigrants filled the least desirable positions in the community, some of which went unaccounted for in official government documents. For instance, it is impossible to know for certain how many Mexican and Indian women worked as domestics in middle and upper class homes. Similarly, it is difficult to determine the number of Chinese and ethnic Mexican men who helped build Greater San Diego railroads and other major construction projects, such as dams.²⁴

These demographic changes were precipitated by the region's slow shift toward modernization in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.²⁵ Similar to other parts of the United States, this shift produced an uneven concentration of wealth in this Southern California

²² Despite its proximity to the U.S.-Mexico international border, Greater San Diego, like other swaths of the American West in the 19th century, were only lightly populated by ethnic Mexicans.

²³ The percentage figure was calculated by geographer Lawrence A. Herzog. He concluded that the number of Mexicans in the city of San Diego in 1910 was 1,222. Also of note, Mexicans were included under the census's "foreign-born white" category, and not "native white." Thus, the Census Bureau reinforced the notion that though legally "white," Mexicans were non-white perpetual foreigners. Lawrence A. Herzog, *Where North Meets South: Cities, Space, and Politics on the U.S.-Mexico Border* (Austin: Center for Mexican American Studies, University of Texas at Austin, 1990), 173; Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census*, Vol. II, 174; for a study that touches on the Census Bureau's classification of Los Angeles' Mexicans in the non-white category, see Natalia Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

²⁴ In the previous chapter I noted how many Mexican and Indian women entered the domestics industry to make ends meet in the changing Southern Californian economy. Like Mexican and Indian women, Chinese, many of whom were men, filled domestic roles in Southern California. For example, prior to becoming a leading Chinese businessman and civic leader in San Diego, Ah Quin, a native of Guangdong Province in southern China, struggled as a cook, interpreter (he began learning English in China under the tutelage of American missionaries), and labor recruiter. A combination of will and good fortune – connections to some of Greater San Diego's leading boosters, notably George W. Marston – allowed Ah Quin to escape indebtedness and poverty by the early 20th century, more than two decades after he had arrived in San Diego. Murray K. Lee, *In Search of Gold Mountain: A History of the Chinese in San Diego, California* (Virginia Beach, VA: Donning Company Publishers, 2011), 50-64; for a study that briefly touches on the role of non-white workers in the building of Greater San Diego's much-needed dams, see Eliza L. Martin, "Growth by the Gallon: Water, Development and Power in San Diego, California, 1890-1947" (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Cruz, 2010), especially chapter three.

²⁵ San Diego's embrace of modernization was slow in part due to the in-fighting among San Diego's elites, as some elites wanted the city and county to develop only a leisure tourism economy that utilized the region's natural landscapes, such as its scenic beaches, and temperate weather. Other elites wanted emphasized San Diego's need to industrialize. In short, "Geraniums" preferred leisure tourism, while "Smokestacks" favored heavy industrialization. Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1950-1963* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 60.

community. Of the nearly 17,000 San Diegans engaged in some occupation in 1910 – undoubtedly employed in the city’s most vital industries of fish canneries, lumber, flour mills and gristmills, slaughtering and meat packing, bakeries, and printing and publishing – many did not earn much in the way of a wage, much less live off of and build upon an inheritance.²⁶ For example, the 408 laborers associated with the city’s transportation industry gained little income and wealth, compared to San Diego’s transportation and real estate mogul, John D. Spreckels.²⁷ When accounting for gender, it becomes clearer that non-white women especially, such as Delfina Cuero, a Greater San Diego Indian woman who was forced to sell her child in order to make ends meet, often felt the greatest brunt of capitalist progress.

Workers’ unions existed in Greater San Diego, but as in other parts of the American West, their influence and power were mitigated by a range of factors, from boss policies and tactics to racial and ethnic differences within the working class ranks. For example, the Federated Trades and Labor Council of San Diego County – an AFL-affiliated delegation of labor representatives from several of San Diego’s unions – did not contest the lack of wage increases from 1905 to 1917 because they either feared employers would bring in undocumented, unskilled Mexican workers to take jobs, or that the military would be used to break strikes. Moreover, the capital-controlling class was firmly united in keeping wages low, making protest appear futile.²⁸ Thus, early 20th century San Diego experienced economic progress *and* greater

²⁶ Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census*, Vol. IX, 80.

²⁷ During this period Spreckels was heavily involved in San Diego’s rail and “other” transportation industries. I have used the 1910 Census to arrive at this figure, which is a combination of the railroad transportation “laborers” and the “other” transportation “laborers.” Laborers, at least according to the U.S. Census Bureau, alluded to those men and women who worked infrequently and in various capacities. In short, their occupation could not be easily specified. My calculation does not take into account the motormen, boiler washers and engine hostlers, and various other positions associated with railroad and “other” transportation, for they were categorized more precisely. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910*, Vol. IV (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913), 271.

²⁸ In 1891, union leaders from San Diego’s Typographical Workers, Cigar Makers, Bakers, Longshoremen, Sailors, and Fishermen formed the Labor Council. Three years after its inception the governing body voted to join the AFL,

poverty.²⁹ Increased urbanization and manufacturing, then, primed San Diego for some form of protest.

A Salubrious Climate

Matthew S. May notes that what distinguished the formation of the IWW “hobo orator union” in San Diego from other parts of the Pacific coast was the possibility of creating solidarity between Spanish-speaking laborers and the lower stratum of the English-speaking working class.³⁰ Such multiracial and cross-border solidarities, however, were already forming in parts of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, and California was no different. From the first decade of the 20th century on, the IWW introduced California’s Mexican workers on both sides of the border to the influence of leftist ideas that highlighted the unequal distribution of wealth and income, as well as the loss in autonomy due to changes in workplace culture. White Wobblies struggled on behalf of, and with, their Mexican counterparts even before the outbreak of revolution in Baja California. For example, in 1910 Wobblies came to the aid of Mexican

which was widely accepted by all unions except one: the longshoremen, who were previously tied to the Knights of Labor. Although the Labor Council left the AFL on two occasions due to funding issues, by the first decade of the 20th century the labor body, which now represented more of the county’s unions, was fully in the Gompers fold. Unlike labor radicals, the Labor Council fully backed collective bargaining with employers. In fact, in their declaration of purpose the Labor Council wrote that their unions would “not precipitate strikes.” Politically, the Labor Council was weakened by the fact that they never produced a candidate for civic office; rather, they endorsed candidates from the existing political parties. These candidates were lukewarm, at best, to the interests of San Diego labor. Among the Labor Council’s unsuccessful campaigns were the inability to secure an eight-hour workday for workers, and their failure to halt the employment of non-American citizens. In 1909, they sought to unionize the laundry workers of the city, but this failed. Recruitment efforts of non-whites were unsuccessful, too. Italian workers refused to join the Labor Council’s proposed union. Frederick L. Ryan, *The Labor Movement in San Diego: Problems and Development from 1887 to 1957* (San Diego: Bureau of Business and Economic Research, San Diego State College, 1959), 10-19.

²⁹ My argument counters Rosalie Shanks’s claim that San Diego elites were reasonably tolerant of the city and county’s organized working class. Shanks writes: “[A] distinctive attitude existed in San Diego that was reasonably tolerant toward organized labor. This atmosphere was due, in no small part, to the feeling of leading San Diego families toward unions. Their philosophy was one of live and let live, and they were not willing to crusade against unions. John F. Forward, a former mayor and prominent citizen, had stated that unions were the salvation of the working man.” Shanks then notes that even at the height of the Free Speech Fights, San Diego’s leading conservative paper supported the passage of child labor laws. However, supporting “liberal, if not radical, for the time” child labor laws do not signify support for the working class as a whole. Rosalie Shanks, “The I.W.W. Free Speech Movement: San Diego, 1912,” *Journal of San Diego History* 19 (Winter 1973), 25.

³⁰ May, *Soapbox Rebellion*, 63.

migrant railroad and construction workers in Fresno, as well as to the Mexican workers in Los Angeles who struck the Los Angeles Gas Works for higher wages.³¹ In San Diego, Mexican and white solidarities between workers formed as well, as evidenced in the organizing activities of Wobblies Fernando Palomares, S.F. McGee, and Stanley Gue.

Prior to the Baja California revolution, Palomares and other leftist workers in San Diego accomplished a feat which prominent California Wobbly Frank Little had been advocating for throughout the Southwest: the organization and incorporation of Mexican workers into the IWW fold. The Spanish-Speaking Public Service Local was formed in San Diego in August 1910, just as the city's working class was on the verge of action.³² Several members of the Spanish-speaking local were employed as laborers for the San Diego Consolidated Gas & Electric Company, where they were delegated the task of digging the company's trenches for their lines. They soon discovered that the company utilized the dual wage system: white workers received \$2.25 for a day's toil and Mexican workers received twenty-five cents less. Mexican workers went on strike and, to the surprise of the company, white workers joined the striking Mexicans and demanded that all workers receive \$2.25 per eight-hour work day. The multi-racial strike soon spread to other parts of the city; day laborers refused to work and construction workers walked off the job in solidarity.

The San Diego police stepped in and arrested the strike committee in the hopes of reducing agitation, but this action only spurred more opposition. Wobblies and Wobbly-sympathizers like San Diegan Laura Payne Emerson took to the streets and denounced law

³¹ Zaragosa Vargas, *Crucible of Struggle: A History of Mexican Americans from Colonial Times to the Present Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 179.

³² Struthers, "The Boss Has No Color Line," 77; Hyman Weintraub, "The I.W.W. in California: 1905-1931" (Master's thesis, University of California at Los Angeles, 1947), 116-117.

enforcement and employer tactics as donations were collected for the striking Mexicans.³³ These activities continued for a month until finally the striking workers peacefully achieved part of their intended goals. Workers did not halt capitalist development, but they did secure better pay and hours. IWW activity subsequently decreased due to the outbreak of revolution in Mexico, as Wobblies joined the PLM in Baja California in what Gue noted was the common cause to end capitalism, imperialism, and racism.³⁴

The joint PLM and IWW campaign in Baja California, however, did not halt all leftist activity in San Diego. For example, the IWW's Spanish-speaking local was consolidated with Local 13. Additionally, Emerson and fellow San Diegan Kasper Bauer, a staunch supporter of the PLM, incessantly vilified business interests and demonstrated leftists' capacity to place struggles in San Diego with those around the world. In a poem titled "As It Shall Be," Emerson wrote that the master capitalist class would fall and that "All boundaries that divide / Nation, tribe or clan / We soon will find are in the mind / Only of foolish man." She ended her piece by noting that "The time is at hand in every land / When all men shall be free. / No worship of Father-land. / No faction, creed or clan, / But power and place for the human race – / The Brotherhood of Man."³⁵ Bauer showed his internationalism when in response to the attempted deportation of Celestino Aldena, a Mexican worker who had allegedly violated U.S. neutrality laws, he declared that the working class needed to arm itself for its own protection against the worldwide capitalist class.³⁶

³³ Mexican Strike Committee, Local No. 13, IWW, "San Diego on the Map," *Industrial Worker*, 27 August 1910; May, *Soapbox Rebellion*, 65.

³⁴ Shanks, "I.W.W. Free Speech Movement," 25; Weber, "Wobblies and the Partido Liberal Mexicano," 207.

³⁵ Emerson, "As Shall Be All," in *Laurels*, 52-53.

³⁶ May, *Soapbox Rebellion*, 67.

Despite the zeal of the city and county's working class, San Diego remained not only a one-man town run by and large by business magnate John D. Spreckels, but a city where most of the community's elites adhered to a conservative and business-oriented worldview which desired a pacified labor force. Gone were the days when some of the region's boosters, such as E.W. Scripps and his daily *San Diego Sun*, showed some support for working class goals.³⁷ Booster San Diego, buoyed by the anti-leftist labor climate of California, in general moved to quell any protest which questioned business and profit. At a banquet in San Diego held more than a year after the infamous October 1910 bombings of the Los Angeles Times Building by the unionist McNamara brothers, the powerful *Los Angeles Times* publisher Harrison Gray Otis, along with the secretary of the California Merchants and Manufacturers Association (CMMA), urged the suppression of public speaking in the Golden State.³⁸ Undoubtedly, Otis mentioned Los Angeles' own efforts to eliminate "street speaking" and organized picketing. Back in July 1910, the Los Angeles municipal government had passed a restrictive ordinance – written by Earl Rogers, counsel for the CMMA – banning loitering, picketing, and public "loud or unusual noise" or "loud or unusual tone" to protect the city's business interests.³⁹

³⁷ Scripps and the *Sun* did not want Spreckels to replicate Otis' anti-labor efforts in Los Angeles. Scripps motives for contesting Spreckels were likely a combination of political, economic, and ideological factors. Although Scripps was a businessman, he was not cut of the same cloth as Spreckels; Scripps, a progressive, did harbor some sympathy for the working class. In 1911, Emerson wrote Scripps on matters pertaining to the condition of San Diego's working class. Scripps responded by noting that while the "Scripps papers have know (sic) other reason for existence than to serve laboring Men and Women and all those who are unfortunate" he could do nothing to help in the radical's organizing efforts. In separate correspondence with Emerson, Scripps alluded to the usefulness of syndicalism, as he thought it would initiate dialogue among workers and non-workers. Despite such sympathies, the publisher remained wary of left-wing radicalism. E.W. Scripps to Laura B. Payne Emerson, 24 October 1911, Folder 3, Box 18, E.W. Scripps Papers, Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University Libraries, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio (MCA); E.W. Scripps to A. Lyle DeJarnette, 18 February 1914, Box 2, Volume 4, E.W. Scripps Papers, MCA; Matthew F. Bokovoy, *The San Diego World's Fairs and Southwestern Memory, 1880-1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 28.

³⁸ *Los Angeles Citizen*, 12 April 1912; Selig Perlman and Philip Taft, "Labor Movements," in *History of Labour in the United States*, Vol. IV, ed. John R. Commons, et al. (New York: A.M. Kelley, 1966), 240.

³⁹ Ordinance No. 20586 carried with it a fine of no more than \$100, or a jail sentence of no more than 50 days. "Ordinance No. 20586 – An Ordinance Prohibiting Loitering, Picketing, Carrying or Displaying Banners, Signs or Transparencies, or Speaking in Public Streets in a Loud or Unusual Tone, for Certain Purposes," Clarence Darrow Digital Collection, Law Library, University of Minnesota, <http://darrow.law.umn.edu/>, accessed 1 September 2017.

Influential members of Booster San Diego listened intently to Otis' warnings, but they also had their first-hand experiences with leftist politics on which they could draw. Events across the border in Tijuana and other parts of northern Baja California were fresh in mind. Moreover, renowned anarchist Emma Goldman, looking to raise awareness and support of radical left goals in Southern California, had returned to San Diego to protest alongside local Socialists the trial of the McNamara brothers in Los Angeles. The *San Diego Union* editorialized that Goldman's "fulminations" were "of no more force even in the Soap Box district and the ghetto sections, than the voice of the weary bencher crying (sic) in our own Plaza," and yet the paper still found the anarchist's presence sufficiently worrisome to cover her activities.

More dangerous, the newspaper continued, were the leftists' disregard for law and order, for when they marched on behalf of the McNamaras they asserted "the right to disturb the public peace." Protesters, it was reasoned by the *San Diego Union*, subjected others to their own form of oppression. "It is tyranny on the part of the McNamaraites," the *Union* argued, "to flaunt their red flags and sing their un-American Marseillaise in the presence of a community that is in no wise personally concerned about the fate of McNamara." The editor warned that if outspoken workers and organizers persisted in "keeping up the rumpus," they should "not complain if the counter-hullabaloo is even more raucous and hellish than their own."⁴⁰ The *Union*, then, raised the question as to how San Diego was to handle public working-class demonstrations within its boundaries. Was Booster San Diego to allow such elements to threaten their quiet community? Were men and women like Palomares, Emerson, and Bauer to stand in the way of their visions

⁴⁰ "On the Margin," *San Diego Union*, 3 December 1911.

and dreams for a tranquil and business-friendly city and county? The initial answer came rather swiftly.

According to the *New York Call*, one of several left-leaning newspapers concerned with covering the growing anti-labor sentiment around the country, on 6 January 1912 “a squad of police and a local real estate dealer of San Diego precipitated a street row while a number of Socialists and Single Taxers were trying to hold meetings in the streets.”⁴¹ R.J. Walsh, a local real estate agent, drove his motorcar through a workers’ street meeting, prompting a member of the crowd to slash one of the tires on Walsh’s vehicle. IWW organizer E.J. Lewis reported the realtor’s provocations to the police, but rather than arrest Walsh, the police began assaulting the workers.⁴² Two days later the Common Council passed the restrictive Ordinance No. 4623, effectively prohibiting public speaking within 49 blocks of the more populated city center. The *Union* reported on 9 January 1912 that street speaking was outlawed between “C and F streets on the north and south and Fourth and Sixth streets on the west and east” – areas heavily frequented by the community’s workers. The measure prohibited discourses, lectures, songs, and “other public demonstrations of an oratorical or musical nature,” thereby also impacting the Christian charity group Salvation Army and campaign stumpers, but their main targets were the Socialists and the IWW. Ordinance No. 4623 stipulated that any person in violation of the law would be charged with a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, be punished by a substantial fine ranging from 25 to 100 dollars, or by imprisonment in the city jail for no more than 30 days, or both.⁴³

The reasons for the ordinance’s near unanimous passage were made clear under the ordinance’s third section: “This is an ordinance for the immediate preservation of the public

⁴¹ *The History of the San Diego Free Speech Fight* (Chicago: San Diego Branch, Industrial Workers of the World, 1973), 117. Republished from the *New York Call*, Sunday issues beginning 15 March 1914.

⁴² May, *Soapbox Rebellion*, 68-69.

⁴³ “Street Speaking Boundaries Set,” *San Diego Union*, 9 January 1912.

peace, health and safety and one of emergency.”⁴⁴ The events of two days previous appeared to give the Common Council an excuse for the ordinance, but its members claimed this to not be the case. Attorney E.E. Kirk, a leftist and member of the California Free Speech League – an organization which rejected the idea that “citizens and property owners” had more rights in the streets than those who were not property owners – protested “against the petition of the Merchants’ association” and asked Sehon if the measure was intended to be vindication for the disturbances on 6 January 1912. Sehon responded that the ordinance had been discussed and drawn up well before the night in question.⁴⁵

If true, Booster San Diego had not waited for a disturbance to legislate a restrictive law, and the events of early January simply validated their actions. They had likely never read the *Industrial Worker*, much less the PLM’s newspaper *Regeneración*, but they were aware of events around them.⁴⁶ They knew of the labor unrest throughout the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, the bombing of the Los Angeles Times Building, the Baja California revolt, and recently, *insurrecto* agitation in the Imperial Valley, which *Regeneración*’s English Section, now under the editorship of anarchist William C. Owen, sarcastically reported was put down by a “mob of brave and respected citizens” that burned down the hall of IWW Local 439. The arson occurred after anti-worker forces had previously abducted several Wobblies, including Isabel Fierro, a Mexican American woman who traveled from New Mexico to take part in the Baja California revolution, and “a Mexican named Toba.”⁴⁷ Fierro, Tirso de la Toba, and several other Wobblies

⁴⁴ “Ordinance No. 4623 – An Ordinance Prohibiting Public Speaking or Singing within Certain Boundaries,” City Ordinance Books, Vol. 20, Public Records Collection, SDHC.

⁴⁵ “Street Speaking Boundaries Set”; the California Free Speech League, comprised of Socialists, Wobblies, and representatives from a few other labor unions and religious organizations in San Diego, denounced the property-less’ second-class status in a leaflet they circulated throughout the community. *San Diego Free Speech Fight*, 118.

⁴⁶ A.J. Wilson, an Imperial Valley Wobbly, labeled anti-worker persons “narrow brained cockroaches.” A.J. Wilson, “Workers are Persecuted,” *Industrial Worker*, 25 January 1912.

⁴⁷ Maintaining the solidarity between the PLM and the IWW, Owen, an Englishman who had taken over the editorship of the English section of *Regeneración* in April 1911 after Ethel Duffy Turner grew alienated from Flores

were taken “across the line” into Mexico by American and Mexican law enforcement to be shot dead. Aware of what could become the norm in Greater San Diego if anti-worker sentiment and policies remained unchecked, the Wobbly publication declared: “If those kidnapped are killed outright they will be lucky, but they will surely suffer hours of torture before death relieves them.”⁴⁸

Back in San Diego, after the first street row in the city influential businessmen and local government officials adopted a host of ordinances and tactics to curb and defeat unionist objectives. For example, when the California Free Speech League sought permission to parade within the city, the Common Council granted permission but an alternative, less visible route was designated, allegedly to control pedestrian traffic in the more populated areas of the city.⁴⁹ The Common Council effectively attempted to suppress discontent behind a veneer of tolerance, but to no avail. Protestors ignored the limitations placed upon their parade and on 8 February 1912 proceeded into unauthorized sections of San Diego’s downtown. That night 41 individuals were arrested for violating the ban against speaking on the streets. Among the arrested were three

Magón’s radicalism, reprinted Brawley, California IWW Local 439’s account of the events in the Imperial Valley. The local noted how American and Mexican authorities worked together in their persecution of Wobblies, several of them veterans of the Baja California revolution: “We learned that Mexico had offered \$100 reward for privates and \$500 for officers in the late insurreccion (sic). As many I.W.W. men fought in Mexico last winter all I.W.W. men were classed as insurrectos... The number who have been taken to Mexico will probably never be known. Among others, Mrs. Isabel Fieras (sic), a member of the I.W.W. was taken.” Wobblies subsequently armed themselves in self-defense; when they refused to surrender their weapons to the local sheriff and his deputies, the workers’ hall was burned down by the “brave” and “respectable.” To ensure that Spanish-speaking readers were aware of these events, the account was printed in the Spanish section of the paper. “Burn I.W.W. Hall; Run Members Into Jail,” *Regeneración*, 13 January 1912; “Persecución burguesa,” *Regeneración*, 13 January 1912; “Kidnapped from America,” *Industrial Worker*, 7 December 1911.

⁴⁸ As noted in the *Industrial Worker*, kidnappings continued into 1912. One report mentioned that a Wobbly was taken by American and Mexican law enforcement from Holtville to Mexico, with the worker’s fate unknown. Not all abducted Wobblies ended up missing. The 1920 U.S. Census suggests that Isabel Fierro, back in the Imperial Valley, continued to live, organize, and help raise a family whose life revolved around farm work. Toba, however, was killed in Mexico, as reported in *Regeneración*. “Kidnapped from America,” *Industrial Worker*, 7 December 1911; “Atentados a Granel,” *Regeneración*, 25 November 1911; “IWW Man Kidnapped,” *Industrial Worker*, 18 January 1912.

⁴⁹ “Traffic Ordinance is Made Law at Last,” *San Diego Union*, 8 February 1912; “Free Speech League Permitted to Parade,” *San Diego Union*, 8 February 1912.

women: Emerson, 20-year-old Juanita McKamey, and Augusta Dittrach. Also among those detained was the outspoken attorney Kirk, as well as Bauer. The *Union* reported that arrests began at eight o'clock in the evening after pro-free speech demonstrators entered the restricted zone of the city; they marched into the city center, wielding signs which incorporated imagery not of the Mexican Revolution, but of the American Revolution: "Liberty and Justice Live. 1776-1912. Tyranny and Exploitation Perish." Although Kirk encouraged on-looking crowds to join in the march, the *Union* reported that "few answered the call." Evidence, including that provided in the same *Union* news article, suggests a sizeable number did march alongside Kirk.⁵⁰

Once in the restricted area, protesters began to soapbox and the arrests began in earnest (See Figure 2.1). During the altercation between workers and city police, "sticks were flourished above the heads of the people... with here and there a raucous voice raised against the officers." The *Union* reported that the protesters shouted "'Free speech! Show that you are Americans!'" and that some rolled their 'r's' with an "unfamiliar accent [which] betrayed foreign blood." One man, who was observed but not confronted by the police, stood on a sidewalk "declaiming against capital and proclaiming the sanctity of labor." Another, a "great burly fellow, with heavy jaws and brows," was pulled off the soapbox, roughly pushed by one officer, and finally led away. The *Union* noted that of the 41 apprehended, 12 were penniless, 17 had more than a dollar, and only two had more than 10 dollars.⁵¹ The demonstrators, then, were rendered poor foreigners, tramps with ideas alien to Greater San Diego.

Booster San Diego's public denunciation of pro-free speech advocates quickly escalated.

⁵⁰ "Three Women and 38 Men Arrested," *San Diego Union*, 9 February 1912. The exact number of those that marched on this day is unclear; again, the *Union* explained that few joined the demonstration's leaders, yet the paper did note that the crowd itself was substantial. Historians Selig Perlman and Philip Taft estimate that 2,500 took part in the parade. Perlman and Taft, "Labor Movements," 240.

⁵¹ "Three Women and 38 Men Arrested."



Figure 2.1. Woman standing on soapbox in IWW demonstration, San Diego, 1912. Courtesy of University of Michigan Digital Collections, Labadie Photograph Collection, University of Michigan.

Less than 48 hours after the police suppression of soapboxing in the restricted zone, the *Union* published Clark Braly's op-ed on how to halt further demonstrations. Braly, an influential booster who was once supervisor for the massive Spanish-themed city park under construction, suggested a "horsewhip vigilance committee to deal with the hordes" of Wobblies now in San Diego. The daily quoted Braly:

Determined representative men of San Diego... should meet those fellows at the city limits, if they come, and drive them back with horsewhips as an expression from the people direct that they will not tolerate any of the disorder which these same fellows have created in other cities... If good representative citizens volunteer to be deputized for this work these fellows can take it as an expression from the people direct that we are determined to run our own affairs here and [Wobblies and their allies] can't raise the cry that good honest workingmen are persecuted and run down by the police... These fellows believe in popular government. Now let's give it to them if they come.⁵²

⁵² "Horsewhip Vigilantes Urged to Drive Back Industrial 'Workers'," *San Diego Union*, 10 February 1912.

Reflecting the general belief that San Diego stood at a crossroads, Braly added that “development and progress” dictated that no chances be taken “with these lawless trouble makers,” who had brought with them the same “disagreeable notoriety” witnessed in other cities.⁵³ Like Otis’ *Los Angeles Times*, which almost a full year earlier printed a story which described the IWW as an organization of “gentlemen who are not industrious in any legitimate line of industry” and “not workers at anything in the world, or anywhere in the world, or for anybody in the world,” the *Evening Tribune* – another Spreckels publication – opined with equal disdain.⁵⁴ One article read: “Hanging is none too good for them [leftist radicals]. They would be much better dead, for they are absolutely useless in the human economy; they are the waste material of creation and should be drained off into the sewer of oblivion there to rot... like any other excrement.”⁵⁵ The *Union*, too, effectively rendered the protestors anomalies and unrepresentative of the true American working class. Booster San Diego, through print media, advanced the notion that these leftist men and women threatened their Southern California community.

For the next couple of days more street-speakers – not all of them Wobblies or Socialists – were arrested. Some faced small fines or short jail terms, but several were prosecuted on the more serious charge of conspiracy to disobey the law. District Attorney H.S. Utley, using a statute from 1879, argued that from January to early February 1912 the defendants plotted to purposely violate Ordinance No. 4623, thereby opening themselves to a jail sentence of one year or a fine of up to \$1,000.⁵⁶ IWW Local 13 informed the organization’s main headquarters of developments in Southern California. Because they planned to fight “to a finish,” the IWW

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ “March of the Unemployed,” *Los Angeles Times*, 20 February 1911.

⁵⁵ “Raising Vagrants to the Dignity of Great Criminals,” *San Diego Evening Tribune*, 4 March 1912.

⁵⁶ “Sixteen Arrested Yesterday; Four Give Bonds,” *San Diego Union*, 10 February 1912.

spread the word concerning the movement: “Out there in San Diego / Where the western breakers beat, / They’re jailing men and women / For speaking on the street.”⁵⁷ San Diego Wobblies called on all fellow workers to come to the border community and “feast upon our salubrious climate and make the acquaintance of those staunch upholders of working class justice.”⁵⁸

Although the *Union* reported that the number of “martyrs to the cause of free speech” dwindled in San Diego, Wobblies did heed the call.⁵⁹ The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that 6,000 to 10,000 Wobblies were traveling to San Diego, but this is likely an exaggeration.⁶⁰ Regardless of the actual number, San Diego law enforcement remained on alert, and on 13 February 1912 Schon, following a new ordinance issued by the Common Council, ordered a general roundup of all vagrants, as protesters, like the leftist floating army that had operated in Baja California in 1911, had consistently been associated with vagrancy and criminality.⁶¹ The ordinance, which once more targeted the circulation of ideas within the city, read: “Any officer designated by the Chief of Police to perform such duty shall control the movement and order and stoppage of persons, street cars, vehicles, animals in or upon any public street, and disperse any unusual and unnecessary assemblage of persons or vehicles” that impeded, or seemed likely to impede, the free passage of persons and vehicles along city streets. Schon broadened Chief

⁵⁷ “Appeal from San Diego,” *Industrial Worker*, 22 February 1912; quoted in Paul J. Vanderwood and Frank N. Somporno, *Border Fury: A Picture Postcard Record of Mexico’s Revolution and the U.S. War Preparedness, 1910-1917* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 137.

⁵⁸ “The Shame of San Diego!,” *Industrial Worker*, 29 February 1912.

⁵⁹ “Only Two Soap Box Martyrs Booked at City Jail,” *San Diego Union*, 13 February 1912.

⁶⁰ “Anti-Free Speech Law Crowds San Diego Jail,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 10 February 1912.

⁶¹ Philip S. Foner, ed., *Fellow Workers and Friends: I.W.W. Free-Speech Fights as Told by Participants* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 132; “Hobos and Criminals Flock to Standard of ‘Insurgents’,” *Los Angeles Times*, 2 February 1911. For a study on how anti-vagrancy laws were used in the United States well into the 1960s to enforce conventional standards of morality and propriety (and thereby criminalize certain politics, including radical leftism), see Risa Goluboff, *Vagrant Nation: Police Power, Constitutional Change, and the Making of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Wilson's powers by ordering a general roundup of all male "vagrants and hoboes," who were *suspected* of being "crooks." Wilson pursued this order with zeal: "We are going to rid the city of beggars and crooks and the idle who don't want to work. The many petty crimes and too frequent hold-ups in San Diego have got to end, if we have to arrest every vagrant in the city and drive them beyond the city's gates."⁶²

One such arrest yielded a startling discovery in late March 1912. When Wilson arrested Jack Whyte – a "notorious anarchist" who had earlier been arrested along with Emerson, Bauer, and Kirk – on a charge of conspiracy to violate a law, he allegedly found on the suspect's person a memorandum book with a notation regarding a possible plot to bring explosive trouble to San Diego. "I can't tell what is in [the memorandum book]," the police chief told the *Union*, "It would startle the town too much." He did, however, reveal that the plot involved a gun store in Santa Ana, California, which was owned by A.E. Hawley, a man that according to Wilson "evinced tendencies... to be radical." The paper then reported that Wilson and Charles H. De Lacour traveled north to Santa Ana and Riverside to investigate further, where they allegedly found 1,200 pounds of dynamite, which was intended to be delivered to San Diego to be used to destroy several of the city's buildings.⁶³

The *Union* used the discovery of the plot to once more undermine the leftist cause. According to the paper, the men and women apprehended in connection to the plot were examined on their "allegiance to the constitution," and "nearly in every instance the prisoner defiantly declared that he believed in no law, no country and no flag excepting the red flag." The IWW's ideology corrupted even those of more privileged backgrounds: "Young men, born of American parents, their eyes aflame and heads thrown back, sneered with contempt at every

⁶² *History of the San Diego Free Speech Fight*, 121.

⁶³ "Half Ton of Dynamite is Seized by Police," *San Diego Union*, 29 March 1912.

mention of government by law and judicial procedure.” Wilson and Booster San Diego, the paper suggested, were on the frontlines trying to save the United States from the radical horde, and Washington D.C. could do more to help. “To save the boys, not only in San Diego but all over the United States,” the *Union* explained, “the police, with the assistance of private citizens, have obtained overwhelming data which has been placed before federal officials at Washington. They [San Diego law enforcement and boosters] are working... for the deportation of aliens who have come to the United States for the express purpose of overthrowing this government.”⁶⁴

Fifty immigrants from countries ranging from New Zealand to Germany to Italy were identified as agitators. When asked by San Diego law enforcement if they were carrying out revolution, one detainee answered, “It is in the country you fellows call Mexico.” Asked if they were aiming to overthrow the Mexican government, the captive replied, “We certainly are.”⁶⁵ As a result Booster San Diego pressured for more arrests, more demonstrations of force, and more show trials, which they received. When Wobblies violated the “move on,” or anti-vagrancy ordinance, many were beaten by San Diego police.⁶⁶ Emerson, though not beaten or arrested, was harassed and taunted by city law enforcement.⁶⁷ Protestors were detained and interrogated, as was the case with Bauer. Called to provide state’s evidence at Whyte’s trial for conspiracy, Bauer was described by prosecutors as an agent of czarist Russia.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ “Proof to be Laid before Federal Officers,” *San Diego Union*, 29 March 1912.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ “Traffic Ordinance Receives First Application,” *San Diego Union*, 29 March 1912.

⁶⁷ Upon exiting a store Emerson was handed a red pamphlet by a plain-clothed deputy sheriff, which she assumed was a new radical publication. When she opened the thin book to find a copy of the new restrictive ordinance, Emerson threw it to the ground, kicked it into the street, and proceeded to stomp on it. An added layer of criticism of Emerson appeared in the reporting of the incident, as the *Union*’s title for the article on the incident ridiculed Emerson’s appearance. “Mrs. Emerson Shows Contempt for New Law; Likewise Some Hosiery,” *San Diego Union*, 29 March 1912.

⁶⁸ “Three I.W.W.’s Are Placed on Trial,” *San Diego Union*, 29 March 1912.

Despite the persecution, Wobblies continued to arrive in the city. They were there not just to challenge the city's anti-free speech law but to challenge the legitimacy and supremacy of capital, and how it dictated the lives of the disinherited. *Regeneración's* Owen wrote that the Free Speech Fight in San Diego was part of the badly needed "economic revolution" in the United States. As they had witnessed in other parts of the West and the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, fellow workers and some other itinerant workers believed that San Diego, much like the rest of the world, was succumbing to the tenants of commercialism, "with its dogma that time is money and money-getting the one end of life."⁶⁹ San Diego was increasingly privileging the dreams and wealth of the few at the expense of the many, and as argued in San Francisco by laborer Cloudlessly Johns, "if [the anti-free speech contingent] drives [leftists] off of the streets the next move will be to drive them out of the halls, and if that happens we shall have to fight for free speech as people are now fighting in Mexico."⁷⁰ Thus Kirk and the California Free Speech League appealed to *Regeneración* for help in spreading their message: "UNEMPLOYED OF AMERICA: March on to San Diego. Join the army of ten thousand marching from San Francisco; join the March of the Hungry. Go to San Diego. Demand your right of Free Speech;

⁶⁹ "San Diego Calls," *Regeneración*, 20 April 1912; "Icebergs Be Damned! Full Steam Ahead!," *Regeneración*, 27 April 1912. The earlier April issue did not report for its Spanish readers on San Diego's Free Speech Fight, but the paper did publish its usual radical propaganda and made announcements pertaining to radicals' meetings throughout the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands. A week later Owen continued the publication's radical interpretations, as he wrote that the sinking of the Titanic was a sign of capitalism's excesses. In a desire to "pander to the craze for speed," Owen contended, ship owners risked the lives of passengers; rather than take safer routes, for decades ship owners elected to take dangerous shortcuts. Owen's analysis of the catastrophe continued with an assessment of the media's coverage. First-class passengers had their individuality and self-control respected, while those in steerage were simply a mob; the former heroic, the latter forgotten or, more likely, never known. The editor, then, believed the Titanic to be a microcosm of the world. The article closed by suggesting that "little heaps of matter," which only the first-class possessed, dictated the quality of life – or in the case of the Titanic, who should survive and live.

⁷⁰ *San Diego Free Speech Fight*, 154. The *Labor Index* newspaper of San Mateo reported that Johns emphasized the protection of free speech, regardless of the message, in order to attract wider support for radicals in San Diego. Johns declared that the idea that the movement in San Diego solely concerned the I.W.W. "is entirely false. If the powers that be can prevent the I.W.W. from disseminating their ideas on the public streets, they can silence any other radical organization whose views they do not like." The capitalist class, then, would dictate the lives of everyone unless dissenters were allowed to voice their grievances.

demand bread; demand freedom. You are not wanted where you are and San Diego needs you.
Fall in line. BE MEN.”⁷¹

Unlike in Baja California, and contrary to reports found in the *Union*, most of the floating army did not plan to, nor did they ever resort to propaganda by the deed. Instead, they believed that revolution in San Diego would come through dialogue, song, and the over-stretching of state resources. Their hope was that the world would notice their generally peaceful resistance.

Protests from a Jail Cell

Laura Payne Emerson, who was freed from the city jail almost immediately, visited those still imprisoned and, as she was accustomed to doing, produced a pro-IWW poem. She described the methods by which the incarcerated floating army chose to challenge Booster San Diego’s grip on the city. Emerson wrote:

I stood by a city prison
In the twilight’s deepening gloom,
Where men and women languished
In a loathsome, living tomb.
They were singing! And their voices
Seemed to weave a wreath of light,
As the words came clear with meaning:
“Workers of the World, unite!”⁷²

Well attuned to the beliefs of the IWW, Emerson continued that the day was near when the workers of the world would take what they created, leaving the capitalist class – “the masters, lords, and rulers” – with nothing. Workers, she militantly declared, were going to “Break your [business interests’] scaffolds, burn your jails, / Sink your warships, kill your soldiers, / To the music of your wails.”⁷³

⁷¹ “San Diego Calls.”

⁷² Laura Payne Emerson, “The Industrial Workers of the World,” in *Laurels*, 58.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 59.

But the imprisoned fellow workers and IWW allies remained peaceful, as noted by Chief of Police Wilson, who stated to a visiting special worker's committee from San Francisco that the jailed, who were "worse than animals," only sang, yelled, and hollered.⁷⁴ Such nonviolent tactics were notable considering the deplorable jail conditions and treatment. One prisoner wrote that 36 men were put into a 16 square foot room with one open toilet and two small windows which were kept only half open for ventilation. Drinking water was routinely denied; guards instructed the jailed to drink from the toilet. Meals consisted of bread and mush for breakfast, and in the late afternoon a small meal of generally rotten and sour stew or beans. The fellow worker added that prisoners were kicked when put into the small cell, and when a prisoner mentioned his constitutional rights a detective replied that he would "smash his head if he spoke again."⁷⁵ Most of the prisoners were denied timely trials, therefore conditions in the city and county jails worsened due to overcrowding. On 20 February 1912, one jailed worker wrote that there were 78 advocates of free speech confined in a room intended for 20 inmates. The poor conditions – a lack of food and water; a shortage of beds; damp cells – took their toll on many prisoners. One morning approximately two-thirds of them applied for medical aid even though 90 percent of them were healthy young men before their incarceration.⁷⁶

District Attorney Utley initially had no issues with filling the city and county jails. He stated that "any man who has no work ought to be put in jail, especially if he wants to talk about it."⁷⁷ Like the *Union*, Utley reflected the view of Booster San Diego that workers were valuable only when serving the interests of business. Any protest from an unemployed worker, the

⁷⁴ Special Investigating Committee, *San Diego Free Speech Controversy: Report to the San Francisco Labor Council* (San Francisco: San Francisco Labor Council, 1912), 8.

⁷⁵ *San Diego Free Speech Fight*, 122.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

prosecutor believed, merited imprisonment. However, the costs to the state of holding such a high volume of prisoners – numbers surpassed 200 as early as the first week of March 1912 – became too great, thus Chief Wilson developed two strategies. The first was to offer the jailed an immediate release if they claimed that they were ill *and* admitted their guilt in the breaking of the law; the second was to offer employment to pacify free speech advocates and keep them from speaking out against the city. Both proposals, to the surprise of Wilson, were rejected by the inmates. Responding to the job offer, one prisoner responded: “That’s what we’re for, to keep your [San Diego’s] jails full until you fellows realize the fact that we are going to have our rights.”⁷⁸ Wobblies, Socialists, and their allies wanted work, but they also wanted control of their thoughts, of their bodies, and of their lives. Until such control was guaranteed in San Diego, leftists were going to both draw attention to the brutality of the jailers and “pile up the expense” to the city and county by forcing them to house, feed (albeit poorly), and prosecute each of the detained.⁷⁹

While numbers within the jails swelled, workers who remained free continued to protest and circulate anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist ideas on the streets. San Diego police began to arrest workers who sold or distributed radical and pro-labor literature, chiefly the *San Diego Herald*, San Francisco’s *Bulletin*, and even the AFL’s *Labor Leader*, which had defended leftists’ right of free speech but had not supported their anti-capitalist, internationalist message.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Ibid., 124.

⁷⁹ Reports from fellow workers demonstrate that the San Diego Free Speech Fight was not a local affair. Not only were San Diego officials forced to enlist the assistance of surrounding counties (Orange County jails held some of San Diego’s political prisoners), but Wobblies rightly noted that events in San Diego mirrored those in New Hampshire and Vancouver, Canada, among others. “Change Tactics in San Diego,” *Industrial Worker*, 7 March 1912.

⁸⁰ The AFL supported free speech advocates because they, like Cloudlessly Johns, realized that an attack on one group’s freedom of speech was an attack on everyone’s freedom of speech. The Labor Council did not endorse the views of radicalized workers, however, because the AFL sought to work within the existing economic system. Additionally, the AFL did not yet seek to overcome national and racial divides. Thus, the Labor Council simultaneously denounced the suppression of free speech, criticized the San Diego business interests’

Vendors of Spreckels' dailies and the *Sun* were unaffected. The tactics used by law enforcement to suppress discontent began to quietly draw criticism from some San Diego small businessmen. Sol Stone, a shop owner who had emigrated from Russia, stated: "I lived for years under the despotism of the Czar and witnessed the methods by which the officials of Russia suppressed any effort of the peasants to better their conditions... but in all the years I lived in Russia I never witnessed such inhuman treatment by the Russian police as that meted out to the members of the Free Speech League in this 'Land of the Free.'" ⁸¹

However, most businessmen either did not dare to openly express sympathy for the advocates of free speech or outright supported the police and district attorney. Some Booster San Diegans chose to put an emphatic and definite end to agitation in the community.

"The Blood and Thunder Regime"

He wanted nothing more than to die, to be released from his living hell. "Screaming in pain," the man recounted, "I begged them to kill me." But the men refused to grant the stripped, almost-naked victim his wish and instead continued the torture deep into the night, each man getting his turn at beating and humiliating him. One sworn statement stated: "A cane was pushed into his rectum. His scrotum was twisted and he was beat upon the penis." For one of the captors, the floggings, bare-knuckled punches, and penetrations were not enough; the man took his cigar and slowly pressed it into the captive's skin, branding into him a sloppy "IWW." Another man cried out a message: "We're Americans, and we'll teach you to keep away from San Diego." Then Old Glory appeared. "The American flag was rammed into my throat until I

misrepresentation of labor conditions and employment opportunities in the city, and supported the "barring [of] Japs, Chinese, and Hindoos, from the land." Minutes of the San Diego County Federated Trades and Labor Council, 13 February 1912, Document 125, Box 4, San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council Records, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Access, San Diego State University Special Collections (SDSU).

⁸¹ *San Diego Free Speech Fight*, 128.

was strangled,” recalled the victim. Finally, the subject of the torture, Ben L. Reitman, the personal manager and one-time lover of Emma Goldman, was tarred, “feathered” with dry sagebrush, and released, told to never return. They let Reitman live so that he could recount his story. They wanted the world to know what San Diego stood for.⁸²

Reitman’s experience in San Diego was not atypical. In April 1912 – a month and a half before Goldman’s manager was tortured – Charles Hanson, along with 65 other fellow workers, made a second trip to San Diego from Los Angeles to protest the anti-free speech ordinance. On their way to the heart of San Diego, the freight train on which they were riding was stopped by an armed mob of vigilantes popularly known as the Citizens’ Committee, which had been organized or secretly supported by several prominent businessmen, including Spreckels, sporting-goods manufacturer Frank C. Spalding, banker Julius Wangenheim, and realtors George and John Burnham. Comprised of not only local businessmen, but also policemen, “armed persons of doubtful character,” and others, such as a *Union* reporter, the Citizens’ Committee was formed to ensure that leftist radicalism was purged from San Diego, and that taxpayer dollars were not used to feed and house prisoners.⁸³ It was common for workers to be taken off the railroad cars and clubbed. Hanson reported, “We were kept holding our hands up for an hour if not more. I was clubbed several times for letting my hands down, being tired. Clubbing

⁸² “Reitman Describes How He Was Tarred,” *New York Times*, 17 May 1912; “What Was Done to Ben Reitman!,” *Industrial Worker*, 6 June 1912. With no feathers available, the vigilantes used dry sage brush as a substitute. The vigilantes informed Reitman that Goldman would succumb to the same fate if caught. Goldman, however, escaped without bodily harm by surreptitiously exiting her downtown San Diego lodgings, the U.S. Grant Hotel. For more on the events leading up to this incident, see Emma Goldman, *Living My Life* (New York: AMS Press, 1970) and Caroline Nelson, “Emma Goldman and Ben Reitman Tell of San Diego Experience,” *Industrial Worker*, 6 June 1912.

⁸³ John Stone, a radicalized worker who himself was beaten by the vigilantes, recalled seeing a reporter from the *Union* participate in the vigilante activity. Some prominent boosters, including but not limited to department store owner George W. Marston, would likely have denounced the reporter’s support since they reasoned that workers not only had a right to free speech, but that their messages merited some consideration. Their defense of workers’ right to free speech, however, was not an endorsement of left-wing politics, for they believed in capitalism and the state. Ryan, *Labor Movement in San Diego*, 22; *San Diego Free Speech Fight*, 132; Bokovoy, *San Diego World’s Fairs*, 32.

became general... Then they herded us in a cattle pen, made us lay down on the ground or rather manure pile.”⁸⁴ Starving, badly beaten, and some suffering from broken bones, the simple task of lying down added to the torture.

Hours later, recounted Hanson, the workers were taken out in groups of five and made to run “the gauntlet” – a torture exercise which placed weapon-wielding vigilantes in two parallel lines so that victims could be struck as they ran through the avenue created by the configuration. Before the captured men were to run the gauntlet, however, they were to pledge their allegiance to the United States. Hanson recalled: “[F]irst thing on the program was to kiss the flag. [A vigilante said:] ‘You son of a B—, Come on Kiss it G—damn you.’ As he said it I was hit with a wagon spoke all over; when you had kissed the flag you were told to run the gauntlet. 50 men being on each side, each being armed.” As Hanson ran through the gauntlet his knee was shattered; unable to continue, he laid on the ground and watched his fellow workers try to break the line, to only be beaten back down. “It was the most cowardly and inhuman cracking of heads I ever witnessed,” Hanson recollected. After spending about eight days at a San Diego County drug store the victim was finally taken to the county hospital for proper treatment. The worker’s good constitution, along with a bit of luck, saved him from an amputation. The experience taught Hanson a lesson: “[P]assive resistance no more.”⁸⁵ Alfred R. Tucker, who encountered similar torture on 5 April 1912, concluded similarly: “If I ever take part in another [free speech fight] it will be with machine guns or aerial bombs.”⁸⁶ It seemed as though anti-labor vigilante

⁸⁴ Charles Hanson, “My Experience During the San Diego Free-Speech Fight,” in *Fellow Workers and Friends: I.W.W. Free-Speech Fights as Told by Participants*, ed. Philip S. Foner (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 136.

⁸⁵ Initially the vigilantes refused to transport the incapacitated and fevered Hanson to the county hospital. *Ibid.*, 137-138.

⁸⁶ Alfred R. Tucker, “San Diego Free-Speech Fight,” in *Fellow Workers and Friends: I.W.W. Free-Speech Fights as Told by Participants*, ed. Philip S. Foner (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981).

terror had compelled protestors arriving in San Diego to consider propaganda by the deed, or individual acts of violence, such as using dynamite. In other words, violence begot violence.

With few exceptions, such as Henry Austin Adams, who called the vigilantes the “Blood and Thunder regime,” many San Diegans did not criticize the actions taken by the Citizens’ Committee.⁸⁷ Individuals and organizations outside of the city and county, however, sought explanations. Why had some of San Diego’s leading residents not only introduced highly-restrictive ordinances, but also taken such extreme, seemingly draconian steps to enforce their will? Did the IWW and its sympathizers in fact pose a serious threat to the Southern California community? If so, did this validate the use of such legal and extralegal measures? To answer some of these questions, the governor of California, Hiram W. Johnson, sent special representative Harris Weinstock to San Diego in April 1912.

Important to note is the fact that the Weinstock Report was not undertaken at the behest of Booster San Diego; rather, it was repeated requests from the IWW’s national headquarters which prompted Johnson to finally act. Indeed, a lack of cooperation from some of San Diego’s leaders greeted the commissioner. Utley refused to meet with Weinstock, leaving the investigator to interview Police Commissioner Schon, Chief of Police Wilson, and Captain of Detectives Joseph Myers. Although the three spoke with Weinstock, their explanations and versions of events appeared to in part contradict not only the testimony given by Wobblies and other workers, but also those recounted in private correspondence and in the city’s newspapers. The *Union* did not shy from condoning and inciting vigilantism. Privately, adherents of the Booster San Diego dream boasted of their involvement in extralegal activities. For instance, a few years after the Free Speech Fight fireman Bert Shankland often heard his colleagues boast of

⁸⁷ Adams later wrote a flattering biography on John D. Spreckels. San Francisco Labor Council, *San Diego Free Speech Controversy*, 7; H. Austin Adams, *The Man, John D. Spreckels* (San Diego: Press of Frye and Smith, 1924).

having hosed down protestors in 1912, as well as participating in the vigilante violence (See Figure 2.2).⁸⁸

Weinstock, to the dismay of Booster San Diego, made an honest effort to investigate the actions of the city's police and Citizens' Committee, interviewing a wide range of witnesses from leftists to civic leaders. Weinstock studied the various newspapers to properly gauge the overall tone of community relations. Upon completing the fact-finding mission Weinstock concluded that the city commissioner had over-reacted: "Your commissioner has been to Russia and... is frank to confess that when he became satisfied of the truth of the stories [in San Diego]... it was hard for him to believe that he still was not sojourning in Russia."⁸⁹

Weinstock's investigation also corroborated the cause of death of Michael Hoey, a Wobbly in his sixties, who died as a result of beatings sustained at the hands of San Diego policemen. Even though he complained of stomach and chest pains and pleaded for medical attention while in his jail cell, the authorities ignored his requests. After weeks of neglect, Hoey died of his injuries. The second doctor who had attended to Hoey attributed his death to a "rupture [of vital organs], brought about by kicks in the stomach and groin... Of course, the police claimed that Hoey had received his injuries before the arrest."⁹⁰

Weinstock documented and confirmed other instances of police brutality, notably those inflicted upon Julius Tum, Joseph Marco, and John Wallace, but his investigation came before

⁸⁸ Shankland was not a member of San Diego's fire brigade during the Free Speech Fight of 1912. Bert Shankland, interviewed by Robert G. Wright, 24 November 1972, transcript, San Diego History Center Oral History Project, SDHC.

⁸⁹ Harris Weinstock, "Report of Harris Weinstock, Commissioner to Investigate the Recent Disturbances in the City of San Diego and the County of San Diego, California, 22 April, 1912, San Diego," 16. Folder Weinstock, Box 44, Hiram Johnson Papers (1866-1945), Correspondence and Papers (Part II), Bancroft Library, University of California – Berkeley (BANC).

⁹⁰ The first doctor, a physician employed by the police department, claimed that Hoey was faking his injuries. The second physician, whose services were attained by pro-free speech advocates, could not save the veteran Wobbly. Ibid., 13; *San Diego Free Speech Fight*, 141-142.



Figure 2.2. Police and water vs. IWWs, San Diego. Courtesy of University of Michigan Digital Collections, Labadie Photograph Collection, University of Michigan.

the death of another radical, Joseph Mikolasek.⁹¹ According to the *San Diego Herald*, on 7 May 1912 Mikolasek was standing outside of the IWW's headquarters in San Diego when he was approached by two officers. One officer asked Mikolasek what he was doing, to which Mikolasek replied with a "vile epithet." One policeman responded by shooting the worker in the leg, prompting Mikolasek to reach for a nearby ax in self-defense. Mikolasek swung the ax at

⁹¹ Weinstock, "Recent Disturbances," 13, 15-16. Tums' story – like many others, the German tailor was forced to complete the vigilantes' "gauntlet" and "Star Spangled Banner" ritual – was mentioned by Walter V. Woehlke in the popular magazine *The Outlook*. Woehlke wrote that the events of San Diego were not isolated, citing similar instances in other parts of the American West. Woehlke argued that vigilante action and even killings, as was the case with Mikolasek (sometimes spelled "Mikolash"), was understandable, for it was a natural reaction to the "volatile" "industrial guerillas" imported into the U.S. The suggestion, then, was that the IWW impeded capitalist progress. Walter V. Woehlke, "I.W.W.," *The Outlook*, 6 July 1912, 531.

one officer and the two policemen began to shoot, hitting him four times, and ultimately killing him. The Spreckels press justified police actions.⁹²

At his trial, Jack Whyte, the Wobbly identified by Sehon as an ardent anarchist, denounced those responsible for these fatalities: “[The court cases against leftists in San Diego are] a hideous lie. The court itself knows that it is a lie, and I know that it is a lie. If the people of the state are to blame for this persecution, then the people are to blame for the murder of Michael Hoey and the assassination of Joseph Mikolasek. They are to blame and responsible for every bruise, every insult and injury inflicted upon the members of the working class by the vigilantes of this city.” Whyte added: “You cowards throw the blame upon the people, but I know who is to blame and I name them – it is Spreckels and his partners in business, and this court is the lackey and lickspittle of that class, defending the property of that class against the advancing horde of starving American workers.”⁹³

Weinstock did not agree with this assessment and attributed some of the blame for the free speech violence on leftist radicals. The IWW, he reasoned, threatened “the industrial peace and welfare of the country” supported by “the great body of conservative wage earners affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.”⁹⁴ Wobbly radicalism, however, did not excuse the methods used by San Diego boosters. Weinstock condemned the San Diego Building Exchange, the Merchants’ Association of San Diego, and the San Diego Chamber of Commerce for publicly supporting and endorsing the Citizens’ Committee.⁹⁵ The commissioner was also disturbed by the sentiments expressed in the city’s leading newspapers, which claimed that vigilante justice was a legitimate response. As he noted, such extreme measures had censored even the city’s

⁹² *San Diego Free Speech Fight*, 157-158.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 189-190.

⁹⁴ Weinstock, “Recent Disturbances,” 22.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

moderates, including A.R. Sauer, editor of the *San Diego Herald*, who had been kidnapped by vigilantes. Taken to the community's outskirts, vigilantes tied a rope around Sauer's neck and "flung [him] over the limb of a tree" so that the outspoken editor "was hauled clear of the ground." Although his kidnappers let him go, the message was received. Sauer fled to Los Angeles soon after but eventually returned to San Diego.⁹⁶

The most ardent supporters of the Booster San Diego worldview, then, disregarded Weinstock's denunciations. In fact, the defense of the Citizens' Committee escalated. On 2 May 1912, the *Evening Tribune* reported that the vigilantes were needed for the city's protection, as another wave of demonstrations were expected to erupt after Emma Goldman and IWW leader "Big Bill" Haywood arrived in town. One article read: "There is no reason why any distinction or discrimination should be made between Goldman or Haywood and the meanest hobo that rides a brake beam into San Diego to make a 'martyr' of himself in 'the cause of free speech' under his 'constitutional guarantees.' As a matter of fact there is a greater reason for keeping these revolutionaries out of San Diego." The newspaper then lauded the use of vigilantism: "Thus far San Diego has managed its own affairs with complete satisfaction to the vast majority of the citizens. It was necessary to resort to somewhat drastic measures, and these measures have proved so effectual that there is no reason why they should be relaxed. San Diego must have peace at any price!!" According to the paper, leftist workers and their sympathizers had no place in San Diego. "We don't want these people with us," reported the *Evening Tribune*, "and the sooner they leave the better for all concerned."⁹⁷ Two weeks after the *Evening Tribune's*

⁹⁶ Ibid., 21.

⁹⁷ "Goldman and Haywood – Anarchists," *San Diego Evening Tribune*, 2 May 1912.

editorial and only hours after vigilantes had raided the IWW headquarters in San Diego, Ben Reitman, badly beaten, penetrated, and branded by a cigar, begged his torturers to kill him.⁹⁸

Pacification in Wartime

Charles H. De Lacour, who in 1912 had worked closely with San Diego Chief of Police Wilson to investigate the IWW and press for the deportation of radical immigrants, and was now a representative for the San Diego Consolidated Gas & Electric Company, contacted several high-level Washington D.C. politicians, including President Taft, about continued subversive activity in the Southern California community. Taft promptly contacted his attorney general, George C. Wickersham: “De Lacour... has come East to represent a citizens’ committee of five hundred, including Mr. John D. Spreckels and General Harrison Gray Otis. He bears with him documents tending to show the existence of a formidable conspiracy of anarchists, headed by Emma Goldman and other well-known members of this political faith.” Taft added that ten thousand working class radicals were ready “to introduce a new form of government, or non-government,” therefore he wanted the district attorney of Southern California to prosecute said leftists. “There is not any doubt,” the president wrote, “that that corner of the country is the basis for most of the anarchists and industrial world workers, and for all the lawless flotsam and jetsam that proximity to the Mexican border thrusts into... San Diego and Los Angeles. We ought to take direct action.”⁹⁹

Wickersham replied that the Justice Department had been carefully following the Wobblies in Southern California, but evidence for federal prosecution was lacking. The inability of Governor Johnson to properly handle the situation in San Diego and other parts of California,

⁹⁸ Emma Goldman, *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman, Third Edition (Amherst, NY: Humanity books, 1998), 323.

⁹⁹ William Howard Taft to George C. Wickersham, 7 September 1912, DOJ.

as well as political expediency (the Presidential Election of 1912), appeared to push the attorney general to action.¹⁰⁰ However, the federal government remained slow to address booster concerns, leaving anti-leftist actions to the local and state governments.¹⁰¹ In 1913, legal prosecution of leftists and sympathizers by local and state governments continued, as activists persisted in challenging boosters and business interests. E.E. Kirk, the outspoken lawyer who had stood shoulder to shoulder with fellow workers Whyte, Bauer, Emerson, and many others on the streets of San Diego, was convicted and imprisoned for his subversive activities.¹⁰² The Hanna, Wyoming branch of the Socialist Party condemned Kirk's incarceration and wrote to Congressman Frank W. Mondell that Kirk, in addition to Harry M. McKee of San Diego and Alex Scott of Paterson, New Jersey, "should have the right of free speech and public assembly without interference by the paid hireling tools of Corporations."¹⁰³ Leftists from other

¹⁰⁰ The governor's performance was deemed "derelict" by the attorney general, and Taft labeled Johnson an "utterly unscrupulous boss." Critical words such as these were in part fueled by politics. Johnson had joined Theodore Roosevelt on the Bull Moose Party ticket for the presidential election of 1912. F.W. Estabrook of the Republican National Committee (RNC), concerned over the splitting of the Republican vote by Roosevelt, wrote to Charles D. Hillis, the RNC's chairman, that federal action against California leftists would provide a boost to the president's reelection prospects. He wrote: "[De Lacour] states emphatically to me that if vigorous action is at once taken against these revolutionists in California, it would result in the greatest reaction among the republicans, and would mean that the State would go for the President." Thanks to the inclusion of Johnson on the ticket, all but two of California's electoral votes went to Roosevelt (the other two were awarded to Woodrow Wilson). Johnson's unpopularity in San Diego following the Free Speech Fight, and the federal government's slow response in prosecuting radicals, contributed to Wilson's victory in the San Diego district. George W. Wickersham to William Howard Taft, 16 September 1912, DOJ; Taft to Wickersham, 7 September 1912, DOJ; F.W. Estabrook to Charles D. Hillis, 5 September 1912, DOJ; A.R. Sauer, a supporter of the governor, noted that "the vigilante vote was all against the progressives." A.R. Sauer to Hiram Johnson, 14 November 1912, Folder San Diego Herald, Box 30, Johnson Papers (Part II), BANC.

¹⁰¹ In late November 1912, De Lacour claimed that "the same line of activities as previously indulged in by these people [leftist radicals] are being pursued and we fear that some action is taken the trouble will be more serious than heretofore... Trusting that you [Wickersham] will see your way clear to have these people brought to justice." Charles H. De Lacour to George C. Wickersham, 22 November 1912, DOJ.

¹⁰² Kirk had originally been arrested with 84 other leftist workers in early 1912, charged with counts of "criminal conspiracy." Whyte, released on bail, wrote to *Solidarity*, urging leftist "tourists" to "roll in" to San Diego to take in its "beautiful climate." Jack Whyte, "Call from San Diego," *Solidarity*, 24 February 1912.

¹⁰³ Paterson, New Jersey was another site of a silk strike from February to July 1913, led by Wobblies "Big Bill" Haywood and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. The strike ended with workers' failure to secure an eight-hour workday and better pay. In 1919 anarchists bombed the city. In his letter to Attorney General James C. McReynolds Mondell enclosed the letter he had received from the Hanna, Montana branch of the Socialist Party. F.W. Mondell to James C. McReynolds, 7 August 1913, DOJ. See also Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Vol. 4: The Industrial Workers of the World* (New York: International Publishers, 1965); George William

parts echoed the sentiments of the Hanna socialists, for they viewed the incarceration of one as an attack on all.

In California, Governor Johnson attempted to quell labor discontent in various ways. In 1913, after prominent San Diego businessman and self-described progressive Ed Fletcher implored him to pardon McKee – who according to Fletcher had been “easily influenced by Kirk” – Johnson released the free speech advocate in question.¹⁰⁴ In the same year as McKee’s pardon, Johnson spoke in favor of a “Workmen’s Compensation Act,” asking the state’s business leaders to “figure into your business the broken human being, too.” The bill passed despite vehement opposition from California businessmen and a minority of hardline politicians led by a state senator from San Diego. However, not all workers were protected by the legislation. Domestic and agricultural workers – a sizeable constituency of the IWW and PLM – were not covered by the new law.¹⁰⁵ The California government’s uneven protections from exploitative employers allowed for further clashes between leftists and business interests, as illustrated in August 1913 on the Ralph Durst Ranch at Wheatland – the largest single employer of agricultural labor in the state at the time. The familiar story of violence against itinerant and

Shea, *Spoiled Silk: The Red Mayor and the Great Paterson Textile Strike* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001).

¹⁰⁴ Fletcher, a figure central to the development of the San Diego County’s water resources and motor highways, communicated to the California governor that he had known McKee for two decades. He knew the imprisoned individual to be a good family man that had simply fallen under the influence of Kirk and was “being punished for the sins of a hundred or two hundred.” Indeed, Fletcher wrote that Kirk deserved his punishment. Thus, the San Diego progressive, while also critical of the unpunished “fifty or seventy-five vigilantes,” believed that workers’ demonstrations were unwarranted and unlawful. Ed Fletcher to Hiram W. Johnson, 15 August 1913, Folder 2, Box 14, Special Collections & Archives, University of California, San Diego (UCSD); Fletcher to Johnson, 16 September 1913, Folder 2, Box 14, Special Collections & Archives, UCSD; Fletcher to Johnson, 22 September 1913, Folder 2, Box 14, Special Collections & Archives, UCSD.

¹⁰⁵ Lou Guernsley, a reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*, called the proposed law a “socialistic experiment” that would ultimately hurt California businesses. In a separate editorial, the newspaper described the bill as “foolish and wicked” since it would kill small businesses. The tailor, the restaurant owner, and the baker, according to the editorial, would pay for the negligence of the worker. The Workmen’s Compensation, Insurance and Safety Act passed and went into effect on 1 January 1914. Hiram Johnson, speech on the California “Workmen’s Compensation Act” delivered in 1913, Box 43, Johnson Papers (Part II), BANC; “California to Embark in Insurance Business,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 April 1913, 12; “Foolish and Wicked Bill,” *Los Angeles Times*, 3 May 1913; “Employers Will Be Made Liable,” *Los Angeles Times*, 21 December 1913.

labor unfolded, as a peaceful Wobbly-led protest turned into a bloody and lethal affair that left a district attorney, a deputy sheriff, and two workers dead. Rather than indict and convict all responsible parties, which included overzealous law enforcement and anti-worker vigilantes, the state only charged and found guilt with two Wobblies.¹⁰⁶

The state government's legal prosecution of only workers angered the left; the arrests and convictions of Wobblies demonstrated to them that even reform-minded individuals did not truly care about the disinherited, and Wobblies resumed rhetorically attacking and now directly targeting the business-state alliance.¹⁰⁷ Vincent St. John, a nationally prominent Wobbly, called for stronger solidarity amongst all workers to "prevent oppression and take from the clutches of the employing class every member of the working class whose life and liberty may be in danger."¹⁰⁸ In an undercover investigation undertaken on behalf of Johnson in 1915, an IWW plot to cripple the fruit growers, canneries, and Southern Pacific Railroad – all emerging industries and corporations vital to Greater San Diego's growth – was uncovered. The state investigator revealed that Governor Johnson's life was in danger, too. Indeed, in a vulgar, expletive-laden letter sent to Johnson in September 1915, Wobblies voiced their displeasure over

¹⁰⁶ Carey McWilliams argues that the history of migratory labor in California and the greater American West is a history of violence, as corporate farmers require a docile labor force to maximize profits. Employers repress their employees and "occasional outbursts of indignation and protest" occur. As a result, McWilliams adds, vigilante violence is a critical feature of the American West since agribusiness requires a docile labor force to maximize profit. Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, First California Paperback Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 152-167; Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 169-173.

¹⁰⁷ The treatment of "General Kelley's" Army in northern California by business interests and law enforcement following the Wheatland revolt added to the Left's renewed antagonisms with the state. Many of the itinerant workers at the Durst ranch ended up in San Francisco, where they were organized by a man named Kelley. Under Kelley's direction the 2,000-strong army of the unemployed camped in tents and squatted in abandoned warehouses and buildings, asking local government for relief. Rather than provide assistance, the mayor of San Francisco ferried Kelley's Army to Oakland; civil leaders there transported them to Sacramento. Once there Kelley's Army prepared to march on the state capitol, but were met by a contingent of 800 special deputy sheriffs who summarily beat the seasonal workers and destroyed the few supplies they had. Within three weeks Kelley's Army was no more. McWilliams, *Factories in the Field*, 165.

¹⁰⁸ Vincent St. John, "The Wheatland Victims," *Solidarity*, 11 October 1913. The article was a reproduction of a speech delivered before fellow workers in Chicago on 28 September 1913.

the governor's refusal to release from prison the two convicted Wobblies from Wheatland. They told Johnson to set the pair free by 1 November 1915 or face retaliation: "[W]e all took a (sic) oath that we would shoot you down like a dog for that is what you are, you big bull head son of a bitch."¹⁰⁹

Such increased hostility helped to turn middle class moderates in San Diego and across the United States completely against leftists like the IWW.¹¹⁰ A.R. Sauer, the editor of the *San Diego Herald* and defender of free speech advocates during the Free Speech Fight, and perhaps still reeling from his own brush with death, now criticized workers for demanding too much, for seeking the overthrow of capitalism and the state.¹¹¹ Leftist activity catalyzed federal responses as well. In his State of the Union Address of 1915, President Woodrow Wilson, echoing the sentiments expressed in San Diego during the Free Speech Fight, stated that immigrants "welcomed under our generous naturalization laws to the full freedom and opportunity of America... have poured the poison of disloyalty into the very arteries of our national life." Their radical dreams, he suggested, threatened the "national safety" and commercial interests of the United States¹¹² Anti-leftist and anti-immigrant legislation, notably the Immigration Act of 1917, which reaffirmed the Anarchist Exclusion Act of 1903, was introduced and adopted,

¹⁰⁹ Investigators believed that the letter was written by members of the San Francisco IWW local. It is possible that the letter was written by a non-Wobbly, but considering the hostility toward the governor demonstrated by leftists following the free speech fights and Wheatland, the threat was likely of IWW origin. Exhibit P: Copy of anonymous letter sent to Governor Johnson under the date of September 14, 1915, DOJ.

¹¹⁰ Historian Clemens P. Work writes that corporations, with the press on their side, were central to turning moderates and the middle class against leftist radicals in the U.S. He adds that most Americans "also found the Wobblies' ideological baggage unsettling... Terms such as direct action, the general strike, and syndicalism smelled of anarchy and revolution. So did the idea of sabotage, even if the IWW definition focused on work withdrawal, rather than the spikes and fires they were constantly blamed for." Clemens P. Work, *Darkest Before Dawn: Sedition and Free Speech in the American West* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 75.

¹¹¹ A.R. Sauer to Hiram Johnson, 14 November 1912. A.R. Sauer to Hiram Johnson, 14 November 1912, Folder San Diego Herald, Box 30, Johnson Papers (Part II), BANC

¹¹² Wilson's address stressed the necessity to protect American business at home and abroad, hence the importance of enacting more robust anti-radical laws and building up the country's armed forces. Woodrow Wilson, "Address of the President." U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States with the Address of the President to Congress December 7, 1915* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1915), xx.

helping usher in the beginning of the First Red Scare; Washington D.C. passed the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918, which served to curtail free speech in the United States. Leftists in the country, many of whom were opposed to the war since they believed it be a war for the benefit of imperialists and business interests, were arrested and jailed due to their vocal opposition.

Several noncitizens faced deportation, including Juan Villanueva, a Mexican found in possession of anarchist pamphlets and correspondence with Ricardo Flores Magón's brother and wife, and one unnamed sympathizer who "was once arrested [in San Diego] attempting to test an anarchist free speech ordinance."¹¹³ The PLM's Flores Magón, like many Wobblies, anarchists, socialists, and others on the political Left during and after the First World War, was jailed and faced deportation charges as well.¹¹⁴ Fears of leftism from abroad increased after the Bolshevik Revolution broke out in October 1917. For instance, during World War I the *New York Times* ran a headline "Anarchists Flock Here From Mexico: Dangerous Aliens Smuggled Across the Border at the Rate of 100 a Day." The article noted that "Russian Reds" had reached Mexico in "Japanese vessels" and had then crossed the U.S.-Mexico border; Russia, East Asia, and Mexico were implicated in the rise of anti-capitalist ideologies.¹¹⁵ As a result, federal authorities accelerated the repression of all leftists and the suppression of their ideals.

During this period, San Diego's relationship with the U.S. military grew more pronounced, due in large part to the efforts of William Kettner, an insurance, real estate, and

¹¹³ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Communist and Anarchist Deportation Cases*, 66th Cong. 2nd Sess. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920), 62, 113-114. See also U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *I.W.W. Deportation Cases*, 66th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920).

¹¹⁴ Christina Heatherton, "University of Radicalism: Ricardo Flores Magón and Leavenworth Penitentiary," *American Quarterly* 66 (September 2014), 558.

¹¹⁵ The *New York Times* article declared that more stringent immigration laws were necessary to protect the U.S. from dangerous leftist politics. "Anarchists Flock Here From Mexico: Dangerous Aliens Smuggled Across the Border at the Rate of 100 a Day," *New York Times*, 24 November 1919.

banking executive who arrived in the city in 1907 and became head of the San Diego Chamber of Commerce. Following the 1908 visit of the Great White Fleet (the Navy's 16 battleships) to San Diego, Kettner became convinced that the U.S. Navy could serve as source of federal dollars (especially for the badly needed dredging of San Diego Bay), but also a source of disciplined, white servicemen who could settle in San Diego and help ensure Booster San Diego's vision of a conflict-free and racially homogenous community. To persuade servicemen to stay in the area after their tour of duty expired, Kettner convinced the city to offer enticing incentives. According to an advertisement in the *San Diego Sun* in 1908, for as little as \$150 total or \$5 down, a serviceman could claim a residential plot in the growing city.¹¹⁶ The fact that the Pacific fleet docked in San Diego Bay during the anarcho-syndicalist Baja California revolution of 1911 was due in large part to Kettner's campaign for a naval coaling station for San Diego.¹¹⁷

Kettner's role in transforming San Diego into a "Navy Town" expanded when he became a Congressman in 1912. From his first year in office to his last in 1921, Congressmen Kettner successfully united Greater San Diego business interests with the interests of the federal government. By the end of 1917, the federal government had spent millions of dollars developing sites around San Diego County, with local businesses and individuals profiting handsomely.¹¹⁸ When a congressional colleague asked Kettner why he, a fiscally conservative

¹¹⁶ Robert Gene Chase, "Imagining an Anglo Ocean: The Great White Fleet in the Pacific" (PhD diss., University of California, Irvine, 2012), 16-17.

¹¹⁷ The Mexican Revolution continued to impact troop deployment along the California-Baja California border after the Baja California revolt. From 1914 to 1916 residents in San Diego and Imperial counties wrote to Governor Johnson, pleading him to contact Washington D.C. to send more soldiers to the borderline. Threats to life and property by Mexican "criminals" were the general concerns, and as before, Americans criticized slow government responses to border issues. On 26 March 1914, for example, Alta L. Grow, Charles F. Young, and Edward Berger of San Ysidro, which was adjacent to Tijuana, wrote: "Is it absolutely necessary that some people be killed, or property be burned in San Ysidro, as in Tecarte (sic), in order to move those in authority to meet our legitimate demands?" Alta L. Grow, Charles F. Young, and Edward Berger to Hiram Johnson, 26 March 1914, Folder Mexican Border Incidents, Box 42, Johnson Papers (Part II), BANC.

¹¹⁸ Aside from already existing naval operations in San Diego, the U.S. military added a naval training station in Balboa Park, expanded an Army and Navy aviation installation, and opened a new military camp. Further military installations began in 1921. See John Martin, "Patriotism and Profit: San Diego's Campy Kearny," *Journal of San*

legislator, consistently called for costly military build-up, Kettner replied by reminding him “that our forefathers on the frontier always carried guns, not for purpose of killing people, but because they recognized the dangers and the necessity of self-protection.” The safety and security of the nation, then, both depended on the availability of weapons and had no price tag, especially if colleagues and neighbors made money in the process. Kettner painted San Diego as a particularly important site in the United States’ defense arsenal. “[M]y home city of San Diego, within 16 miles of the Mexican border, and the first port of call in the United States north of the Panama Canal,” Kettner stated in 1915, “occupies an important point in the defense of the Pacific coast. As we are holding an exposition there this year, I hope to have the pleasure of showing a great many of my friends in the House why we feel the need of protection and why we believe that important strategic points have been and are being overlooked.”¹¹⁹ According to the congressman, San Diego needed the federal government, and the country needed San Diego.

True to his word, Kettner effectively used the Panama-California Exposition of 1915-1917, which was held in the recently completed Balboa Park, to court federal support for San Diego as a site for the U.S. Navy. The congressmen garnered the support of former president Theodore Roosevelt and, perhaps more importantly, the friendship and ear of Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt.¹²⁰ During the exposition, Marine Corps Colonel Joseph H. Pendleton (for whom San Diego’s Camp Pendleton was eventually named) also became an enthusiastic supporter of San Diego’s potential role in national defense. After much lobbying and allusions to the dangers prevalent abroad, as evidenced by the wars and revolutions in

Diego History 58 (Fall 2012), 247-272; Molly McClain, “‘Liberty Station’ and the Naval Training Center in San Diego,” *Journal of San Diego History* 54 (Spring 2008), 73-74; Lucille Clark Duvall, “William Kettner: San Diego’s Dynamic Congressman,” *Journal of San Diego History* 25 (Winter 1979), 191-207.

¹¹⁹ Rep. Kettner (CA), “Remarks on Navy Appropriation Bill – Pacific Coast,” 63rd Cong., 3rd sess., *Congressional Record* 52, Pt. 3 (5 February 1915), 3148.

¹²⁰ Iris H.W. Engstrand, “A Brief Sketch of San Diego’s Military Presence: 1542-1945,” *Journal of San Diego History* 60 (Winter/Spring 2014), 2.

Europe and Mexico, Kettner and Booster San Diego secured greater military investment during and after World War I, which further altered the political economy of the border community.¹²¹

The business interests of San Diego were not alone in recognizing the benefits in military build-up, nor in accepting a hyper-patriotic mentality required for the proliferation of “wartime,” or the concept that civil liberties could be suspended indefinitely for the sake of security. By the end of the war, San Diego’s working class had changed. The city and county’s labor unions were silenced in the subsequent years; left-wing ideologies had been purged and more conservative labor organizations gained ascendancy. San Diego’s *Labor Leader* proclaimed, “We set above life itself the cause for which America has entered this war, and we proclaim our condemnation of all men and agencies which set themselves in the way of our course of victory. We declare that the cause of America is the cause of humanity everywhere and that he who obstructs the defense of this cause by word or act is a traitor to humankind.”¹²² The IWW and its “dastardly” practices throughout the U.S. were not welcomed by San Diego’s conservative, anti-foreigner, and hyper-patriotic labor.¹²³

The more dominant conservative wing of San Diego’s working class fell in line with the war effort for two critical reasons: 1) greater military presence meant more jobs for native, white Americans; and 2) workers represented by the Labor Council finally received a wage increase in 1917, though not because they protested for higher pay, but because the economy boomed as a

¹²¹ Ibid., 3.

¹²² “The Pledge of American Labor,” *Labor Leader*, 30 August 1918.

¹²³ AFL leadership in San Diego did not question “Big Bill” Haywood’s organizing abilities, but they did question his motives. They cited Haywood’s “great desire to pose and read his name in the headlines” as his fall “from the ranks of legitimate effort.” The *Labor Leader* did not agree with Wobbly tactics either, for extreme actions, such as the recent bombings in Chicago, brought accusations of disloyalty to the greater workers’ movement. For this reason, the publication supported the incarceration of radical workers found guilty for the Chicago bombing attacks. “How Organized Labor Views It,” *Labor Leader*, 13 September 1918, 4. For an analysis on right-wing American movements and their ties to anti-alienism, or “the common vision of alien intruders in the promised land,” see David M. Bennett, *The Party of Fear: From Nativist Movements to the New Right in American History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 2.

result of events in Europe.¹²⁴ As further proof of the general ideological shift in the ranks of San Diego's working class, the *Labor Leader* in 1918 proclaimed John D. Spreckels, the anti-free speech businessman who was also a firm proponent of the military's presence in San Diego, to be "honorable" and the community's "leading citizen."¹²⁵ Indeed, it seemed as though the Labor Council and the workers it represented agreed with the sentiment Spreckels himself expressed several years later at a banquet of San Diego elites: Spreckels was not one of the "hungry wolves" who preyed on workers, but rather a positive force who invested his fortune in Greater San Diego, thereby creating jobs for the working class. James E. Wadham, the mayor of San Diego during the Free Speech Fight, agreed with Spreckels' premise that it was only the acquisitive businessman who was the true ally of the worker.¹²⁶

Any possibility for another leftist movement in Greater San Diego, then, seemed to dissipate due to the exigencies of World War I, and the prosperous economic years that followed. San Diego, increasingly economically, politically and socially tied to the U.S. military, fully entered a "wartime" mentality that had been building since the turn of the century. By the First World War era the questioning of the war effort and the questioning of the government and military, threatened the overall welfare of San Diego. "Resolved," thus declared the San Diego

¹²⁴ Ryan, *Labor Movement in San Diego*, 26. Some delegates in the Labor Council believed that it would be best for American labor for the U.S. to remain out of the war, but once Wilson committed troops to the battlefields of Europe, all delegates supported the war effort. Unions represented by the Labor Council enthusiastically subscribed for Liberty Loans, too.

¹²⁵ "What in the World Can the Matter Be?," *Labor Leader*, 13 September 1918, 4.

¹²⁶ During the hotly contested 1917 San Diego mayoral election, Wadham sided with "smokestack" candidate Louis J. Wilde. Wadham declared, "George W. Marston [the "geranium" candidate] has been in San Diego for nearly half a century, and in that length of time has established one business. Louise J. Wilde has been in San Diego for fourteen years, and has identified himself with twenty permanent and flourishing institutions." Marston defended himself by noting that he was for combination of industrial development and city beautification. Spreckels personally backed Marston, though his influential paper was considerably more favorable toward Marston's opponent. Spreckels, then, ostensibly backed both candidates since he would likely be able to exert pressure on either one. Untitled speech by John D. Spreckels, 13 June 1923, Folder 8, Box 27, Fletcher Papers, Special Collections & Archives, UCSD; Wadham quoted in Richard F. Pourade, *Gold in the Sun* (San Diego: Union-Tribune Publishing Co., 1965), 224.

Typographical Union, a founding organization of the Labor Council, “that we... do hereby commend the action taken by the San Diego police and the military intelligence bureau in the prompt muzzling of one Lincoln Steffens, lecturer and self-confessed critic of the United States government.” They added, “[I]t is the desire of the members of this union that all trouble-making orators of the Steffens type be barred from speaking in San Diego or be interned for the duration of the war.”¹²⁷ Lincoln Steffens, a proponent of pro-capitalist Wilsonian democracy, was censored by moderate E.W. Scripps and denounced by Greater San Diego’s working class because he appeared to support “philosophical anarchism.” Greater San Diego had become a space for unquestioned and unhindered capitalist progress – a place for docile workers, split along racial, ethnic, and national lines, and a conservative worldview that above all valued monetary profit.

Wreckage of a Dream

Nine days before he was found dead in his Leavenworth prison cell in November 1922, Ricardo Flores Magón, the anarchist intellectual figurehead of the IWW-allied PLM, mustered every last bit of energy in his ailing body to write one of his last letters to Ellen White, a dear friend of his in New York City.¹²⁸ Gone was the fiery optimism displayed during the Baja

¹²⁷ The *Union* reported that “Steffens represents a type of plausible, curiously sincere, but utterly dangerous anarchist,” whose “kind camouflage the evil-sounding term of anarchist by calling themselves philosophical anarchists.” According to the publication, a “philosophical anarchist” was “an assassin by proxy. He pretends to be in opposition to all forms of violence for promoting the anarchistic doctrine. He deprecates ‘direct action,’ sabotage and murder... but when the foul deed has been done he (sic) approves the result, and goes about the country defending the purposes of the lawless brood who... lighted the fuse and exploded the death-dealing dynamite that Steffens dared not handle himself.” Although Steffens called for the release of imprisoned anarchists and Wobblies, he did not condone their beliefs, much less actions. Steffens warned that the U.S. federal government’s hardline against radicals might further alienate itinerant workers. Lincoln Steffens to Allen H. Suggett, 20 October 1917. Winters, *Letters of Lincoln Steffens*, 409-410. “Steffens’ Address Scored by Typographical Union,” *San Diego Union*, 29 April 1918; “Philosophical Anarchist,” *San Diego Union*, 29 April 1918.

¹²⁸ Although Flores Magón had several serious health problems, his physical constitution appeared to be, at least temporarily, improving at the time of his death. Fellow political prisoners concluded that prison guards murdered Flores Magón, for not only was the anarchist noticeably healthier, but the physical evidence suggested a struggle. Colin M. MacLachlan, *Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution: The Political Trials of Ricardo Flores Magón in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 97-98.

California revolution of 1911. Gone, too, were his frustrated, but still struggling, laments voiced in Los Angeles in 1917. Only present were fatigue and dejection. In the letter to White, Flores Magón mentioned the possibility of what he hoped would be his eventual deportation to Mexico; such a fate was better than the daily neglect and isolation – the psychological toll – he, like many other leftist radicals of the period, encountered in the U.S. federal penitentiary.¹²⁹ The somber, incarcerated anarchist wrote: “Yes, it is cold, and I dream of the South [Mexico], and its sky, and its flowers. Before long, perhaps, shall I be blessed with its beauty... And when by my native cliffs I happen to discern the vague outline of the northern shores on which lay scattered the wreckage of so many hopes of mine, I shall say with a sigh – I meant well, my blonde brothers, I meant well, but you could not understand me.”¹³⁰

In a sense, it was as if one of Flores Magón’s maladies, the onset of blindness, prevented him from seeing full historical reality. Certainly, many in the United States did not comprehend, nor did they wish to comprehend, why he sought to overthrow the market economy and the state. In Flores Magón they saw only a danger to his native Mexico and, perhaps more importantly, for the United States. Given the influx of itinerant Mexican labor crossing the southern international line as a result of World War I, and given his connections to other leftist radical individuals and organizations, Flores Magón needed to be eliminated. So, too, did the left-leaning politics of other leftists who, like Flores Magón, blamed the ills of the world on capitalism and the state.

Anarchist Emma Goldman, once run out of town by San Diego vigilantes, and IWW leader “Big Bill” Haywood succumbed to a fate Flores Magón longed for – they were deported

¹²⁹ For a prime example of how imprisonment traumatized late 19th and early 20th century leftist radicals in the U.S., see Alexander Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1912).

¹³⁰ Ricardo Flores Magón to Ellen White, 12 November 1922, Archivo Digital de Ricardo Flores Magón, <http://archivomagon.net/obras-completas/correspondencia-1899-1922/c-1922/cor135-2/>, accessed 1 September 2017.

during the First Red Scare. Odilón Luna, the PLM member who had considered the killed “Bohemian” Mikolasek a brother, evaded deportation in 1917 by telling immigration officials that he was not an anarchist.¹³¹ Influential Wobbly Frank Little, who had long advocated for a strong Mexican presence in the IWW, was the victim of an anti-leftist and pro-war lynch mob in Butte, Montana in 1917.¹³² Joe Hill, a prominent Swedish American Wobbly who spent some time on Southern California’s multiracial and multi-ethnic docks, paid the ultimate sacrifice when he was executed by the state of Utah in 1915; in the eyes of business interests and the state, he was guilty of leftist organizing and, therefore, more easily convicted of murder.¹³³ Many other leftists, many of them often nameless and faceless, disappeared in some fashion – abducted, murdered, or as in the case of thousands of multiracial copper strikers in Bisbee, Arizona in 1917, deported en masse – but not before they left a lasting legacy in the areas where they lived.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Luna was arrested in Los Angeles for illegal street speaking in a town square. He was then handed over to immigration officials, at which point Luna denied being an anarchist. This drew a strong rebuke not from Ricardo Flores Magón, who had actively supported Luna, but rather from Enrique Flores Magón, who labeled Luna a coward and a fraud. Enrique argued that if his brother defended Luna, it was out of principle (to defend free speech) and not because of Luna’s leftist merits. It does not seem likely this was the case, as Ricardo had consistently praised Luna’s personal character and devotion to the PLM cause. Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, *The Return of Comrade Flores Magón* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2014), 469; Javier Torres Pares, *La revolución sin frontera: el Partido Liberal Mexicano y las relaciones entre el movimiento obrero de México y el de Estados Unidos, 1900-1923* (México, D.F.: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, UNAM, Ediciones y Distribuciones Hispánicas, 1990), 198.

¹³² Agitation and anti-war rhetoric eventually led to Little’s death, as angered locals, with the aid of Pinkerton agents and off-duty law enforcement, captured and murdered the outspoken IWW Executive Board member. Little’s body, mangled after being tied and dragged behind a car, was left dangling from a railroad bridge. The vigilantes left a note attached to Little’s lifeless body: “First and last warning.” Butte, Montana was no place for leftist radicalism and anti-war sentiment. In memoriam, leftist radical Phillips Russell, highlighting Little’s supposed biracialism, wrote: “Half Indian, half white man, All I.W.W. / You’d have died a thousand deaths / Before you’d have cried aloud / Or whimpered once to let them [the vigilantes] / Enjoy your pain.” Work, *Darkest Before Dawn*, 94-95; Phillips Russell, “To Frank H. Little (Lynched at Butte, Montana, August 1, 1917),” in *Songs of the Workers: To Fan the Flames of Discontent*, Thirty-Second Edition (Chicago: Industrial Workers of the World, 1968), 45.

¹³³ Hill was convicted for the killing of a former police officer and his son. Despite the evidence which corroborated Hill’s story that at the time of the double-murder he had been in an entirely separate, non-lethal altercation resulting from a love triangle, the Wobbly was executed. The state of Utah, like other western states, was bent on eliminating the Left. Decades later more evidence surfaced which further pointed to Hill’s innocence. See Philip S. Foner, *The Case of Joe Hill* (New York: International Publishers, 1966).

¹³⁴ On 12 July 1917, a posse of about 2,000 people, organized by the Phelps Dodge mining company and in collusion with local law enforcement, rounded up and arrested approximately 1,300 striking miners, several of whom were Mexican, Finnish, and Slavic immigrants, in Bisbee, Arizona. The arrested were then forced on to cattle

One such area was Greater San Diego, including its most populous city, San Diego. Although they pleaded for federal and state assistance to combat leftist radicalism following the Baja California revolution, Booster San Diego in the end took the initiative to safeguard its profit-making dream. When leftist workers Kasper Bauer, Laura Payne Emerson, and Joseph Mikolasek, to name a few, voiced their opposition to Greater San Diego's capitalist progress and demanded the right to free speech, adherents of the Booster San Diego ideology adopted extreme, illiberal measures to silence them. Sleepy San Diego became barbarous San Diego. Vigilantes patrolled the entry points and streets of San Diego and stopped, detained, and eventually tortured and murdered rebellious workers. Booster San Diego, with the press firmly in its command, vilified leftists, which served to wreck these workers' immediate dreams and helped reify a dominant culture that valued profit above all else. San Diego's clear blue skies and warm weather was for those who did not question the Booster worldview.

By 1914, Congressmen William Kettner, deeply tied to Greater San Diego's elites, declared to fellow lawmakers the region ready for more projects, technologies, and people. Kettner looked east of the city of San Diego to underscore the case that his district was ready for more growth: "Everything in the market is grown in the Imperial Valley all the year round and is sold in San Diego markets at reasonable prices."¹³⁵ Typical of boosters, the congressman failed to acknowledge the complete cost of capitalist progress and state growth. The Imperial Valley's large-scale agribusiness could not grow without workers. Beginning in the early 20th century,

cars provided by the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad, which deported the striking workers to New Mexico. Historian Katherine Benton-Cohen notes that the Bisbee Deportation had racial underpinnings, as a significant proportion of the deported were of Mexican descent. Ethnic Mexican miners in particular agitated and organized because they did not benefit from a "white man's camp" social compact. Ethnic Mexicans challenged the dual wage system by demanding a family wage and an American standard of living, which in turn challenged white workers' conceptions of whiteness and manhood. These strikers, many of whom were familiar with the ideologies of the PLM and IWW, imperiled the existing racial hierarchy. Katherine Benton-Cohen, *Borderline Americans: Racial Division and Labor War in the Arizona Borderlands* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 202-211.

¹³⁵ Kettner, "Remarks on Navy Appropriation Bill," 3148.

colonization schemes and publicly- and privately-financed irrigation projects transformed Greater San Diego's inhospitable desert lands into lucrative agricultural fields, but the multiracial, though increasingly ethnic Mexican, migrant working class still did not reap the rewards of growth. Once again, the working poor resorted to labor strikes.

The Imperial Valley's boosters and business interests, eager to maintain their power and control over the working class, responded once again with violence, intimidation, and arrests. Like their predecessors during the Baja California revolution and San Diego Free Speech Fight, workers of the Imperial Valley, steeped in the radical tradition of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, once more organized and tenuously united across racial, ethnic, national, and linguistic lines to contest the narratives of capitalist progress. Unlike their predecessors, however, not all "radicals" called for the overthrow of capital and the state.

3

Empire's Promises: *Agribusiness and the Imperial Valley, 1900 – 1934*

The future of California will be very different from its past. It has been the land of large things – of large estates, of large enterprises, of large fortunes... These were its plain tendencies years ago, when somebody coined the epigram, “California is the rich man’s paradise and the poor man’s hell.”

- William E. Smythe, 1900

They don’t care what kind of houses we live in, or if we starve... Capital likes to pay us as little as they can.

- Brawley Farm Worker, 1935

After traveling through the United States in 1930, literary critic and reporter Edmund Wilson published *The American Jitters* (1932), a collection of essays he had first written for the magazine *The New Republic*. Wilson’s year-long journey brought him to, among other places, Greater San Diego, where he had the opportunity to visit the “white and ornate as a wedding-cake” Hotel del Coronado located on Coronado, an “island” (peninsula) off the mainland.¹ Built by a multiracial and multi-ethnic workforce – mainly Chinese, but also ethnic Mexicans, blacks, and whites – and saved from financial ruin by sugar scion and real estate and transportation mogul John D. Spreckels, Hotel del Coronado opened for business in 1887.² The resort quickly

¹ Edmund Wilson, *The American Jitters: A Year of the Slump* (New York: Scribner’s, 1932), 254.

² John D. Spreckels is often credited with having saved Hotel del Coronado and Coronado Island’s development since he made an emergency loan of \$100,000 to the hotel’s original investors, Elisha S. Babcock and Hampton L. Story, who were not going to be able to finish the hotel’s construction due to a real estate bust. Spreckels’ sizeable loan, which went unpaid, allowed construction to continue, and the hotel opened in 1887. Within a year of its opening, Spreckels bought out Story, and by 1893 he owned the hotel and other Coronado properties outright. Often

became a destination for the country's rich, famous, and powerful.³ Indeed, by the first few decades of the 20th century, Hotel del Coronado was the Southern California site of choice not just for celebrities, but also for government officials and businessmen eager to mix business with pleasure.⁴

The resort owed much of its popularity to its scenic location and views, “unrivaled” architecture, diverse entertainment ranging from rowing races to Indian and Mexican “fiestas,” and “interminable” sumptuous meals made from the freshest ingredients.⁵ Even during the Depression, which had relatively spared Greater San Diego since it was not very reliant on industrial labor, these ingredients were readily available thanks in part to San Diego County farms, but mostly due to the sizeable harvests brought in by the San Diego & Arizona Railway

lost in discussions on Spreckels' place in the Hotel del Coronado's history are the stories of the workers who literally built the leisure center. Chinese laborers contracted by the San Francisco-based Chinese Six Companies (or Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association), a confederation of Chinese organizations that helped Chinese immigrants in various ways, had the heaviest hand in erecting Hotel del Coronado and its associated irrigation, light, and transportation systems. Other racial and ethnic groups took part in its construction too. A contemporary newspaper reported that “it was not an uncommon sight to see a wagon full of men with a black driver, whites, Chinese, and Mexicans riding along laughing and talking with each other in his own way.” Burke Ormsby, “The Lady Who Lives by the Sea,” *Journal of San Diego History* 12 (Jan. 1966), 3-13; “Life Story of Coronado's Founder of Local Interest,” *Coronado Compass*, 23 October 1947; for more discussion on the Chinese Six Companies, see William Hoy, *The Chinese Six Companies: A Short, General Historical Resume of Its Origin, Function, and Importance in the Life of California Chinese* (San Francisco: Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, 1942); Him Mark Lai, “Historical Development of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association/Huiguan System,” <http://himmarklai.org>, accessed 1 September 2017; contemporary newspaper report quoted by Murray K. Lee, *In Search of Gold Mountain: A History of the Chinese in San Diego, California* (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Company Publishers, 2011), 85.

³ *Hotel del Coronado, Coronado Beach, San Diego County, California* (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co., 1888), 10; Sally Bullard Thornton, “San Diego's First Cabrillo Celebration, 1892,” *Journal of San Diego History* 30 (Summer 1984), <https://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/1984/july/cabrillo-3/>, accessed 1 September 2017.

⁴ Ten years after Spreckels sold the northern portion of Coronado to the U.S. government (the land was used by the U.S. Army and Navy), Senator Samuel Shortridge worked to ensure that the Navy's wishes for San Diego Bay's ongoing development were met. Shortridge contended that local dreams of building a bridge to connect Coronado with downtown San Diego were feasible so long as the U.S. Navy's operations were not impeded by the proposed structure. “Senator Samuel Shortridge Here on a Vacation,” *Coronado Eagle and Journal*, 5 April 1927; Uldis Portis, “Geraniums vs. Smokestacks San Diego's Mayoralty Campaign of 1917,” *Journal of San Diego History* 21 (Summer 1975): 50-56; Kevin Starr, *The Dream Endures: California Enters the 1940s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), chapter four.

⁵ Wilson, *American Jitters*, 256.

from the large industrial farms of the Imperial Valley.⁶ In this chapter, I follow Spreckels' railroad tracks and focus on the agribusiness mecca in southeastern Southern California that, though officially independent from San Diego County after 1907, remained socially and economically tied to its western neighbor. Since the same dependable sun that shone down on Hotel del Coronado and the rest of Greater San Diego's coast shone down on the region's dry interior, many early boosters and business interests viewed the desert landscape as a site of great economic potential. However, boosters and business interests recognized that a different industry from those dominant nearer the coast would have to flourish to secure profits and help make the region a model business enterprise.

Operating under the same logic of capital as their city-based brethren, valley boosters and business interests reasoned that the subjugation of nature and workers would be central to their pursuit of profits.⁷ With the right vision, scheme, and – perhaps most critically – private and public investment in ambitious irrigation projects, geographic constraints would give way to bountiful opportunities, specifically in the form of large-scale corporate farming.⁸ Turn of the

⁶ State and federal projects reduced some unemployment in San Diego County. However, like in most locales, the economic downturn did negatively impact Greater San Diego. Iris Engstrand, *San Diego: California's Cornerstone* (San Diego: Sunbelt Publications, 2005), 147.

⁷ Historian William G. Robbins argues that throughout the American West the metropole and hinterland were interdependent. The backcountry needed urban capital investment, and the city needed the backcountry for further capital accumulation. This was certainly the case in Greater San Diego, as valley boosters attempted to persuade investors from all parts to contribute funds to the valley's growth. In private meetings and in public gatherings, such as San Diego's California-Panama Exposition of 1916-1917, Imperial Valley boosters pitched the corporate farming viability of the Southern California desert. William Robbins, *Colony and Empire: The Capitalist Transformation of the American West* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1994); see also William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991), 41-46; for Imperial Valley's presence at the California-Panama Exposition, see Matthew F. Bokovoy, "Inventing Agriculture in Southern California," *Journal of San Diego History* 45 (Summer 1999): 67-85; Benny J. Andrés, Jr., *Power and Control in the Imperial Valley: Nature, Agribusiness, and Workers on the California Borderland, 1900-1940* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2015), 68.

⁸ According to environmental historian Donald Worster, federal reclamation laws benefitted elites who favored large-scale farms, which the Department of Commerce Agriculture defined as those farms which raised produce at an annual value of \$30,000 or more. Reclamation laws provided a means for elites to control the landless, the working class, and the small yeoman farmer. William E. Smythe, *The Conquest of Arid America*, Revised Edition (New York: MacMillan Company, 1905), xxvi; Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth*

century Anglo American “pioneers,” or land developers and other business interests, eager to capitalize on the seemingly barren land, began harnessing the Colorado River to “redeem” the desert previously occupied by allegedly un- or semi-civilized Indians and Mexicans.⁹ The agribusiness empire that subsequently flourished was made possible by them and other brown, imported bodies deemed inferior and therefore perfect for the dirty, dangerous, and demanding jobs found in these “factories in the fields,” as Carey McWilliams referred to them. A journalist, lawyer, and civil rights activist, McWilliams astutely concluded that these “factories,” complete with all the elements of capitalist production – infrastructure, machinery, marketing and distribution, market sales, reinvestment, accumulated wealth, and ostensibly free labor – were an exploitative force in the Imperial Valley.¹⁰ Indeed, as an examination of the rise and maintenance of agribusiness in the Imperial Valley through the Great Depression demonstrates,

of the American West (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 163-169; Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1941* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1971), 61.

⁹ Several Mexicans in Mexico’s north believed they had redeemed lands from “nature,” too. For instance, Daniel Nugent argues that for decades colonists of Mexico’s northern frontier tamed “forces of nature – whether the forests, fields, and streams of the sierra which were to be exploited and labored upon, or the ‘barbarians’ who were to be ‘reduced’ to ‘civilized’ social habits or physically exterminated.” Colonists’ mission was to “civilize” the frontier. Daniel Nugent, *Spent Cartridges of Revolution: An Anthropological History of Namiquipa, Chihuahua* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 162.

¹⁰ In a counter to McWilliams, historian David Vaught argues that California farms of the first half of the 20th century did not resemble factories, noting that as early as 1910 only a quarter of California farms were over 175 acres, making large-scale agricultural outfits exceptions. Vaught adds that McWilliams and historians like Devra Weber, who has also been critical of California agribusiness, are guilty of “selective human agency,” treating growers as a (white) monolith concerned only with turning a profit. But as several American West historians point out, capital accumulation was a goal of the corporate farm behemoths that dominated on the “wage worker’s frontier.” Historian Mark Reisler points out that while largescale farms comprised a miniscule 2.1% of California farms by the 1920s, these outfits produced one-third of the state’s agriculture, and would only continue to increase their share. Corporate farms, then, employed significant majority of agricultural workers, thus subjecting most farm workers to factory-like labor. This is what McWilliams and more recent scholars highlight in their respective works. Therefore, while there were some conscientious and just growers, in the main California farms were dominated by growers who used racialized and gendered perceptions of farm workers to legitimize factory-like conditions for financial gain. Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1939); Devra Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton, and the New Deal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); David Vaught, “Factories in the Field Revisited,” *Pacific Historical Review* 66 (May 1997): 149-184; David Vaught, *Cultivating California: Growers, Specialty Crops, and Labor, 1875-1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1999); Reisler, *Sweat of Their Brow*, 78-79. For a short and partial rebuttal of Vaught’s thesis, see Gilbert G. González, “Book Review: *Cultivating California: Growers, Specialty Crops, and Labor, 1875-1920*,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 31 (Spring 2001): 661-662.

rather than break from California's "past tendencies" of "large enterprises" and "large fortunes" built on inequality, the Imperial Valley became a paragon of what historian Elizabeth Sine terms "racial capitalism," or a social structure of difference formed and redefined in the first few decades of the 20th century and "integral to the development and advancement of capitalism itself."¹¹

Arriving in a social structure that made socioeconomic advancement increasingly remote, some workers grudgingly but quietly struggled on. Still, other workers, like the Brawley farm worker who ridiculed "capital" for "paying as little as they can," tapped into radical traditions to contest the world created by Greater San Diego's boosters and business interests.¹² This chapter, then, also explores how and why ethnic Mexicans, long told of the promises of the California sun, came to once more tenuously re-cross racial, ethnic, national, and linguistic lines to lead the challenge of the world created by boosters and business interests. Many ethnic Mexican farm workers, joined by other itinerant workers, disinherited small-scale farmers, liberals and civil rights advocates, and leftists from organizations like the communist-aligned Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU), struggled not for an immediate nor completely new order, but rather for a reformed capitalist system that ensured fair wages, civil rights, and ultimately, dignity.

¹¹ Sine has examined the historical roots of the multiracial and multi-ethnic strikes in the Imperial Valley in the 1920s. In particular, Sine focuses on the cross-racial alliances of the 1920s, which were the result of both overlapping "radical traditions," in "grassroots knowledge about racial capitalist development in the region," and in the everyday and personal connections between diverse farmworkers. Elizabeth E. Sine, "Grassroots Multiracialism: Imperial Valley Farm Labor and the Making of Popular Front California from Below," *Pacific Historical Review* 85 (May 2016), 227, 232n10; see also Elizabeth E. Sine, "Grassroots Surrealism: The Culture of Opposition and the Crisis of Development in 1930s California" (PhD diss., University of California – San Diego, 2014), chapter one; William E. Smythe, *Conquest of Arid America*, Revised Edition (New York: MacMillan Co., 1905), 159-160.

¹² Interview with Mexican laborer, Brawley, California, June 16, 1935, Folder 9, Carton 15, Paul S. Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (BANC).

Imperial Valley workers believed that the ability to independently organize, voice grievances, and strike was a fundamental right, and not grounds for harassment, arrest, and for some – especially ethnic Mexicans racialized as disposable – deportation.¹³ They rejected the Imperial Valley’s boosters and business interests’ populist appeals to a narrowly-defined patriotism which, like those made by their business-friendly coastal colleagues, deemed leftist worker organization subversive and un-American, and therefore dangerous to capitalist progress. However, before boosters and business interests’ power and control were contested, both the desert and a myth had to grow. Water had to flow.

A Dream, A Promise, A Realization

Harold Bell Wright arrived in the town of El Centro in the Imperial Valley in 1907 after he resigned from his pastorate at an evangelical church in Redlands, California. By the time of his arrival in the valley, Wright was long removed from his humble beginnings in upstate New York, finding a career in the Midwest spreading the word of God. While preaching in Kansas and Missouri, Wright began to write simple but wildly popular Christian-influenced novels, which eventually brought the minister fame (including the admiration of a young Ronald Reagan) and fortune.¹⁴ It was not until after his move to the valley, however, that Wright would

¹³ According to historian Natalia Molina, “racial scripts” are policies, attitudes, and practices that connect racialized groups “across time and space.” Ethnic Mexicans, like past immigrant groups, were racialized in the United States. Ethnic Mexicans in the Imperial Valley (and in other international border communities), however, “faced a distinct kind of racialization and enforcement shaped by structural forces particular to their immigration histories.” Ethnic Mexicans’ proximity to their homeland – deemed inferior and rife with contagious medical and social diseases – figured prominently into their racialization, and allowed for easy deportation. Such forced removals not only potentially weakened labor organization among ethnic Mexicans in the Imperial Valley, but also increased itinerancy and stunted the educational potential of ethnic Mexican youth. Natalia Molina, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 7, 93; Camille Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 73-74.

¹⁴ Reagan listed Wright’s first book, *That Printer of Udell’s* (1903), which he first came across as a boy, as one of his two favorite novels. The novel’s simple morals and clear distinctions between right and wrong – hallmarks of Wright’s works – appealed to the future U.S. president. Days after reading it, Reagan went to his mother and asked to be baptized at his local church in Illinois. See, Paul Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan: A Spiritual Life* (New

write and publish arguably his most popular fictional work, *The Winning of Barbara Worth* (1911).¹⁵ The novel – a story of love, greed, rugged individualism, regeneration, and irrigation – was based partly on the history of the Imperial Valley in the first decade of the 20th century.¹⁶

Wright's historical novel was a high-profile form of booster literature for the Imperial Valley, as it praised the region's boosters and business interests for bringing capitalist progress – irrigated agriculture – to a land once considered barren and wasted in the hands of Indians and Mexicans. Wright portrayed *The Winning of Barbara Worth*'s main protagonist, relatively modest financier Jefferson Worth, as an honest man who labored “with his brother men [white yeoman farmers], sharing their hardships, sharing their returns; a man using money as a workman uses his tools to fashion and build and develop, adding thus to the welfare of human kind.” Wright's worker-banker Worth, a good capitalist who, like the Lord, cared for others' well-being, stood in stark contrast to not only the servile and child-like Indian and half-breed Mexican, but perhaps more importantly, the unrestrained businessman of the American east coast and big cities. Corporate businessmen, Wright wrote, were “impersonal, inhuman” and “inconsiderate of man's misery or happiness, his life or death.”¹⁷ Big Business, Wright clearly

York: Regan Books, 2004); Ronald Reagan to Jean B. Wright, 13 March 1984, <http://gchudleigh.com/reaganletter.htm>, accessed 1 September 2017.

¹⁵ Historian Darren Dochuk has written on the rise of white evangelical conservatism in Southern California following the Great Depression. Focusing primarily on Orange County in the second half of the 20th century, Dochuk illustrates that white evangelical Christians from the South and Midwest, or “plain folk” religious migrants, arrived in Southern California and organized a potent political machine headed by religious leaders like Billy Graham. Their political influence soon became national, as Graham and other leaders, championing a new gospel of wealth, gained an audience with the Republican Party, culminating in Richard Nixon's “Southern Solution” and Ronald Reagan's ascent to the presidency. Given Reagan's affinity for *That Printer at Udell's*, preacher Wright's moralizing can be considered a precursor to the evangelical conservatives who arrived in Southern California not long after. Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011).

¹⁶ Andrés, *Power and Control*, 47-48.

¹⁷ Harold Bell Wright, *The Winning of Barbara Worth* (Chicago: Book Supply Co., 1911), 395; for an excellent discussion on the importance of fictional works like *Barbara Worth* to the acceptance of capitalist relations in California, including the Imperial Valley, see George L. Henderson, *California and the Fictions of Capital* (New York: Oxford University of Press, 1999).

communicated, sought and cared only for profit, even if it meant crippling the hardworking, independent white family man. In Wright's fictional valley, tyrannical corporate capital had little sway, and Christian-based democracy and freedom (for white male farmers) prevailed. Good businessmen like Jefferson Worth made the valley community possible, and for that business efforts and riches were to be celebrated.

The promotional literature circulated by the region's economic leaders was equally as romantic as Wright's novel. "Call into your mind your conception of the desert!" began the Imperial County Board of Supervisors' *Imperial Valley, 1901-1915* (1915), an official account of the history of the Imperial Valley. "A place of interminable sand," it continued, "silent save for the howl of the coyote, devoid of all things growing except gnarled mesquite and scrubby greasewood, a land of heat, thirst and death! Such was the Imperial Valley fourteen years ago." The harnessing of the Colorado River by "brave pioneer" business interests and engineers, however, changed the region's fortunes for the better. "Imperial is a county apart," the Board of Supervisors continued, "distinctive in its geography, distinctive in its history, distinctive in its progress, products, profits."¹⁸ The Salton Sink or Colorado Desert, renamed the Imperial Valley by early developers, became "a vast Empire, the home of a prosperous and happy people."¹⁹ Wright agreed with this interpretation. The prominent author first declared in the *Los Angeles Tribune*, and was later re-quoted in the board's official history: "To the home-hungry settler Imperial Valley has been a dream, a vision, a hope, a promise, a realization."²⁰

The Winning of Barbara Worth and Imperial Valley, 1901-1915 were largely fictions.

Perhaps the racialized and gendered claims of the Imperial Valley promoted by Wright and the

¹⁸ *Imperial Valley, 1901-1915* (El Centro, CA: Board of Supervisors of Imperial County, 1915), 2.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁰ Harold Bell Wright, "Imperial Valley Is," *Los Angeles Tribune*, 15 December 1912; also reprinted in *Imperial Valley*, 7.

Board of Supervisors were actual dreams and hopes, but as an analysis of the water politics of the valley illustrates, not only were they far from realized, they were not genuinely pursued. Already by 1915, the fields of the Imperial Valley more resembled exploitative corporate factories than the homesteads of democracy found in the pages of Wright's book.

Bringing Life to the Desert of Death

The Colorado River was considered both awe-inspiring and forgettable by those who came across it. The river's mystique rested in part on its sheer scale. Its length – 1,440 miles of twists and turns from the Rocky Mountain divide to the Gulf of California in northern Mexico – was impressive. Tributaries of the Colorado River drained over 200,000 square miles of land varying in elevation from over 14,000 feet to below sea level. In comparison to the Mississippi and Columbia rivers, the amount of water the Colorado carried along its banks was not of much note, but what the river lacked in water flow, it made up for in power. The Colorado River could be merciless and violent, and for millennia such ferocity sawed rocks in its currents, creating imposing gorges and canyons throughout the American West.²¹ Geographic changes continued in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as the sawing of rock upstream meant higher river beds downstream. For many months, the river posed little problem, as it sluggishly trickled toward its terminus south of the U.S.-Mexico border. But when winter snowpacks melted or heavy summer rains poured, the river jumped its banks and overflowed into surrounding floodplains, carrying excess water, rock, and dirt. The water would then continue its land-altering trek into the flat deserts of Southern California and southwest Arizona. For the most part, the Colorado would

²¹ Worster, *Rivers of Empire*, 194; David P. Billington, Donald C. Jackson, and Martin V. Melosi, *The History of Federal Dams: Planning, Design, and Construction in the Era of Big Dams* (Denver: U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, 2005), 135.

stay on course and not overflow into the desert until it finally reached its expansive delta and merged with the shallow, salt-watered Gulf of California in northern Mexico.

The collision between ocean and river created a network of interlaced waterways, and the delta gradually broadened to a fan-like plug, which sealed off one end of the sea and occasionally formed an inland saltwater lake. The relentless sun and unforgiving desert eventually caused the water to evaporate, leaving behind a bowl-like area: The Salton Sink. Light vegetation generally kept the Colorado at bay, but occasionally the river would cut through the barrier and flood the sink with its load. Silt would in time plug the break once more, allowing the river to return to its meandering course and the water in the sink to evaporate under the hot sun.²²

Visitors were generally unimpressed when they happened upon the Colorado Desert. For example, explorer John Wesley Powell stated that the region near the Imperial Valley's "grasses are so scant as to be of no value: here the true deserts are found."²³ Powell echoed an old, familiar refrain. Tasked with drawing an imaginary line from San Diego to the confluence of the Colorado and Gila rivers following the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), American surveyors noted the harsh conditions, and the desert's lack of value. Upon entering the Colorado Desert from San Diego, the survey team's leader, Amiel Whipple, noted, "We are now fairly upon the desert; sandy hills behind us – a dreary, desolate plain before us, far as the eye can reach. An undulating surface of sand... Thermometer 108° Fahrenheit in the shade."²⁴ Powell, Whipple, and the Indians and Mexicans who warned of the "desert of death," however,

²² Worster, *Rivers of Empire*, 195.

²³ Quoted in William Morris Davis, *Biographical Memoir of John Wesley Powell, 1834-1902* (Washington: National Academy of Sciences, 1915), 42.

²⁴ U.S. Congress, Senate, *Report of the Secretary of War, Communicating, In Answer to a Resolution of the Senate, the Report of Lieutenant Whipple's Expedition from San Diego to the Colorado*, S. Ex. Doc. 19, 31st Cong., 2nd sess., 1851, 8.

did not deter Anglo Americans from moving to the region. They believed the region capable of sustaining life.

“Almost the very first explorers were interested in the Salton Basin and its various possibilities,” explained engineer Harry Thomas Cory. “The ability to create an inland sea by diverting into it the water of the Colorado,” Cory continued, “attracted much attention... because of a supposed advantageous effect that it might have on the climate of the entire region. On the other hand, the possibilities of irrigating the Colorado Desert by the waters of the Colorado... were not overlooked.”²⁵ Indeed, Cory, who in 1905 had been sent to the Imperial Valley by Edward H. Harriman, the president of the powerful Southern Pacific Railroad, was only the latest person tasked with helping extract profit from the valley. One of the first to consider the possibilities of the valley was physician and settler Oliver M. Wozencraft, who before becoming an exploitative Indian Agent of the U.S., served as a delegate to the California Constitutional Convention the year prior, where he showed his Deep South roots and unsuccessfully advocated for the barring of the “negro race” from California.²⁶ Wozencraft set the foundation for a farming enterprise meant to enrich a select, predominantly white, few.²⁷

²⁵ H.T. Cory, *Irrigation and River Control in the Colorado River Delta* (New York: American Society of Civil Engineers, 1913), 1231.

²⁶ In her examination on the limits of freedom for non-whites in 19th century California, historian Stacey L. Smith writes that Wozencraft captured a nine-year-old Yuki Indian named Shasta “during a punitive campaign against her people in northwestern California in 1851” and then “bound her as his ward under the provisions of California’s 1850 Act for the Government and Protection of Indians.” This law allowed whites to keep Indian children and profit from their labor until they reached adulthood. Save for a three-year period in which she was “kidnapped” by a black woman named Charlotte Sophie Gomez, Shasta served as the Wozencraft family’s domestic servant until at least the 1880s. As Smith notes, Gomez and other black abolitionists in California viewed cases like those of Shasta as akin to those of runaway slaves back east, hence they established Indian safe houses throughout the state. Wozencraft and other whites resorted to using private investigators to track down runaways since persons like Gomez refused to disclose Indians’ whereabouts even after legal charges of kidnapping. John Ross Browne, *Report of the Debates in the Convention of California on the Formation of the State Constitution, in September and October, 1849* (Washington: John T. Towers, 1850), 49; Stacey L. Smith, *Freedom’s Frontier: California and the Struggle Over Unfree Labor, Emancipation, and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 1-2.

²⁷ At the California state constitutional convention, Wozencraft also argued against industrial and agricultural monopolies and in favor of smaller landholdings for the self-employed. Tamara Venit Shelton, *A Squatter’s Republic: Land and the Politics of Monopoly in California, 1850-1900* (Berkeley: Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West by University of California Press, 2013), 48.

Wozencraft became familiar with the Imperial Valley on his way to and from the Gold Rush in northern California. In the mid-1850s Wozencraft, along with his colleague Ebenezer Hadley, the County Surveyor for Los Angeles with professional ties to San Diego County, realized that an ancient channel of the Colorado River, which had been filled with sediments, had once carried water directly into the Imperial Valley.²⁸ In fact, the valley was once part of the Gulf of California, but the accumulation of sediment in the Colorado's delta separated it from the gulf. Now cut off, the land dried out, leaving behind a below sea level desert. Wozencraft reasoned that with some human intervention, waters now fresh could easily return to the Imperial Valley.²⁹ By the late 1850s, the eager Wozencraft had moved on to the next steps in securing the federally-held land for his personal profit: 1) securing support for his fantastic yet vague irrigation scheme from state lawmakers, some of whom were old colleagues of his from his convention days; and 2) persuading said legislators that California, not the federal government, should control the Imperial Valley. The former Indian Agent was successful on both fronts. State legislators were convinced they should govern the valley, three million acres of which would be given to Wozencraft.³⁰

In 1859 representatives of the state of California went to Congress in Washington D.C. and formally asked to have the "barren and sterile" Colorado Desert ceded and donated to it, arguing that under the state government's stewardship the region would become useful to California and the country. The building of canals, the California Assembly and Senate claimed in gendered imagery, would "remove the existing impediments to travel and transportation" and

²⁸ Donald J. Pisani, *From the Family Farm to Agribusiness: The Irrigation Crusade in California and the West, 1850-1931* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 89.

²⁹ David P. Billington and Donald Conrad Jackson, *Big Dams of the New Deal Era: A Confluence of Engineering and Politics* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 109; Billington, *History of Federal Dams*, 138.

³⁰ Robert L. Sperry, "When the Imperial Valley Fought for Its Life," *Journal of San Diego History* 21 (Winter 1975), 4.

would “cause the desert to yield to the wants of man her latent, reserved, and hidden stores.”³¹

Wozencraft did his part to champion the irrigation project. For instance, he provided to the House of Representative’s Committee on Public Lands Hadley’s report to him from November 1860. Engineer Hadley claimed the lands of the Imperial Valley were “unusually rich, being composed of alluvial earth, clay, sand, marl, and shells” and presented “a remarkably favorable surface for irrigation.”³²

While congressmen displayed interest, any decisions on cessions were delayed by the prospects and eventual onset of the American Civil War.³³ Not until 1862, during the war, did the Committee on Public Lands return to the issue on whether to transfer control of the Colorado Desert to the state of California. By then the committee’s commissioner had cooled to Wozencraft’s unclear irrigation proposal (funding and engineering plans were never provided in the petition), yet still saw potential. The committee eventually concluded that the valley would be best developed under the control of the state of California.³⁴ A bill for the transfer of land control was thus introduced to the House of Representatives, but then tabled. Until his death in 1887, Wozencraft continued to lobby members of Congress for a decision for a resolution of this proposal.³⁵ Shortly before his passing, congressmen had dismissed Wozencraft’s dream of irrigating the valley as an old man’s folly.³⁶

³¹ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Public Lands, *Colorado Desert: Report (to Accompany Bill H.R. No. 417)*, 37th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1862, H. Rep. 87, 7.

³² H.R., *Colorado Desert*, 24-26.

³³ Pisani, *From the Family Farm to Agribusiness*, 91.

³⁴ H.R., *Colorado Desert*, 6.

³⁵ Wozencraft was also trying to secure any appointment to “a good consulship” overseas, or a position with the latest U.S.-Mexico Boundary Commission. As with all his other attempts in Washington, he failed. John Steiger, “Engineering the Desert: American Expansion and Global Expertise in the Colorado Desert, 1847-1920” (PhD diss., University of California, Irvine, 2013), 55; Barbara Ann Metcalf, “Oliver M. Wozencraft in California, 1849-1887” (Master’s thesis, University of Southern California, 1963), 81-100.

³⁶ Joseph E. Stevens, *Hoover Dam: An American Adventure* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 10.

Congress may have rejected Wozencraft's proposal again and again, but he had piqued federal interest in the potential of the Imperial Valley. In 1875, the War Department surveyed the area to explore the possibility of tapping into the Colorado River, but concluded that no diversion could be made at any point within U.S. territory. The surveyor's report did add, however, that the desert soil was indeed promising for agriculture.³⁷ The irrigation scheme, then, remained alive. Dreams of bringing the Colorado's waters to the Imperial Valley were bolstered by developments in railroad transportation, which made the desert more accessible to land developers, bankers and settlers, and thus more favorable for investment. Two years after the War Department's report, the Southern Pacific arrived in nearby Yuma, Arizona, and in 1883 the Santa Fe line crossed the Colorado north of the Imperial Valley at Needles, California.³⁸ The railroad had made the "Desert of Death" more open than ever before to the possibility of sustained human life and industrial activity. Nevertheless, through the end of the 1880s, the Colorado River was still used only for light steamboat trade, and the Imperial Valley remained unirrigated.³⁹

As the railroad set down tracks through Southern California's deserts and the federal government conducted exploratory investigations as to the feasibility of irrigating the American West, state-level and private interests moved to realize the irrigation vision. Indeed, while the federal government continued to act slowly with regard to fostering capitalist growth in the west, subnational governments, historian Noam Maggor writes, "remained far and away the principal

³⁷ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Report of the Secretary of War: Bein Part of the Message and Documents Communicated to the Two Houses of Congress at the Beginning of the Second Session of the Forty-Fourth Congress*, Vol. II, Pt. III, H. Exec. Doc. 1, pt. 2, 44th Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1876), 298.

³⁸ In 1885, the Santa Fe line finally reached the city of San Diego. Pisani, *From the Family Farm to Agribusiness*, 92; Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011), 256; Benjamin Thomas Jenkins, "The Octopus's Garden: Railroads, Citrus Agriculture, and the Emergence of Southern California," (PhD diss., University of California, Riverside, 2016), 100.

³⁹ Billington, Jackson, and Melosi, *History of Large Federal Dam*, 137.

sites where economic policy questions were settled.”⁴⁰ In 1878, the California legislature passed the Drainage Act, which created the position of state engineer and appropriated \$100,000 for irrigation, drainage, and navigation studies. William Hammond Hall, California’s chief engineer, published several reports which not only gave specific recommendations and plans for irrigation, but connected such projects with the “great civilizations” of the past and present. Later, California’s Wright Act of 1887 established the framework by which local communities could form irrigation districts that could tax, issue revenue bonds, acquire land by eminent domain, and divert water for irrigation and flood control.

Clearly by the early 1890s, an influential irrigation movement had captured the imagination of Americans and, notably, those Americans with influence in the federal government. Norris Hundley Jr. explains that a “cadre of easterners and westerners whose professed goal... was the moral regeneration of the nation” helped further spur the federal government into dealing with the American West’s water and land problems (extreme droughts had crippled the West in the 1880s and 1890s, leading to severe economic recession in the 1890s).⁴¹ Hiram M. Chittendon, an engineer for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, was one such crusader, as was New England author and publisher William E. Smythe. The founder in 1891 of the journal *Irrigation Age*, Smythe had long believed that the future of a vibrant, masculine, and efficient nation rested on an irrigated and “civilized” American West. American progress in turn was partially contingent on the redemption of desert lands once possessed by Indians and ethnic Mexicans.

⁴⁰ During the 19th century, business interests, particularly “old money” of the east, actively worked with state and local governments to spur infrastructure investment in the American West, and thus incorporate western territories into the economy of the United States. The federal government had yet to become the main driver of development. Noam Maggor, *Brahmin Capitalism: Frontiers of Wealth and Populism in America’s First Gilded Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 4-12.

⁴¹ Norris Hundley, Jr., *The Great Thirst: Californians and Water, 1770s-1990s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, 113; see also Steiger, “Engineering the Desert,” especially chapter two.

One early local history asserted that local Indians and their “heathenish ways” were unable to make use of the Imperial Valley’s “fertility and promise.”⁴² A consulting engineer for the U.S. Department of Agriculture echoed this assertion in 1901, writing that prior to the arrival of the Spanish in the 18th century, “progress toward civilization was impossible, and the inhabitants [natives] remained in hopeless barbarism.” According to the engineer, the Spanish fathers in San Diego began the “practice of irrigation” and, thus, California’s civilizing mission.⁴³ Anglo American institutions finished the mission the Spanish could not complete. By the end of the 1890s, Chittendon persuaded Smythe that only the federal government could subjugate the rivers of the west, and thus Smythe reckoned that federal reclamation would be central to the creation of irrigation communities peopled by down-and-out American families.⁴⁴ Borrowing from his idol Horace Greeley, Smythe wrote in *The Conquest of Arid America* (1900): “Go West, young man! That is, if you are the *right* young man, with the Western temperament, and – if your wife is willing!”⁴⁵

Private interests, however, could not wait for the slow-moving federal government. In 1892, Engineer C.R. Rockwood, under the employ of the Colorado Irrigation Company, headed first to Yuma and later to the Imperial Valley to develop a scheme by which to irrigate lands

⁴² Edgar F. Howe and Wilbur J. Hall produced one of the first romantic histories of the Imperial Valley in 1910. Howe wrote that the building of the Imperial Valley was akin to “building a new Egypt.” Howe believed that like its African predecessor, the “empire in the Southwest” would be recognized as one of the great civilizations of the world. Edgar F. Howe, and Wilbur J. Hall, *The Story of the First Decade in Imperial Valley, California* (Imperial, CA: Edgar F. Howe & Sons, 1910), 176.

⁴³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Report of Irrigation Investigations in California* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), 327.

⁴⁴ After careful study of arguments put forth by men like Chittendon, irrigation lobbyist George E. Maxwell, and countless other men in the U.S. Geological Survey, Smythe concluded that it was the federal government – and not private enterprise – which had the wherewithal (and the capital) to undertake the gargantuan task of watering vast swaths of the arid west for American Civilization. Ibid., 114-115.

⁴⁵ For irrigation promoters, then, women and femininity could impede the civilizing mission. Real men, it seemed, went West to save themselves, their family, and their nation. Smythe, *Conquest of Arid America*, xxvi.

contiguous to the Colorado River.⁴⁶ Rockwood was to conceive of an irrigation project that crossed the southern international border and developed agriculture in both California and Baja California. The Colorado Irrigation Company's project, however, ended in September 1894 when the irrigation company's Board of Directors were accused by investors of "fraud, spurious issue of stock, and conversion... of large sums of money belonging to the company."⁴⁷ Rockwood, who had paid for the company's surveying out of pocket and had not been reimbursed nor paid for services rendered, filed a separate lawsuit. The suit eventually secured for Rockwood all the Colorado Irrigation Company's survey data.⁴⁸ With such valuable assets in hand, Rockwood moved forward with irrigation plans, joining forces with new financiers and engineers.⁴⁹

The Colorado Irrigation Company would be but one of many irrigation companies to form out west, and the leading irrigation company in the Imperial Valley at the turn of the century.⁵⁰ It was also a leading irrigation venture in Baja California after it began making

⁴⁶ C.R. Rockwood, "Early History of Imperial County," in *The History of Imperial County California*, ed. C.R. Rockwood (Berkeley: Elms and Franks, 1918), 97.

⁴⁷ According to one of the company's Canadian investors, Texan John C. Beatty, who was allegedly in control of 1,500,000 acres of land in Sonora, was to give up 500,000 acres of land in exchange for 50,000 shares of company stock. It never became clear if Beatty ever did as was required – he absconded to California, books in hand. Next, Beatty "established offices at Denver, Philadelphia, Washington, and other cities, where he issued prospectuses booming his land scheme and advertising for sale the stock of the company. He was evicted from his office, 66 Wall Street... in July last for non-payment of rent." "Director Beatty Accused of Fraud," *New York Times*, 11 September 1894.

⁴⁸ By the time of the September 1894 suit, Rockwood himself had become aware of Beatty's unscrupulous business dealings. Beatty, penniless due to the financial panic of 1893, had failed to pay Rockwood for his surveying of lands, yet Beatty continued to make promises to the engineer. In late 1893, Rockwood realized he had been dealing with a dishonest man with no money – Beatty could not even pay for the lunch-meeting he had set up with the engineer. Rockwood sued Beatty in early 1894. Rockwood, "Early History of Imperial County," 102-103.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 105-106.

⁵⁰ In the 1888 settlement between land barons Henry Miller and Charles Lux and the Kern County Land and Water Company, riparian rights, or the right to draw flowing river water upstream from another's property, were divided so that all interests would have intervals in which to draw from a given water source. As historian Kevin Starr writes, "The Wright Act and the resolution of *Lux v. Haggin* thus established the legal and political framework for hundreds of irrigation districts that would in the decades to come bring water to previously arid land" and transform "portions of Southern California into an agricultural empire." Kevin Starr, *California: A History* (New York: The Modern Library, 2005), 167-169; see also David Igler, *Industrial Cowboys: Miller & Lux and the Transformation of the Far West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

payments on an option for 100,000 acres of land owned by Guillermo Andrade, the Mexican consul at San Francisco. Rockwood and associates recognized that the Imperial Valley could not be irrigated unless a canal ran through the border and into Mexico, before re-crossing the international line. They also noted that they had to get around Mexican law, which prohibited foreign ownership of land and businesses along its northern border. Thus, the Colorado Irrigation Company entered into an agreement with Andrade and created a Mexican subsidiary named La Sociedad de Irrigación y Terrenos de la Baja California, S.A., or simply La Sociedad. Strapped for cash, Rockwood subsequently renegotiated their initial agreement with Andrade and gave the Mexican diplomat company stock as partial payment for the land optioned. The new deal had yet another stipulation, which was to have significant implications years into the future: the American company was required to make half of the water in the canal available to farmers south of the border.⁵¹

Throughout these dealings, Rockwood had to navigate California and federal laws, too. In the case of the latter, the War Department had to grant permission to divert water from the Colorado River because it was a navigable river under treaty with Mexico. Rather than attempt to comply with all laws, Rockwood and associates simply failed to notify American and Mexican governments of all their activities, thus making the entire project illegal. In 1896 Rockwood, in need of new funding for his proposed canal, teamed with engineers Anthony H. Heber and George Chaffey to form the California Development Company (CDC).⁵² The CDC was joined by other business interests, such as Chaffey's Imperial Land Company, established in 1900. The

⁵¹ Andrés, *Power and Control*, 13.

⁵² As Benny J. Andrés meticulously shows, the newly christened CDC was far from a smooth operation. Funding issues dogged the venture, as did infighting between Rockwood and Chaffey especially. Rockwood, distrusting and perhaps a bit jealous of Chaffey (who was considerably more accomplished and wealthy), continuously made moves which ultimately hurt the company. In time Chaffey was pushed out the door, only to re-emerge with the company Delta Investments, which owned all or parts of most Imperial Valley companies. Andrés, *Power and Control*, 14-17.


Imperial Land Company found ready investors like S.W. Fergusson, who as general manager was tasked with finding colonists for the company, which brought him into contact with many prospective homesteaders, including Reverend J.W. Shenk of Omaha, Nebraska. In August 1900, Fergusson pitched to Shenk that “Mr. Chaffey is a responsible man” who would “deliver the water by the first of January, 1901.”⁵³

Shenk and many others, lured by newspaper advertisements and promotional materials that promised a once-in-a-lifetime opportunities, including but not limited to the right to claim 320 acres of land per person “under the desert land law or homestead land law... liable to be repealed or unfavorably modified soon,” bought the sales pitch, and took up plots by filing paperwork through the United States Lands Office in Los Angeles (See Figure 3.1).⁵⁴ The Imperial Land Company was all too willing to assist prospective “settlers” (who did not have to live on the land), most of whom were white Midwesterners and easterners eager to make it out west. Historian Kevin Starr notes that these settlers were required to assign their mortgages to the Imperial Land Company as security for the stock, or assign the stock itself back to the company as security. Furthermore, settlers had to deed rights-of-way to the Imperial Land Company.⁵⁵

⁵³ Fergusson eventually became the Imperial Land Company’s general manager, and in that position promised Shenk and his sons a plot of land. After placing a deposit on land, Shenk became worried over the feasibility of the irrigation project, as well as potential for employment “along the coast.” Fergusson reassured Shenk on both fronts, going so far as to promise to secure the latter and one of his son’s jobs. S.W. Fergusson to Rev. J.W. Shenk, 11 April 1900, Folder 9, Box 452, Shenk Family Papers, California Library, Sacramento, CA (CL); S.W. Fergusson to Rev. J.W. Shenk, 15 May 1900, Folder 11, Box 452, Shenk Family Papers, CL; S.W. Fergusson to Rev. J.W. Shenk, 16 August 1900, Folder 23, Box 452, Shenk Family Papers, CL.

⁵⁴ The stipulations of the Homestead Act (1862) and Desert Land Act (1877) are critical to note, as it shaped the racial and ethnic composition of early 20th century Imperial Valley. The Homestead Act and its amended version, the Desert Land Act, extended generous land-granting terms only to citizens and those petitioning for naturalization. As a result, the overwhelmingly white majority (13,591 residents according to the 1910 census) held a distinct advantage from the 217 Japanese, 65 blacks, and 32 Chinese who lived in the Imperial Valley. The 1,461 ethnic Mexicans of the region, while legally white, were socially and politically “other.” “Government Lands Cheap Water in the Imperial Settlement,” *Imperial Valley Press*, 27 April 1901; Andrés, *Power and Control*, 51.

⁵⁵ Starr, *Material Dreams*, 26.



**THERE'S MONEY IN
THE SOIL**

The civilizations of Chaldea, Babylonia and Egypt were based upon a fertile soil, abundance of water and a warm climate.
That civilization was the wonder of the world.
No human being can predict the

**GLORIOUS FUTURE of the
IMPERIAL VALLEY**

THE RISE IN VALUES WILL BE STUPENDOUS.
We can only judge of the future by the past.
Acreage in the vicinity of Brawley went from
\$7.00 to \$400.00 in six years.
The ratio of increase on city lots was fully as great.

HORACE GREELY SAID:
"Go West Young Man."
SECRETARY WILSON SAID:
"Young Man Buy Land."
THEODORE ROOSEVELT SAID:
"Land in the Imperial Valley will be
worth \$1500 per acre."
HARRIMAN, "THE WIZARD" SAID:
"Young Man, Go to Imperial."

YOU CAN SAFELY FOLLOW THE ADVICE
OF THESE GREAT MEN.
NOW IT IS UP TO US to show you where you
can locate and make the most money.

Figure 3.1. Imperial Valley land promotion. Reproduced from Imperial Investment Co., *Listen! To What We Have to Say About the Imperial Valley*, c.1912. Courtesy of the Special Collections & Archives, University of California, San Diego.

Together, the CDC and Imperial Land Company would lay out the towns of Heber, Imperial, Brawley, Calexico, and Mexicali.⁵⁶ Also, Chaffey, believing the Colorado Desert moniker unappealing to potential American settlers, renamed the region Imperial Valley.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, irrigation and family farm champion Smythe permanently moved to San Diego in 1900 and quickly befriended many of the city's leading boosters, including department store owner George W. Marston and the city's Chamber of Commerce. Smythe, a pivotal figure in the early promotion of Greater San Diego, teamed with the Chamber of Commerce to develop a prospectus for the San Diego and Eastern Railroad, which was designed to make the dream of reclamation in the interior of California, the Imperial Valley included, reality.⁵⁸

As boosters in San Diego planned, Chaffey, aided by local Indian guides and workers, surveyed and dredged the lands of the valley. After yet another episode of financial controversy and infighting between the company's leaders, Chaffey brought controlled Colorado River waters to Baja California in November 1900. In April 1901, H.P. Wilson, the secretary for the San Diego Chamber of Commerce, publicly and confidently commented that Rockwood, Chaffey, and the CDC were going to "carry into effect the plans of Providence," and irrigate the Imperial Valley, making it possible for "thousands of people" to populate the land in decade's time.⁵⁹ Not long after Wilson's proclamation, under the scorching June sun of the Colorado

⁵⁶ Although it promoted settlement in the Imperial Valley to provide customers for the CDC, the Imperial Land Company was a legally distinct corporate entity. Kevin Starr, *Material Dreams: Southern California through the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 26; H.T. Cory, *The Imperial Valley and the Salton Sink* (San Francisco: John J. Newbegin, 1915), 1248-1262.

⁵⁷ Frederick D. Kershner, Jr., "George Chaffey and the Irrigation Frontier," *Agricultural History* 27 (Oct. 1953), 121.

⁵⁸ When he first arrived in San Diego, Smythe unsuccessfully ran for local public office on the platform of land, water, and agriculture marketing reform. Additionally, Smythe championed progressive ideals, as demonstrated by his later authorship of *Constructive Democracy* (1905). His politics thus gained him the ear of fellow progressives Marston, San Diego City Assessor Bishop J. Edmonds, W.H. Porterfield of the *San Diego Sun*, and various other prominent individuals, groups, and companies, including the CDC. Lawrence B. Lee, "William E. Smythe and San Diego, 1901-1908," *Journal of San Diego History* 19 (Winter 1973), 10-24; William E. Smythe, *Constructive Democracy: The Economics of a Square Deal* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1905).

⁵⁹ "The Colorado River," *Imperial Valley Press*, 20 April 1901.

Desert, the waters of the mighty Colorado River finally flowed into the Imperial Valley via the Alamo Canal.⁶⁰

Capital and engineering expertise, combined with the backbreaking labor of ethnic Mexicans, Indians, and other mostly itinerant workers who were brought in to build the canal, had seemingly subjugated the wild, powerful waters of the Colorado River. As the Charles F. Lummis-edited magazine *The Land of Sunshine* proclaimed, “the silence of desolation” in the Imperial Valley was broken “with voices of industry” to “make the barren waste blossom with all the beauties of Eden.”⁶¹ Wozencraft’s dream of an irrigated Colorado Desert, once derided by congressmen in Washington D.C., became a reality, propelling the former Indian Agent from fool to “a man with a vision.”⁶² Wozencraft had seemingly helped create, in the words of William E. Smythe, a “new Damascus... more beautiful than that of old,” complete with “Towns with schools, churches, banks, fine hotels, and all the conveniences of civilization.”⁶³

Marauders

Instead of finding themselves in an Eden with bountiful water, many early 20th century Anglo settlers, enticed by the sales pitches of colonization companies and land developers, found themselves in a precarious position. Their livelihood and future was heavily dependent on a controlled flow of water that proved scarce. As a result, small-scale farmers often pressed the

⁶⁰ Andrés, *Power and Control*, 16.

⁶¹ The magazine changed its name to *Out West* later in 1901. Under its new name, it continued to publish various articles and literary works by authors like Jack London and John Muir. Charles F. Lummis, ed., *The Land of Sunshine: The Magazine of California and the West*, Vol. XV: June 1901 to December 1901 (Los Angeles: Land of Sunshine Publishing Co., 1901), 292.

⁶² Margaret Romer, *A History of Calexico* (Los Angeles: Historical Society of Southern California, 1922), 7.

⁶³ Smythe, *Conquest of Arid America*, 152-159; for white yeoman farmer communities, see Eliza L. Martin, “Growth By the Gallon: Water, Development and Power in San Diego, California, 1890-1947,” (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Cruz, 2010), 16.

CDC for more water when levels were low, which was common.⁶⁴ In 1904, Rockwood and Heber sought to curb discontent by dredging a new fifty-foot-wide break in the riverbank in Mexican territory (without the Mexican government's approval). Not long after the Colorado River overwhelmed the man-made waterway, and by March 1905 the last and most catastrophic of three floods occurred, which forced Rockwood, in dire need of a new headgate, to ask for a loan from railroad mogul Harriman, who's Southern Pacific had nearby tracks threatened by floodwaters. According to historian Benny J. Andrés, in return for the loan Harriman gained "management control of the Alamo Canal, the right to sell water to farmers on both sides of the line, and 100,000 acres and other assets held by La Sociedad." The CDC, then, was beholden to the desires of the railroad company.⁶⁵

After months of engineering incompetence, Rockwood resigned and was replaced in July 1906 by the Southern Pacific's H.T. Cory, who ordered new track built to the Imperial Valley. Rock-filled dump cars, timber, coal, food and supplies were readily at hand, but workers were not. White workers, exhausted by the backbreaking and dangerous work and unwilling to press through the oppressive summer heat of the desert, quit. To fill the labor shortage, five hundred Mexican workers were contracted by the CDC, but the deal fell through. New arrangements for the importation of white and Mexican workers were made, however. White men were brought on to labor in a nearby quarry, and Alberto Andrade, son of Mexican consul Guillermo Andrade, supplied Mexican workers to work elsewhere. The Southern Pacific also contacted an Indian agent, who promptly entered local communities and ordered four hundred Indian men and their

⁶⁴ In 1903, "there were many complaints from the settlers about the scarcity of water." Some farmers threatened to sue the company for failing to provide any water. "Flood Formed Huge Lake," *Washington Post*, 24 October 1905; Sperry, "Imperial Valley Fought for Its Life," 7.

⁶⁵ In a 1915 court case between the flood-ruined New Liverpool Salt Company and the CDC, the California Supreme Court found that the Southern Pacific "exercised complete and absolute control and dominion over the California Development Company and over the Mexican Company." Andrés, *Power and Control*, 21; *Insurance & Trust Co. v. California Development Co., et al.*, 171 Cal. 173, 152 P.542, 10,

families to the irrigation worksite.⁶⁶ Cory claimed that indigenous workers were necessary since “white men, no matter how well acclimated” could not “work very hard” in the most physically demanding jobs in the valley. “Indian labor” he concluded, was “the only kind for that sort of work.”⁶⁷

To keep the poorly compensated and segregated Digueños, Cocopahs, and other indigenous workers from leaving, Cory turned to the Mexican *rurales*, or the rural police force of choice of the repressive Porfirio Díaz regime. As in other locales, the “corpsmen” (as one historian has termed the *rurales*) were tasked with enforcing capitalist development “law and order” in the work camp, which meant eliminating potentially damaging social activities.⁶⁸ In particular, *rurales* monitored alcohol consumption since inebriation affected worker productivity, and congregation for said activities had the potential to foster labor activism.⁶⁹ For the CDC, the surveillance was worth it. Commenting on *rurales*’ labor control, Cory declared: “This proved extremely efficient and satisfactory, and there was absolutely no disorder at any time.”⁷⁰

After two years of constant planning and labor, engineers and workers finally succeeded in stemming the floods of water entering the newly-created Imperial County, but changes in the

⁶⁶ Howe and Hall, *Story of the First Decade*, 116; Andrés, *Power and Control*, 23.

⁶⁷ Cory, *Irrigation and River Control*, 1330; for another early 20th century account of Indian labor during this period in the Imperial Valley, see Trout, *First Thirty Years*, 105.

⁶⁸ Paul J. Vanderwood writes: “The corpsmen went where economic development ordered them. Contingents rode the trains and manned railroad depots both to ensure order and security and to convince travelers and businessmen that Mexico was well-policed and safe. They also protected payrolls in transit, hustled factory hands to their machines, kept campesinos slashing cane, drove natives from productive land wanted for commercial development, and escorted dignitaries anywhere on request.” Historian Samuel Truett adds that the *rurales* were used by the Díaz regime to project modernity and maintain “law and order” in regions far from the central government. Paul J. Vanderwood, *Disorder and Progress: Bandits, Police, and Mexican Development*, Revised Edition (Wilmington, DE: SR Books 1992), 119; Samuel Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 138-139.

⁶⁹ Eliza L. Martin explains that early 20th century “white critics” in San Diego County viewed “drinking, gambling, and general carousing... [among Indians] as corrupting influences on their Indian charges.” Martin, “Growth by the Gallon,” 175.

⁷⁰ Cory, *Irrigation and River Control*, 1333.

region's development were already afoot.⁷¹ The irrigation scheme had created not just the Salton Sea, but also a plethora of foreclosures that deep-pocketed private interests – kept abreast of Imperial Valley news through personal updates from Smythe and reporting from the *San Diego Union* and *Los Angeles Times*, respectively – could take advantage of.⁷² In the years following the floods of 1905, wealthy individuals like San Diego's John D. Spreckels' and *Los Angeles Times* publisher Harrison Gray Otis continued to move through syndicates and fictitious homesteaders to purchase large expanses of Baja California land to form transnational enterprises like the sprawling California-Mexico Land and Cattle Company (C&M Ranch), a modern cattle and cotton-producing kingdom that effectively blurred the international border.⁷³ In certain cases, business interests sold or leased Mexican land to, among others, immigrant Japanese and South Asian tenants legally barred from owning land in California.⁷⁴ Asian tenants on both sides of the international border would manage farms, but the absentee landlords would collect most, if not all, the profits.⁷⁵

⁷¹ After a hastily held referendum conducted when “the majority of the Valley's residents were over on the [San Diego] coast cooling off,” the Imperial Valley separated from San Diego County in 1907, becoming Imperial County. William O. Hendricks, “Developing San Diego's Desert Empire,” *Journal of San Diego History* 17 (Summer 1971), 10.

⁷² Lawrence B. Lee, “William E. Smythe and San Diego, 1901-1908,” *Journal of San Diego History* 19 (Winter 1973), 20-22.

⁷³ Andrés, *Power and Control*, 43.

⁷⁴ All Asian immigrants were not tenant farmers or farm workers. As Selfa A. Chew explains, for example, of the 11,000 Japanese immigrants who entered Mexico between 1901 and 1907, 8,706 of them were contract laborers who worked everywhere from the henequen fields of the Yucatán to the coal mines of Baja California. Additionally, some Japanese immigrants opened transnational businesses. For instance, Seiji Kondo operated a San Diego-based fishing company that hired Mexican employees and brought fishermen from Japan to catch and pack tuna and abalone in Ensenada, Baja California. Selfa A. Chew, *Uprooting Community: Japanese Mexicans, World War II, and the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015), 34-35, 39.

⁷⁵ The leasing of land to Asian groups concerned California Senator James D. Phelan, who realized that Harrison Chandler, the son-in-law and heir to the Otis empire, actively attempted to sell Mexican land to Japanese business interests in the 1910s. Senator Phelan, an ardent proponent of Japanese exclusion who helped push through California's original Alien Land Law in 1913, feared Japanese and “hybrids,” or mixed race Asians, were threatening the security of the United States by surreptitiously entering the United States via the U.S.-Mexico border. U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Administration of Immigration Laws: Hearings before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization*, 66th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1920, especially “Japanese Immigration.” For analyses of the Alien Land Law, which barred persons ineligible for citizenship from owning land, and its legal and social effects on Japanese and Asian immigrant communities, see

The newspaper magnates of San Diego and Los Angeles were joined by the banker brothers William and Leroy Holt, who created their own colonizing and irrigation companies and persuaded their employer, the Bank of Italy, to extend loans to family farmers of the valley.⁷⁶ The bank, which flourished in part due to the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fires (and later changed its name to Bank of America), foreclosed on tens of thousands of acres of land once small-scale farmers could no longer meet their financial obligations.⁷⁷ Harriman and the Southern Pacific amassed vast amounts of land in similar fashion, which allowed Harriman to team with Spreckels to begin work on a railroad to connect San Diego with its corresponding countryside and to markets to the east.⁷⁸ The Southern Pacific then secured government assistance months before Francisco I. Madero called for revolution in Mexico, as Congress appropriated \$1 million for new levees in Baja California.⁷⁹ “Progress,” then, brought more workers to the Imperial Valley – first to build infrastructure, then to harvest corporate farms’ crops.

Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California, and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 46-64; Karen Leonard, “Punjabi Farmers and California’s Alien Land Law,” *Agricultural History* 59 (Oct. 1985): 549-562; Elichiro Azuma, “Japanese Immigrant Farmers and California Alien Land Laws: A Study of the Walnut Grove Community,” *California History* 73 (Spring 1994), 14-29; Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 40-49.

⁷⁶ In an early effort to gain control of the CDC, William F. Holt, who was the president of the Imperial Valley Water Users Association, petitioned the Reclamation Service to acquire the ailing irrigation company. Harriman’s loan to Holt prevented Holt from acquiring the irrigation company. Imperial Valley Water Users Association, *Reply of the Imperial Valley Water Users Association to the Report Made to the Honorable Secretary of the Interior by the Reclamation Bureau, which Said Report is Dated October 1, 1904* (n.p., 1904); Andrés, *Power and Control*, 21.

⁷⁷ Up until 1906, San Francisco’s Bank of Italy served mostly immigrant groups discriminated against by larger American banks. The bank’s clientele broadened following an earthquake and subsequent firestorms, which ultimately destroyed approximately 80% of the northern California city. However, Amadeo Pietro Giannini, the bank’s founder, successfully saved the institution’s funds before the building they were housed in was destroyed by flames. With other banks slowed, if not ravaged, Giannini’s Bank of Italy filled a lending void. For the Bank of Italy, natural disaster, then, led to financial opportunity in both northern and southern California. Philip L. Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 97-99.

⁷⁸ Lee, “William E. Smythe and San Diego,” 21.

⁷⁹ Andrés, *Power and Control*, 26.

By the second decade of the 20th century, the Holt brothers, the Southern Pacific, and other like-minded boosters and business interests controlled various Imperial Valley land and water companies, the Imperial Irrigation District (a board with city or county-like powers to issue bonds, condemn property, and purchase water), the Imperial County board of supervisors, and other important civic bodies and functions.⁸⁰ Boosters and business interests also controlled the local press, which because agribusiness required labor peace, discredited any working class activism. Unsurprisingly, when anarcho-syndicalist *insurrectos* like Fernando Palomares and an “anarchist” small-scale farmer known simply as Edwards denounced the land-acquiring tactics of business interests, and then attempted to establish a “socialist dream” immediately across the international line in Baja California, the Holt-owned *Imperial Valley Press* painted them as agitators who “ignored the natives” of Mexico.⁸¹ The El Centro newspaper consistently declared *insurrectos* “bands of marauders” who sought to steal mules, forcibly take supplies, and damage irrigation and dam sites in the name of socialist revolution.⁸² As Benny J. Andrés notes, business interests deemed leftists a threat to the economic growth of the Imperial Valley who, like the Colorado River, needed to be subjugated.⁸³

⁸⁰ Ibid., 47.

⁸¹ Some subsistence farmers like Edwards, only marginally materially better off than itinerant farm workers, assisted anarcho-syndicalist revolutionaries. They were consistently in danger of losing their land to companies like the CDC. The *Imperial Valley Press*, founded by the publicity agent for the Imperial Land Company and CDC and eventually purchased by William F. Holt in 1905, left out this detail. “Mexican Revolt a Socialist Dream,” *Imperial Valley Press*, 11 March 1911; “The Mexican Turmoil,” *Imperial Valley Press*, 18 March 1911; Jesus González Monroy, *Ricardo Flores Magón y su actitud en la Baja California* (Mexico: Editorial Academia Literaria, 1962), 43; Finis C. Farr, ed., *The History of Imperial County, California* (Berkeley: Elms and Franks, 1918), 220.

⁸² “The Mexican Turmoil,” *Imperial Valley Press*, 18 March 1911; “Insurrecto Raiders,” *Imperial Valley Press*, 8 April 1911. The newspaper’s loaded reference to “marauders” would not have been lost on its readership, who would have easily linked the *insurrecto* movement with the activities of various Indian groups, races, and other revolutionary groups. One article, for instance, connected a “short, sturdy, low-browed, flat-faced villain of negroid aspect” to both the 1910 bombing of the Los Angeles Times Building, and disturbances on the C&M Ranch. “Times Dynamiter Bowker’s Engineer,” *Imperial Valley Press*, 11 March 1911; see also Nicole M. Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Karl Jacoby, *Shadows At Dawn: A Borderlands Massacre and the Violence of History* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008); Elliot Young, *Catarino Garza’s Revolution on the Texas-Mexico Border* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 141.

⁸³ Andrés, *Power and Control*, 28.

Once the Baja California revolution was defeated, Imperial Valley boosters and business interests' concerns of leftist agitation in the 1910s lessened but did not end, as demonstrated in several anti-radical worker incidents. Boosters forcibly removed Wobbly Isabel Fierro from Calexico in 1911, and then burned down IWW Local 439's hall in Brawley in early 1912.⁸⁴ Echoing the events of the San Diego Free Speech Fight of 1912, in 1914 the Calexico police arrested seven Wobbly organizers for soapboxing, and then deported them from Imperial County. The Wobblies technically violated an ordinance which prohibited street speaking without a permit; the actual crime, however, was Wobblies' attempt to organize Imperial Valley agricultural workers. To further disrupt leftist organizing, agribusiness interests instigated confrontations with several workers. For instance, in the town of Imperial, agribusiness interests and leftist workers broke out into a fight. Twenty-three unionists were arrested for disturbing the peace, while anti-leftists were left alone. Left-leaning workers were still undeterred. A year later, back in Brawley, the IWW posted Spanish-language billboards throughout the town, bringing attention to the region's low wages and high cost of living. Imperial Valley dailies responded by labeling the IWW a criminal organization.⁸⁵

After relentless anti-leftist press and the outbreak of revolution in Russia in 1917, Imperial Valley's conservative and moderate union members – almost always whites tolerated by agribusiness – helped lead the anti-radical worker charge by demanding “reds” leave town or face imprisonment or, worse yet, a lynching.⁸⁶ Although this appears to be an example of workers acting against their own interest, such an interpretation fails to acknowledge the importance of race in the Imperial Valley's workplaces. During this war-time period, pro-

⁸⁴ “Burn I.W.W. Hall; Run Members Into Jail,” *Regeneración*, 13 January 1912.

⁸⁵ Starr, *Endangered Dreams*, 34-50; Andrés, *Power and Control*, 129-130.

⁸⁶ “U.S. Soldiers Raid I.W.W. Headquarters,” *Los Angeles Herald*, 11 August 1917; Andrés, *Power and Control*, 130.

business white shed workers, managers, and unions displayed a “possessive investment in whiteness” since a white identity carried with it a host of privileges and benefits, including better work positions, conditions, and wages. For their part, absentee landowners and employers promoted a racially segmented work site by using differentiated labor recruitment, hiring, wage scaling, and management.⁸⁷ The Imperial Valley was at the forefront in the modern production of racial difference that supported national and capitalist development.⁸⁸ Profits, then, could be maximized with a divided and exploitable working class that continued to grow in number.

Imported Bodies

Business interests in the valley required a docile labor force to maintain the astonishing growth of agribusiness. Elizabeth E. Sine notes that between 1910 and 1930, “the amount of cultivated farmland within the Imperial Valley expanded more than fivefold, from roughly 76,000 acres to over 400,000 acres.” Machine-harvested crops like hay, barley, and cotton and labor-intensive crops like melons, citrus, peas, lettuce, asparagus, tomatoes, sugar beets, and many other fruits and vegetables were grown throughout the region.⁸⁹ On a trip to Southern California in June 1919, the president of the Utah-based Deseret National Bank (and former governor of Utah) commented on the Imperial Valley’s impressive volume of business in booming cities like Los Angeles, noting that business interests had “sold four million dollars’ worth of cantaloupes,” with more to follow. The banking executive concluded that for

⁸⁷ Historian Greg Hall notes that up until World War I “white agricultural workers could be found in almost any agricultural enterprise in California, and accounted for the simple majority of farm laborers in the state.” This, however, changed during and after the war in Europe. The white workers who remained were increasingly delegated more desirable positions like packing shed and managerial jobs. Hall, *Harvest Wobblies*, 36; George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*, Revised Edition (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); Sine, “Grassroots Multiracialism,” 234.

⁸⁸ Roediger and Esch, *Production of Difference*, 193-204; Sine, “Grassroots Multiracialism,” 235.

⁸⁹ Sine, “Grassroots Multiracialism,” 233.

agribusiness to grow yet more, Imperial Valley business interests had to import “a limited number of Chinese... for farm labor to make up the [labor shortage] deficiency.”⁹⁰

Perhaps unfamiliar with trends in California’s agribusiness, the former governor of Utah did not note the racial and ethnic makeup of agricultural labor had already shifted. Although there were instances when Imperial Valley agribusiness interests preferred Chinese workers since the latter’s low numbers posed less of a risk to organize, from 1910 to 1920, Filipinos and, increasingly, ethnic Mexicans were generally the main workers of choice.⁹¹ According to the California governor’s Mexican Fact-Finding Committee of 1930, the number of Mexican nationals in the region increased from 1,461 in 1910 to 6,414 in 1920.⁹² Such figures were likely

⁹⁰ It is worth noting that for Utah banker John C. Cutler, the rise of agribusiness had another effect: the Americanization of immigrants. As he toured Southern California, Cutler noticed that “foreigners” tended to own and/or operate small businesses, including groceries. Cutler noted that these immigrants were predisposed to an American identity, stating, “The industry and frugality of the keepers of these stores is especially noticeable, and the feeling is that if they have not become American citizens a strong effort should be made to have them naturalized, as many of them are doubtless the millionaires of the future; they keep open their places of business from 7 a.m. until 10 and 11 p.m., they don’t ask for eight hour days, they only want their freedom to work as they wish.” For Cutler, then, “Americans” worked extremely long hours without complaint – a contrast to the disruptive, “un-American” worker that demanded concessions like an eight-hour work day. When he himself could no longer work long hours due to terminal illness, Cutler shot himself in the head. “Business Booms on the Pacific Coast,” *The Deseret Evening News*, 23 June 1919; “Utah Ex-Governor Suicide,” *New York Times*, 31 July 1928.

⁹¹ The Mexican Revolution hampered growers well past the Baja California revolution of 1911. William Brandenburg, a cotton grower in Baja California, expressed to the *Imperial Valley Press* in 1913 that he preferred to employ Mexican pickers, “but the revolutionary conditions in Mexico” made it impossible. To deal with this issue – as well as to mitigate revolutionary sentiment within the labor camps – several landowners imported Chinese “by the carload... to work in [Mexican workers’] places.” By May 1916, Baja California’s governor was importing “Orientals” and Mexicans from Sonora, in addition to southern blacks and other workers from Los Angeles and San Diego. The number of Chinese in the Imperial Valley remained low, however. One of economist Paul S. Taylor’s interviewees stated that there were only four or five Chinese farm workers in the Imperial Valley in 1929. Taylor notes from Imperial Valley Press, Folder 10, Carton 10, Taylor Papers, BANC; Hong Chong, McCabe Corners, Imperial Valley 1929, Folder 5, Carton 10, Taylor Papers, BANC.

⁹² Tomás Almaguer has demonstrated that the racialization of industrial farm work in Southern California can be traced to the second half of the 19th century. Following the Mexican-American War at mid-century, in California generally, race “became the main organizing principle of group relations,” extending into the fields. Historian Neil Foley’s study of race and labor relations in cotton-producing central Texas during the same period highlights that ethnic Mexicans were racialized in other parts of the Southwest too. In central Texas, ethnic Mexicans did not always occupy the lowest rung in the social and economic ladder, but they did occupy a middle ground inferior to Anglo Americans and superior to blacks. By the early 20th century, lower-level farm work became synonymous with “Mexican work.” Charles Wollenberg, “Huelga, 1928 Style: The Imperial Valley Cantaloupe Workers’ Strike,” *Pacific Historical Review* 38 (Feb. 1969), 47; *Mexicans in California Report of Governor C.C. Young’s Mexican Fact-Finding Committee* (State Building, San Francisco, 1930), 46; Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California*, 2009 Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 75-104; Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture*

an undercount given the mobility of the ethnic Mexican population. Indeed, historian Charles Wollenberg estimated the number of ethnic Mexican living in the Imperial Valley during the given period to be closer to 20,000 persons, of which many toiled on farms.⁹³

Continued unrest in Mexico, coupled with federal legislation, only spurred further Mexican migration in the 1920s.⁹⁴ Immigration historian Mae M. Ngai asserts that restrictive immigration policies like the Immigration Act of 1924, which reinforced quotas on European and Asian immigrants and hardened the nation's geopolitical borders, "served the interests of agribusiness" by facilitating the entrance of an "alien" and more easily exploitable workforce of brown bodies. During the 1920s Mexicans and Filipinos, who were exempted from the origins quotas due to agribusiness pressures and law (Filipinos were nationals of the United States and therefore exempt from quotas), filled agricultural jobs once held by now barred Asian immigrants.⁹⁵ Since Chinese immigration had significantly slowed, and since Filipinos were increasingly viewed as rebellious workers who felt entitled to "American" wages, growers drew

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), especially chapter three; see also David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).

⁹³ Wollenberg claims "the great bulk" of the Mexican population – both Mexican Americans and Mexican nationals – in the Imperial Valley were field workers. Wollenberg's population figures are higher because Imperial Valley did have a significant number of permanent residents of Mexican descent. Wollenberg, "Huelga," 47.

⁹⁴ Ventura Martínez, a Brawley grocery storekeeper who had arrived in the Imperial Valley from Guanajuato in the early stages of the Mexican Revolution, noted that "unrest" plagued Mexico well into the late 1920s. Martínez explained that though he was relatively better off than most ethnic Mexicans in the Imperial Valley, he longed to return home. He claimed that he would do so once the situation in Mexico settled down. Mr. Ventura Martínez, Grocery storekeeper, J St., Brawley, May 16, 1927, Folder 13, Carton 10, Taylor Papers, BANC.

⁹⁵ Ngai points out that the Immigration Act of 1924 was not the country's first piece of restrictive immigration legislation, as Congress had enacted several laws that barred Asians, anarchists, paupers, and other undesirable groups in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Indeed, only three years earlier Congress passed the Emergency Quota Act, which historian John Higham called "the most important turning-point in American immigration policy" for its ambition to shape the racial and ethnic composition of the country, and, ultimately, limit the influence of the foreign-born. The Emergency Quota Act limited worldwide immigration, capping immigrants from a given country to an annual 3% of the residents from the same country living in the United States as of 1910. The Immigration Act of 1924 went a step further by both lowering the annual percentage to 2%, and using population figures from the census of 1890. By using the earlier year, lawmakers were significantly lowering the number of southern and eastern Europeans admitted into the United States. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 3 and 103; John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*, 2002 Edition (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 311; see also Rudy P. Guevarra Jr., *Becoming Mexipino: Multiethnic Identities and Communities in San Diego* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 14-15.

more heavily from Mexican migrant flows. Business interests reasoned that Mexican nationals could not make all the claims on the state that could be made by American nationals and citizens.⁹⁶ As a result, approximately 62,000 legal and about 100,000 undocumented immigrants from Mexico were employed by American growers during the 1920s.⁹⁷

These migrations significantly impacted the Imperial Valley's social landscape. J.M. Davis, a researcher who travelled to the Imperial Valley in 1924 to assess the region's race relations, observed that the influx of Mexican and Filipino farm workers pushed Chinese and Japanese to an intermediary position between the new arrivals and white owners of large-scale farms. Indeed, since the early colonization days of the Imperial Valley, Japanese and Chinese families, as well as some "Hindus" and "poor white trash from Texes (sic)," were becoming tenant farmers and, particularly in the case of Chinese, store owners. As migrations continued and amplified, these older migrant groups moved a step above ethnic Mexicans and Filipinos in the socioeconomic order, but still beholden to "outside capital."⁹⁸ Boosters and business interests would attempt to exploit this minute difference during the Great Depression.

Imperial Valley growers of all backgrounds took advantage of a far-reaching rail network, the waters of the Colorado River, and a winter-to-spring growing season to deliver

⁹⁶ One Fresno, California report stated that Filipinos tended "to ask for more wages than the Mexicans." This reputation undoubtedly spread throughout California's industrial farms. Woman Secretary at Fresno Farms Company, Kerman, California, September 10, 1928, Folder 8, Carton 10, Taylor Papers, BANC; Sine, "Grassroots Multiculturalism," 237.

⁹⁷ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 131.

⁹⁸ The Imperial Valley's high overall tenancy rate, in addition to the high tenancy rate of non-whites, contrasted significantly with the relatively low tenancy rates (roughly 20%) of the far fewer and smaller San Diego County farms. The San Diego County report created by George Gleason reads: "There are 391 native white tenants farming in San Diego County and 114 foreign born tenants. Negroes and other non-white tenants, 141. The number of farms operated by tenants is approximately 20%, 80% are operated by owners or managers. Tenancy has never been and is not a problem in this county. Most of the lessees have demonstrated their fitness to successfully manage and farm the leased premises and as a rule are acceptable to the community at large." J.M. Davis, *Report of Visit of J.M. Davis to Imperial County, October 7 to 9, 1924*, Folder 5, Box 18, Survey of Race Relations, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA (HIA); G. Gleason, *Report of Visit of G. Gleason to San Diego County, September 2, 1924*, Folder 9, Box 18, Survey of Race Relations, HIA; Hong Chong, McCabe Corners, Taylor Papers, BANC.

many of the goods on offer to Southern California visitors like Utah banker Cutler and literary critic and journalist Edmund Wilson. Drought-tolerant crops like cotton, melons, peas, and lettuce not only made it to markets like Los Angeles and San Diego, but also to those far off. Lettuce, for instance, was sent to Montreal, Canada at a time of year when such crops were rare.⁹⁹ Thus, industrial farms in the Imperial Valley took advantage of the cheap and abundant supply of brown-skinned workers flooding into California to meet demand and generate yet more profit.¹⁰⁰ The federal government assisted them in such endeavors through a contract-labor program initiated in 1917 and lasting until 1922. The *Los Angeles Herald* reported: “Five thousand Mexican laborers who have been working in the beet fields of Southern California are to be transferred to Imperial valley (sic), where cotton picking and corn harvesting is in progress, according to an executive order issued by the federal immigration department.”¹⁰¹

Many of the ethnic Mexicans who traveled to the Imperial Valley – and Greater San Diego in general – from other southwestern states and Mexico were single men, but it was rather common to see married men among the migrant ranks, too. If these men were not accompanied by their families on the journey, their loved ones joined them shortly thereafter. For instance,

⁹⁹ Matt García points to the advantage of the Imperial Valley’s early growing season, as corporate farms could secure an adequate labor supply with little competition. When the Imperial Valley season ended, migrant workers moved on elsewhere, only to return to the valley again, thus continuing the farm work cycle. United States Department of Agriculture reports highlight the various North American destinations of the Imperial Valley’s crops. For instance, from 1922 to 1925, though a significant number of the Imperial Valley’s lettuce shipments went to growing and industrial American cities like Los Angeles, Chicago, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a notable number of shipments were destined for Canadian cities like Winnipeg, Manitoba, Toronto, and Montreal. Matt García, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 14; C.E. Schultz, “Summary of the Imperial Valley Lettuce Deal, Season 1924-1925,” in United States Agricultural Marketing Administration, *Marketing Imperial Valley Lettuce, 1924-1932* (Sacramento: Bureau of Agricultural Economics, 1938), 27-30.

¹⁰⁰ Southern blacks migrated to the Imperial Valley in small numbers, too. They, like Asians, were hired as tenant farmers. Several were cotton farmers and cotton laborers. Letter to T.F. Hunt, undated, Folder 5, Box 18, Survey of Race Relations, HIA.

¹⁰¹ The first Mexican guest worker, or Bracero, program was made possible when Congress passed the restrictive Immigration Act of 1917. The law contained a provision that granted entry to temporary workers from the Western Hemisphere. In May 1917, the Secretary of Labor exempted unskilled Mexican farmworkers. Also under this immigration law, radical leftists were further targeted and subjected to deportation. “5000 Laborers to Go to Imperial,” *Los Angeles Herald*, 6 November 1917; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 59.

Sonoran José Portillo arrived in Brawley via Arizona in 1913, where he became a part-time trucker and from March to May of every year, trekked northward to Stockton, California to shear sheep. Although it pained Portillo to leave his family in one of Imperial County's burgeoning Mexican *barrios*, doing so allowed him to earn a bit more money for subsistence.¹⁰²

Barrios, or Mexican enclaves formed as a result of social and legal segregation, poverty, and relative proximity to work sites, were both helpful and perilous to all newcomers, including single Mexican women with few connections and in need of work. Margarito C.L. Ruíz, a leading ethnic Mexican in Brawley, noted that 35 prostitutes lived on one half block, each woman "arrested regularly each month and fined \$50.00 for plying her trade in the city limits and publicly soliciting on the streets." Although a clear majority of the *barrio's* residents did not condone such activities, local law enforcement allowed the practice to continue since the fines helped line their pockets. However, when factoring in the size of the ethnic Mexican population, it is reasonable to conclude that few ethnic Mexican women were involved in the sex industry.¹⁰³ Women like Inés Amescua arrived in Imperial Valley towns like Brawley and generally found domestic or agricultural work with the assistance of local *mutualistas*, or mutual aid societies. *Mutualistas* also helped ethnic Mexican newcomers establish local connections and acclimate them to cultural norms in the United States by screening films and playing music at social

¹⁰² Demonstrating both the size and permanency of the ethnic Mexican community in the Imperial Valley, eight Mexican schools served the region by the 1920s. Ricardo Portillo, H St. Brawley, Folder 13, Container 10, Taylor Papers, BANC; Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold*, 55.

¹⁰³ Ruíz, who acted as a guide for white liberal visitors to the Imperial Valley who were concerned with poverty in the region, was not particularly clear as to the racial and ethnic composition of Brawley's prostitutes. The report suggests that some ethnic Mexican women were prostitutes, but does not rule out that other ethnoracial groups were represented. Similarly, no mention is made as to who solicited prostitutes. It is possible, if not likely, that clientele cut across ethnoracial and class lines. "Report of Tour in Brawley," April 29, 1935, Folder 16, Carton 15, Taylor Papers, BANC.

gatherings, among other services.¹⁰⁴ The resilience and community-building aspects of the *barrios*, then, were positives for ethnic Mexicans.

The circuitous paths to Southern California for Amescua and the Portillos were, as for so many others, risky and even dangerous. In certain instances, such journeys were potentially deadly due to the harsh and unforgiving geography of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands. For example, in late November 1922, 82 Mexican men, women, and children in route from Mazatlán to the cotton fields of the Mexicali Valley drowned at the mouth of the Colorado River in Baja California.¹⁰⁵ These Mexican nationals, like many others before and after them, would have likely crossed the international line into the Imperial Valley to pick cotton or harvest any one of the many other crops grown in the region.¹⁰⁶

For the thousands of ethnic Mexicans promised a better future in the Imperial Valley in the 1920s and into the 1930s, the risk was well worth it.¹⁰⁷ In his study on Mexican and Filipino race relations in 20th century San Diego, historian Rudy P. Guevarra Jr. explains, “The chance to live free from war, earn a living, and provide their children with school was more than enough to entice many Mexicans to migrate north to the United States.”¹⁰⁸ Their dreams would run headlong into the long-held aspirations, demands, and prejudices of boosters and business

¹⁰⁴ The Miguel Hidalgo Society in Imperial Valley owned few items, but of those few was a “moving motion picture machine.” Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold*, 58; Kathryn Cramp, *Study of the Mexican Population of the Imperial Valley, California* (New York Committee on Farm and Cannery Migrants, Council of Women for Home Missions, 1926), 14.

¹⁰⁵ The article is unclear as to where exactly the Mexican migrant workers were headed, reporting that the Mexican nationals were going to the cotton fields of northern Baja California, or the “Imperial Valley.” The paper likely meant the Mexicali Valley directly across the international border. “82 Mexicans Drown When Ship Is Sunk,” *Madera Tribune*, 20 November 1922.

¹⁰⁶ According to economist Paul S. Taylor, Imperial Valley’s Mexican cotton pickers “probably drifted across the border.” Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States: Imperial Valley*, Vol. 6 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1928), 13.

¹⁰⁷ Taylor tabulated that about 20,000 ethnic Mexican farm workers toiled in the valley. About half of these farmworkers were born in the United States. *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁰⁸ Guevarra, *Becoming Mexipino*, 19; see also Richard Griswold del Castillo, “From Revolution to Economic Depression,” in *Chicano San Diego: Cultural Space and the Struggle for Justice*, ed. Richard Griswold del Castillo (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 79-81.

interests of the Imperial Valley. Ethnic Mexican farm workers, however, found ways to struggle against the world created by agribusiness. For some workers, one means of challenging the power and control of Imperial Valley boosters and business interests was by tapping into a radical leftist tradition that allowed for a (re-)crossing of racial, ethnic, national, and linguistic lines of division.

“Young Red Revolution”

Economist Paul S. Taylor and his wife, photojournalist Dorothea Lange, diligently captured the difficult lives lived by California agribusiness’s multiracial and multi-ethnic workforce, which had formed due to continued immigration, the crash of the world economy, and the arrival of “dried out” and destitute farming families of the ravaged Midwest and South.¹⁰⁹ Although perhaps best known for her 1936 photograph of “Okie” mother Florence Owens Thompson – a migrant agricultural worker who had toiled in the Imperial Valley – Lange also produced images of many non-white farm workers for the New Deal’s Farm Security Administration (FSA). As a federal employee, Lange attempted to demonstrate that the country’s rural whites and non-whites were in many cases not divided by experiences – an exhausted Imperial Valley ethnic Mexican farm worker differed little from the wearied Thompson.¹¹⁰ The photojournalist understood that all migrant farm workers, regardless of racial

¹⁰⁹ The Council of Women for Home Missions, a coalition of Protestant groups engaged in missionary work in the United States, reported on the diversity of California’s farm workers. By the 1930s, Mexicans, Filipinos, Chinese, and eastern and southern European agricultural workers were joined by “native” Americans who had previously “refused to work in the fields.” The religious organization explained, “Recently, however, ‘dried out’ and ‘blown out’ families of the ‘Dust Bowl’ – Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Mississippi, and Texas – have joined the migratory group, pouring into California in droves because of its year-round crops and its climate.” Edith E. Lowry, ed., *Migrants of the Crops: They Starve That We May Eat* (New York: Council of Women for Home Missions and Missionary Education Movement, 1938), 13.

¹¹⁰ An “Okie” was a pejorative term for a white migrant agricultural worker from Great Depression-era Dust Bowls of Oklahoma, Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas, and Texas. Although some Okies, including Thompson, were settled farmers, many who arrived in California in the mid-1930s were veteran migrant workers. Commenting on white cotton workers, Devra Weber explains, “Since the nineteenth century [Okies] had been migrating in response to the ebbs and flows of cotton production; moving was a familiar, if not welcome, way of life.” Dorothea Lange, “Imperial Valley Mexican,” March 1935, LNG35036.1, Dorothea Lange Collection, Oakland Museum of California

and ethnic background or national origin, were caught in a system predicated on agribusiness-backed and reified inequality, yet all had the power to overcome if given proper state assistance. However, Lange's anti-racist views, which historian Linda Gordon claims were "conscious, considered, and consistent," were not held by all New Deal employees.¹¹¹

For instance, workers for the Federal Writers' Project – a New Deal program designed to fund and support writers, historians, teachers, librarians and other professionals during the Great Depression – descended upon the Imperial Valley in 1938 and wrote:

Docile by nature, placed at a disadvantage of being in a foreign land, and handicapped by a lack of ability to speak English, the Mexican farm worker, for approximately 80 years, remained unorganized. Largely of Indian blood, with a history of bondage, illiteracy, suppression and poverty for 400 years, they were unquestionably submissive to authority; their ignorance and simplicity leaving them dazed in our civilization and easy prey to exploiters.¹¹²

Unsurprisingly, federal writers identified valley business interests among the Mexican worker's "exploiters." Perhaps more noteworthy, however, the Federal Writers' Project identified leftist labor groups as "exploiters" of ethnic Mexican farm workers too. "Lacking any organization through which he could seek to better his condition," they reported, "the Mexican lived under the most wretched conditions and became easy prey to agitators... Communists seized upon the opportunity to organize these workers."¹¹³

(OMC); Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold*, 140; for "Okies" in California and Imperial Valley, see Starr, *Endangered Dreams*, 224-226.

¹¹¹ In a careful examination of Lange and the FSA, Linda Gordon explains that Lange, Paul S. Taylor, and the predominantly Jewish photographers of the liberal FSA "not only challenged an entire agricultural political economy, but tried to illustrate the racial system in which it operated – a system it also reinforced." Although the FSA officially endorsed the (white) family farm ideal, Lange and Taylor recognized that while favored, such an ideal could hardly become a reality in California due to the power of agribusiness. Weary of both the appeal of communism and the influence of big business farming, Lange and Taylor sought to alleviate the plight of destitute migrant farm workers by providing federally funded housing. Before the FSA erected its handful of labor camps, migrant workers rented from large growers (at exorbitant fees) or lived in squatter's camps. Ultimately, Lange and Taylor's successes were severely limited, as most migrant workers were not serviced by the FSA. Linda Gordon, "Dorothea Lange: The Photographer as Agricultural Sociologist," *Journal of American History* 93 (Dec. 2006), 722.

¹¹² Federal Writers' Project, "Organization of Mexican Agricultural Workers," in *A Documentary History of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, edited by Raymond P. Barry (Oakland: Federal Writers Project, 1938), 1.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

In one passage, then, federal writers were both sympathetic to the perilous situation faced by ethnic Mexican workers, and yet dismissive of said workers. Ethnic Mexicans were rendered products of a different era, passive victims of civilized progress and incapable of shaping their lived lives in the Imperial Valley. Federal writers, armed with prejudices of their own, failed to take note of the active role many ethnic Mexicans played in challenging the valley's boosters and their business interests. The independent organizing activities of ethnic Mexicans went unacknowledged, as did some ethnic Mexican farm workers' voluntary affiliations with leftists.¹¹⁴ As communist organizer Dorothy Ray (later Ray Healey) recalled, many ethnic Mexican farm workers were not strict adherents of communist "revolutionary rhetoric," but rather pragmatists who turned to communists like herself because more conservative labor unions largely ignored them.¹¹⁵ But to boosters and business interests, most unionizing ethnic Mexicans were viewed as threats to the profit-making enterprise they maneuvered to establish. To profit-seekers, organized ethnic Mexican farm workers were the active vanguard of "young red revolution."¹¹⁶

1928

In April 1928, six years after a small union briefly operated in Brawley's cantaloupe fields, Filemon González, president of Imperial Valley's Sociedad Benito Juárez, a Mexican

¹¹⁴ Historians have at times been guilty of ignoring Imperial Valley's ethnic Mexicans' voluntary affiliations with leftist organizations as well. For instance, one study of Depression-era labor disturbances in the valley asserted that communist organizers "entered the Imperial Valley in California to assume control of a spontaneous strike of Mexican and Filipino lettuce pickers." While communist organizations did seek to achieve some of their goals, in practice ethnic Mexicans generally only adopted what was expedient for them. James Gray, "The American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California and Imperial Valley Agricultural Disturbances: 1930, 1934" (PhD diss., University of California – Los Angeles, 1966), 24.

¹¹⁵ I have chosen to identify Dorothy Ray Healey as she was known during the Imperial Valley strikes: Dorothy Ray. However, references are cited as they appear in their respective archives. Dorothy Healey, interviewed by Joel Gardner, 10 October 1972, Tape II, Side One, Center for Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles (COHR); Dorothy Ray Healey, interviewed by George Ewart, Reel 4, "Interviews on the Organization of the Cannery and Agricultural Workers' Industrial Union in California in the 1930's," Oral Histories Collection, BANC.

¹¹⁶ Quoted in Sine, "Grassroots Multiracialism," 230.

mutual aid society formed in 1919, organized the independent ethnic Mexican union, La Unión de Trabajadores del Valle Imperial.¹¹⁷ Although the Mexican consul at Calexico, Carlos V. Ariza, initiated and strongly encouraged the creation of a new countywide union, the formation of the 1,200 member labor body was a largely grassroots affair.¹¹⁸ After all, it was the workers themselves who collectively had the power to resolve their disagreements with their bosses. These disputes mainly rested on the under- or non-payment of wages by labor contractors – Mexican, Japanese, Filipino, and “Hindoo” middlemen between farm workers and growers – or tenant farmers and shippers.¹¹⁹ In early May 1928, La Unión (as the union was commonly called) members were joined by other disgruntled ethnic Mexican cantaloupe workers to form a 3,000 person strong strike, counter to La Unión leadership’s wishes.¹²⁰ Though unauthorized to strike by union leaders, strikers echoed the former’s demands by calling for better wages. Several strikers, however, sought a more drastic goal. As Juan Estrada stated: “We want to abolish the contractor.”¹²¹

Regardless of exact goals, most ethnic Mexicans were not outright hostile toward the commercial farming enterprises of the Imperial Valley since they provided work; rather, ethnic

¹¹⁷ *Mutualistas*, or mutual aid societies, drew from a broad membership, but most members were workers, contractors, and small merchants. As Devra Weber explains, *mutualistas* like Sociedad Benito Juárez and Sociedad Mutualista Miguel Hidalgo, established in Brawley in 1922, pooled “their meager resources to provide insurance, financial aid, and burial assistance to ethnic Mexicans regardless of membership status. Accustomed to coming together, paying dues, and assisting those in need, many members of the valley’s Benito Juárez mutual aid society also joined the new ethnic Mexican union. Richard Griswold del Castillo, “From Revolution to Economic Depression,” 82; Gilbert G. González, “Company Unions, the Mexican Consulate, and the Imperial Valley Strikes, 1928-1934,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 27 (Spring 1996), 56; Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold*, 61; see also Gilbert G. González, *Mexican Consuls and Labor Organizing: Imperial Politics in the American Southwest* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 165-168.

¹¹⁸ The California Fact-Finding Committee’s Will J. French, director of the state’s Department of Industrial Relations, reported: “Personally, I believe that if it were not for Mr. Ariza, the union would probably have been organized anyway. I am basing my belief upon the fact that similar Mexican unions have been very recently organized throughout southern California and that one of the principal aims of these unions is to do away with the labor contractor system.” *Mexicans in California*, 137.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹²⁰ “3,000 mexicanos rechazan los nuevos contratos de trabajo en el V. Imperial,” *La Opinión*, 8 May 1928.

¹²¹ Juan Estrada, San Luís Pool Hall, El Centro, CA, October 18, 1928, Folder 4, Carton 10, Taylor Papers, BANC.

Mexicans were critical of some of the features of a system that had developed over the decades. Since the irrigation days of the early 20th century, valley growers had come to demand unforgiving, arduous work from laborers they now considered docile and malleable. Ethnic Mexican farm workers were the quiet “beast of the fields” who would work long, intensive hours under a scorching sun, to only catch limited relief in tent camps or in makeshift and dilapidated dwellings on the outskirts and in Mexican *barrios* (See Figure 3.2). These Mexican enclaves, while a relatively safe refuge, featured both inadequate housing and public schools for ethnic Mexican pupils like José Oliva and Christine Solana, both of whom dreamed of attending college to escape not only disease-causing squalor, but what they recognized as exploitative field work.¹²²

A particularly pernicious feature of the valley’s agribusiness was its reliance on contract labor. The contract labor system proved overwhelmingly exploitative, as most, though not all, labor contractors proved unscrupulous. Most contractors withheld at least a quarter of each worker’s meager pay until the end of the growing season, which served to tie many farm workers to the workplace. In other instances, a particularly unsavory labor contractor found ways in which to keep for himself a percentage of withheld pay, if not outright abscond with all the funds.¹²³ Thus, workers sought some change to the labor contract system. La Unión leadership maneuvered for moderate reform and did not advocate for the abolition of the labor contractor

¹²² Oliva and Solana did not originally enjoy school, but both came to see its positives. Oliva was persuaded into continuing school by adult farm workers in the community, who explained to him that he should avoid farm laborer. Solana was inspired into continuing school by the school truancy officer, and eventually the young woman dreamed of enrolling in college if she could afford it. Solana, aware of the inferiority of her Mexican school, also desired a transfer to the white high school. José Oliva, Brawley H.S. Students, April 27, 1927, Folder 12, Carton 10, Taylor Papers, BANC; Christine Solana, Brawley H.S. Students, April 27, 1927, Folder 12, Carton 10, Taylor Papers, BANC; Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold*, 55.

¹²³ *Mexicans in California*, 148.



Figure 3.2. Migratory Mexican field worker's home on the edge of a frozen pea field – Imperial Valley, March 1937, photograph by Dorothea Lange. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration – Office of War Information Photograph Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C.

since union membership drew not only from workers, but also labor contractors and merchants.¹²⁴

González, himself a labor contractor, made a genuine effort at reforming the prevailing system, going so far as to continue to appeal to the new local Mexican consul, the conservative and less worker-friendly Hermolao Torres, and Mexican President Plutarco Elías Calles.¹²⁵ The

¹²⁴ Historian Gilbert G. González argues that from its inception, La Unión “assumed a cautious character” and “went to great lengths to dissociate itself from leftists, especially communists.” It was also starkly anti-Filipino, as many members believed Filipino farm workers undercut wages. González, “Company Unions,” 56; González, *Mexican Consuls*, 167; Andrés, *Power and Control*, 134.

¹²⁵ Taylor explained that the line between labor contractor and laborer was “not sharp and is often crossed both ways,” which explains González’s position in the Imperial Valley – he was both laborer and labor contractor.

union's board of directors stated, "We want to keep on cooperating with our hand of labor, but we claim a more liberal wages (sic), enough to cover... alimentation, clothing, house rent, medicine, automobile, and other small exigents." To escape the "unhonorable (sic) and miserable way" they lived, the union demanded that growers provide not only "reasonable wages" paid in a prompt manner directly to workers, but also picking sacks, wagons for melons transport, lumber to build sheds for melon storage, and ice for drinking water. Additionally, La Unión called for workers' compensation.¹²⁶ Indeed, workers wanted to protect against damaging injury and illness, not to mention death, which was a legitimate danger. As Spanish-language newspaper *La Opinión* reported in June 1929, approximately a dozen (if not more) ethnic Mexicans working in the valley died due to heatstroke, with many more ill.¹²⁷

To achieve their goals, La Unión leadership used "respectful language" in their public communications, including when they reached out to the Brawley and El Centro Chambers of Commerce. They hoped a friendly tone would open the business bodies to act as mediators between La Unión and individual growers.¹²⁸ Although both Chambers of Commerce politely declined the invitation, workers still attempted to negotiate in good faith. Far from radical, González and La Unión called for merely a livable wage, tolerable working conditions, and the application of existing labor laws. For Imperial Valley boosters and business interests, however, such demands were revolutionary precisely because it threatened the existing order. The "just"

Filemon González to H.N. Torres, 8 May 1928, Folder 19, Carton 10, Taylor Papers, BANC; Board of Directors to The President of the Republic, undated, Folder 19, Carton 10, Taylor Papers, BANC; Taylor, *Mexican Labor*, 53.

¹²⁶ "In case of accidents caused to the laborers during work," the union declared, "the companies must cover all expenses during their sickness, and if further consequence appear, caused by illness, the companies must pay indemnity as the law requires." *Mexicans in California*, 138-139.

¹²⁷ "Numerosos trabajadores mueren de insolación," *La Opinión*, 30 June 1929.

¹²⁸ *Mexicans in California*, 138.

demands listed by González would have upended a profitable system, challenged the worldview of boosters and business interests, and by extension, imperiled the Greater San Diego project.¹²⁹

Agribusiness interests and boosters believed farm workers, particularly those of Mexican descent, did not deserve or need reasonable compensation, accommodations, and protections. As one leftist Brawley farm worker later put it: “[Boosters and business interests] don’t care what kind of houses we live in, or if we starve... Capital likes to pay us as little as they can.”¹³⁰

Growers and their allies countered these charges by both claiming they simply could not afford to pay higher wages, and by labeling outspoken workers anti-capitalist and un-American subversives. Farm workers who did not withhold their labor power by deserting Imperial Valley fields allegedly initiated fights; burned hay stacks on a nightly basis; and sabotaged harvests by cutting irrigation ditches to damage unattended fields with excess water.¹³¹ To be sure, some ethnic Mexicans did pillage produce fields, pack sacks with dirt and rocks to cheat at weigh-ins, and threaten to assault contractors and farmers; but as noted above, they also sought to fairly bargain and/or pursued non-violent recourse such as lobbying Mexican consuls or quitting, especially if the dual wage system was in place.¹³² “[One] cannot easily pay [ethnic Mexicans] and whites differently on [the] same job,” explained an employment agent, “as [ethnic Mexicans] will quit when they find out.”¹³³

¹²⁹ Filemon González to Director of “El Universal,” 13 May 1928, Folder 19, Carton 10, Taylor Papers, BANC.

¹³⁰ Interview with Mexican laborer, Brawley, California, June 16, 1935, Folder 9, Carton 15, Taylor Papers, BANC.

¹³¹ These acts of resistance were recollected in an early Cold War era report linking a communist organizer to labor activism in the Imperial Valley in the 1930s. Although the veracity of such charges is not clear, it must be remembered that farm workers did engage in infrapolitics, which political scientist and anthropologist James C. Scott argues are politics not readily detected by the state. For instance, farm workers sometimes stole equipment to disrupt work rhythms and schedules, which allowed them to assert their autonomy and control of their bodies. “Eugene Dennis Was Linked to Group: NY Communist Trial Had Parallel in State in 1930,” *Madera Tribune*, 18 October 1949; Sine, “Grassroots Multiracialism,” 239; James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); for an example of African American working class infrapolitics, see Robin D.G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

¹³² Andrés, *Power and Control*, 127-128.

¹³³ Interview with Mr. Rowe, Los Angeles, Calif., March 30, 1927, Folder 24, Carton 10, Taylor Papers, BANC.

Imperial Valley boosters and business interests highlighted these acts of resistance and stressed farm workers' alleged un-Americanness. The Imperial County assistant district attorney stated: "Mexicans wanted higher wages than could be paid and wanted to run this country. It was Bolsheviks and Communists from Mexico and Russia."¹³⁴ Boosters and business interests circulated narratives of radicalism imported from Mexico, as evidenced by a "red flag... used in a parade of Mexican laborers" in the valley.¹³⁵ As in previous decades, the implication was that radical leftism – or the perception of radical leftism – from abroad threatened not only the Imperial Valley, but also Greater San Diego and the United States. To allay concerns from boosters and businessmen, La Unión leaders denied all accusations and asserted they were not "a bunch of bolsheviks or I.W.W.'s."¹³⁶

The denials did little to stop boosters and business interests' attempts to disrupt labor organizing and mobilization. Beginning on 7 May 1928, local law enforcement arrested several dozen ethnic Mexican labor leaders and legally charged them with "disturbing the peace," vagrancy, and failing to vacate private property. Bail was set in many cases at \$1000 – a sum no poor ethnic Mexican farm worker could pay. Business interests rationalized these tactics by stating that worker organization fostered and fanned the flames of discontent and, equally as important, jeopardized the season's harvests. Louis Bloch, a statistician for the California Department of Industrial Relations, reported that "growers became anxious lest they would suffer partial loss of their crop." The secretary for the Brawley Chamber of Commerce stated, "Cantaloupe are perishable and we couldn't let them have a strike," and then added that striking

¹³⁴ Taylor's field notes list F.A. Takmann as the county's district attorney in 1928, but this is a mistake, as Takmann was the assistant district attorney. F.A. Takmann, District Attorney of Imperial County, October 19, 1928, Folder 4, Carton 10, Taylor Papers, BANC.

¹³⁵ Taylor, *Mexican Labor*, 50.

¹³⁶ Quoted in Andrés, *Power and Control*, 136.

Mexicans “marched down the street with a red flag.”¹³⁷ Growers believed that this rationalized the summoning of the county sheriff, Charles L. Gillett, who promptly deputized about 40 men, “some of whom were the field inspectors, foremen and superintendents of the growers.”¹³⁸

George Swink, a fruit inspector for the Miller Cummings Company, proudly stated that he told ethnic Mexican strikers that “if they didn’t want to work to get out.” Swink used “big shot guns, not pistols” to help farm workers come to a decision, to discipline them and keep them from moving on to elsewhere.¹³⁹

While the district attorney of Imperial County, Elmer Heald, believed that farm workers had the constitutional right to organize, many boosters reasoned that law enforcement “raids” were justified to “nip things in the bud,” curtail potential worker violence, and prevent “large meetings” of workers. Heald himself, who despite the lack of evidence had accused one ethnic Mexican farm worker of being a “red agitator,” declared that he did not know “what three thousand Mexicans might do when they get together,” and therefore supported the deportation of most ethnic Mexicans, who he claimed did not “assimilate into Anglo-Saxon citizens.”¹⁴⁰

Sheriff Gillett, a Midwesterner who moved west to become a real estate agent and landowner in

¹³⁷ Mr. Moore, Secretary Chamber of Commerce, Brawley, October 1928, Folder 4, Carton 10, Taylor Papers, BANC.

¹³⁸ The Imperial County sheriff appears in the historical record as both “Gillett” and “Gillette.” I have chosen to follow the spelling used by Taylor, the California Fact-Finding Committee, and the U.S. Census, among others. *Mexicans in California*, 141.

¹³⁹ Swink reflected the uneasy racial relations of the region and time. He stated: “We realize in other places Mexicans are taking white man’s jobs. If given time we can adjust our conditions and hold Mexicans here. Now they come in and move on to the city and elsewhere.” George Swink, Miller Cummings Company, Brawley, October 1928, Folder 4, Carton 10, Taylor Papers, BANC.

¹⁴⁰ Heald told Taylor: “Why no, there was no rebellion or anything like that. There was a red agitator ([Frank] Hernández) who was advocating violence, burning sheds, etc. I told him I could not prove anything and never found a red card or literature on him, but I would place a charge of vagrancy against him every day I found him in the valley.” In a separate interview with Bloch, Heald claimed that he had shown leniency toward Hernández, as he let the farm worker walk on a suspended sentence. The district attorney contended that he was lenient with all farm workers who pleaded guilty to charges because “he was interested primarily in preventing threatened violence and possible bloodshed.” Heald, then, was allegedly merely quelling “trouble” instigated by agitating workers like Hernández, who subsequently left the Imperial Valley for his native Arizona. Elmer Heald, District Attorney, Imperial County, Folder 4, Carton 10, Taylor Papers, BANC; Takmann, Taylor Papers; *Mexicans in California*, 148.

the Imperial Valley, harbored similar suspicions and prescribed to comparable remedies.¹⁴¹ As historian Rodolfo Acuña briefly notes, Gillett swiftly and “brutally crushed” labor activism.¹⁴² Gillett not only arrested all Mexicans found on the street, but also forbade picketing, speeches, and the passing out of pro-labor literature. Hinting at the blurring racial divides between farm workers, the sheriff ordered three Mexican and one “Negro” pool hall closed.¹⁴³ “The reason for this order,” Bloch noted, “was that pool halls are the workers’ gathering places, and in times of trouble, pool halls might be used for meetings, at which fiery gesticulating orators might agitate.”¹⁴⁴ To further stifle free speech and labor organizing, Gillett shut down a Brawley union office.¹⁴⁵

Next, echoing remarks made by his deputies, Gillett told a local newspaper that if farm workers had a problem with conditions in the Imperial Valley, “they might better return to Mexico.” He added that if more trouble arose, “a general deportation movement of all Mexican laborers employed in the valley would begin.”¹⁴⁶ Although mass deportations did not result then, ethnic Mexicans did start to avoid large meetings, as well as any contacts with sheriff’s officials,

¹⁴¹ According to census records, Gillett was born in Kansas in about 1880. After a stint as a grocer in Maricopa County, Arizona in the early 20th century, he arrived in the Imperial Valley, became a real estate agent and served as the county sheriff from 1922 to 1930. California voter rolls indicate that Gillett was also a farmer. Court records corroborate property ownership. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, El Centro, Imperial, California; Roll: 119; Page: 7B, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed 1 September 2017, <http://ancestry.com>; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Glendale, Maricopa, Arizona; Roll: T624_40; Page: 9A, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed 1 September 2017, <http://ancestry.com>; California State Library, *Great Register of Voters, 1900-1968*, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed 1 September 2017, <http://ancestry.com>; “Former Sheriff of Imperial County Dies of Injury,” *Desert Sun*, 16 July 1937; Chapman v. Gillett, 120 Cal. App. 122 (Cal. Ct. App. 1932).

¹⁴² Rodolfo F. Acuña, *Corridors of Migration: The Odyssey of Mexican Laborers, 1600-1933* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 225.

¹⁴³ Andrés, *Power and Control*, 136.

¹⁴⁴ *Mexicans in California*, 143.

¹⁴⁵ It is alleged that local law enforcement conferred with the Bureau of Investigation (BOI), later renamed the Federal Bureau of Investigation, on how to handle the labor disturbance of 1928. Following the recommendations of the BOI, local authorities hired two special investigators to infiltrate the ranks of the “communist” organizers. Eventually the informants tipped off the local sheriff’s department and deputies moved in to arrest several of the leaders in Brawley, “but they escaped, presumably over the line into Mexico.” Taylor, *Mexican Labor*, 50; “Eugene Dennis Was Linked to Group.”

¹⁴⁶ *Mexicans in California*, 143.

in part because Gillett did attempt to selectively remove ethnic Mexicans from the country. On one occasion Gillett turned over two ethnic Mexicans held in his jail to U.S. immigration authorities. However, the immigration inspector refused to get involved in the labor conflict and let the pair go.¹⁴⁷ Given how understaffed and ill-prepared the relatively new U.S. Border Patrol was, labor discipline in the Imperial Valley was not a task it could take on then, though it would certainly do so in the future.¹⁴⁸

Ethnic Mexicans on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border denounced Gillett's actions, and some questioned the sheriff's commitment to the United States' promises of democracy and liberalism. *El Nuevo Mundo*, a Mexicali paper read by ethnic Mexicans on both sides of the international line, paralleled the dreams and desires of ethnic Mexican farm workers with those of British North America colonists. Both groups, the newspaper argued, ventured to a new world to "improve matters," or their quality of life; however, unlike the colonists, Mexican immigrants' opportunities to advance were generally blocked. Perhaps in acknowledgment that some of the strikers were "formerly organized revolutionary activists," *El Nuevo Mundo* declared that Mexicans in the Imperial Valley "became again dissatisfied with the existing order of things."¹⁴⁹ Yet strikers only peacefully lobbied for change, and Imperial Valley law enforcement, at the

¹⁴⁷ Taylor, *Mexican Labor*, 50.

¹⁴⁸ The Border Patrol was created with the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924. Historian Kelly Lytle Hernández has shown how the early years of the Border Patrol resembled the wild west, as many border stations were manned by highly unprofessional residents of the local community, with at times deadly consequences for ethnic Mexicans. Hernández also notes how the Border Patrol initially was shaped by the conceptions and prejudices of the region (and period during which) it served, but the Border Patrol was not necessarily anti-immigrant or anti-Mexican. Nevertheless, a grower could place a call to immigration officials when "Mexican Brown" farm workers became too demanding and/or unreliable. Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Migra!: A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); for the association of ethnic Mexicans with foreignness in south Texas in the early decades of the 20th century (when farms there were industrializing), see also Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), especially chapter two.

¹⁴⁹ Ben Saenz, a member of the of the local Benito Juárez *mutualista*, told Paul S. Taylor of the links between the cantaloupe strike and the Mexican Revolution. Mutual Benefit Societies, April 1927, Folder 12, Carton 10, Taylor Papers, BANC.

behest of agribusiness interests and boosters, threatened demonstrators with deportation. This, according to the paper, called into question Gillett's commitment to American ideals. To close, the Mexicali paper warned that if such ideals were not honored, "all the Mexicans would now start to go to the South [Mexico] and... abandon the Imperial Valley," triggering an "agricultural catastrophe."¹⁵⁰ The Imperial Valley, then, could continue to grow only if ethnic Mexicans' labor and civil rights were honored.

Growers and shippers countered by increasing their red-baiting, or persecuting suspected leftists, and by arguing in circulars that they, and not ethnic Mexican farm workers, were central to both the health of the valley's economy and the well-being of said laborers. They claimed that not only did they oversee the growth of Greater San Diego agribusiness, they also ensured Mexican farm workers were allowed to enter and remain in the country. Growers and shippers put forth a paternalist imagining, arguing they protected imported workers from anti-immigrant legislators and their policies. In return, agribusiness interests expected loyalty from their workforce. When this obedience failed to materialize, however, valley boosters and business interests felt compelled to intimidate cantaloupe pickers. Growers threatened to halt lobbying for quota exemptions for Mexican immigration, as well as to replace recalcitrant workers with ethnic Mexicans from other parts of the American Southwest. In one circular seen by valley workers, an Arizona employment agent allegedly reported: "At present we have about 900 men [workers]. They are ready to go to Imperial Valley. Southern Pacific has train ready to deliver the men at short notice." The Southern Pacific Railroad, which owned 42,000 acres of Imperial land, had a vested interest in the commercial success of the valley.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Taylor, *Mexican Labor*, 51; Andrés, *Power and Control*, 136.

¹⁵¹ *Mexicans in California*, 145; Elliot Robert Barkan, *From All Points: America's Immigrant West, 1870s-1952* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 266.

Despite their best efforts, boosters and business interests were unable to completely prevail in dividing striking ethnic Mexicans and outright defeating the movement, as Swink himself admitted. “Yes,” the deputized fruit inspector stated, “the Mexicans won the strike demands.”¹⁵² In reality, the farm workers’ victory was partial, as better pay was secured but lasted only until the crash of the stock market in 1929, when wages began to plummet and the number of jobs available dropped. Furthermore, the contract labor system remained.¹⁵³ Yet the strike was significant in that it reminded ethnic Mexican workers that by openly protesting and exerting enough pressure on bosses, union leadership, and Mexican government officials, they could enact change in their community.¹⁵⁴ Direct action was a means to an end – to better pay, working and living conditions, and representation. Conversely for Imperial Valley boosters and business interests, such extensions of labor and civil rights endangered their dream of a highly lucrative agribusiness empire.

Thus, when farm workers and their coalition of allies once more called for changes to the racial capitalist system in the 1930s, Imperial Valley boosters and business interests responded with an anti-worker ferocity both reminiscent of years past, and congruous with the rise of the “vigilante right” in Depression-era Greater San Diego.¹⁵⁵ While right-wing groups like the

¹⁵² Swink, Taylor Papers, BANC.

¹⁵³ According to James Gray, the Mexican union asked for 75 cents per hour for field labor, but “as a result of the depression which meant reduced profits or actual losses to growers of lettuce, melons, and peas, the hourly wage rate had fallen to 30 cents.” Wages only worsened over the Depression years. Gray, “American Civil Liberties Union,” 18.

¹⁵⁴ Leaders of La Unión, Mexican President Calles, and Calexico consular Torres called on American government officials to intervene only after workers became more militant. However, even then Torres’ support was at best lukewarm. In fact, the Mexican farm workers’ greatest support came from the California state labor department, especially Bloch. Not only did he conclude that “reds” did not exist among the strikers, but he also blamed prevailing agribusiness practices for much of the valley’s labor strife. Andrés, *Power and Control*, 138.

¹⁵⁵ Here I borrow from labor historian John H.M. Laslett, who writes that “California’s vigilante right became increasingly aggressive” during the 1930s. Laslett adds: “[The vigilante right] included fringe groups such as the Silver Shirts in San Diego (an echo of Hitler’s Brown Shirts in Germany), a revived Ku Klux Klan, and the Associated Farmers, a powerful group of right-wing growers.” The Associated Farmers were affiliated with the Merchants and Manufacturers Association, the deeply conservative organization that promoted anti-free speech

Silver Shirts terrorized ethnic Mexicans in San Diego, in the Imperial Valley the anti-worker vigilante movement was led by the Associated Farmers of California, Inc., an organization funded by deep-pocketed individuals and companies, including the Southern Pacific Railroad, Bank of America, and the Spreckels Sugar Company, the latter of which was administered by John D. Spreckels' younger brother, Adolph, until his death – from syphilis-induced pneumonia – in 1924.¹⁵⁶ The Associated Farmers' tactics in the Imperial Valley led the progressive Carey McWilliams to liken the organization to those found in Nazi Germany, as “farm fascism” advocated capitalist exploitation, union busting, and red-baiting. He labeled the Imperial Valley “the Cradle of Vigilantism.”¹⁵⁷

Terror in the Depression

“On the night of April 14, 1930,” communist Frank Spector recounted from a prison cell, “over one hundred Mexican, Filipino, Negro and white workers gathered in a dingy working

ordinances in early 20th century California. John H.M. Laslett, *Sunshine Was Never Enough: Los Angeles Workers, 1880-2010* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 99.

¹⁵⁶ In its opening issue, *The Rural Observer*, a San Francisco-based paper concerned with breaking the power and control of agribusiness interests throughout California, reported that the federal government had uncovered large corporations funneling thousands of dollars to the Alliance of Farmers to cripple working class activism. The newspaper lamented that such links were not reaching the public. *The Rural Observer* rhetorically asked: “But are you hearing about it? No, because CalPak [California Packing Corporation], Bank of America, S.P. [Southern Pacific], and a few others own the papers, own the canneries, own the railroads, the waterfront, and YOU” (author’s emphasis). In a subsequent edition of the newspaper, the Spreckels Sugar Company, which had owned or operated Hawaiian sugar plantations in the 19th century and contracted northern California sugar beet farms in the 20th century, drew scrutiny. When Claus Spreckels died in 1908, Adolph B. Spreckels, seemingly recovered from a bout of “temporary insanity” that had exonerated him from a charge of attempted murder of a co-founder of the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1884, took over its administration. He was certainly influenced by John D. Spreckels, who had a 25% stake in the company. During Adolph’s leadership, the Spreckels Sugar Company held considerable sway in the Salinas Valley, combining with other dominant business interests to form the “oligarchy” known as the Citizens Association of the Salinas Valley. Many years after the Spreckels family plundered company coffers, other investors bought out the family stake and eventually moved the company’s headquarters to El Centro. “San Francisco at Bay,” *The Rural Observer*, 1937; “Who Are the Associated Farmers?,” *The Rural Observer*, September-October 1938; Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin; With a New Preface* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 175-180; Starr, *Endangered Dreams*, 181.

¹⁵⁷ During the 1930s and 1940s, fascism was a broad concept used by the California Left to refer to organizations, such as the American Legion, and companies that engaged in anti-worker activities. Historian Daniel Geary notes that for McWilliams, antifascism, while lacking in theoretical rigor, allowed for “a political posture that called for radical reforms toward economic reconstruction and racial equality in a democratic constitutional order.” Daniel Geary, “Carey McWilliams and Antifascism, 1934-1943,” *Journal of American History* 90 (Dec. 2003), 912; McWilliams, *Factories in the Fields*, 231.

class hall in El Centro... They had been called there by the Agricultural Workers Industrial Union” to discuss their “inhuman exploitation, the contract system, speed-up [of work rates], and unemployment.” Building on informal conversations that occurred in worker camps over a pot of beans and tortillas, workers of all ranks, “tongues,” and genders took turns in the formal gathering to tell “of the starvation and sickness of their wives and children, of the constant wage cuts, and of the long hours of bitter toil under a scorching a sun.”¹⁵⁸ Increases in grower’s demands and the devastation wrought by the Great Depression had allowed racially, ethnically, nationally, and linguistically diverse persons to identify their shared experience of injustice. As one ethnic Mexican commented, black neighbors “was treated pretty bad” by growers and their allies too.¹⁵⁹ Perhaps more importantly, some Anglos were once more coming to terms with the fact that the “wages of whiteness” were not necessarily bettering their material conditions in hard economic times.¹⁶⁰ Thus, in the shadow of the goliath C&M Ranch and other modern business enterprises, worker after worker pledged to wage a united left-leaning campaign.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Sine highlights the central role women played in uniting farm workers across ethnoracial lines, as women established informal networks that helped forge formal organizing. Andrés, *Power and Control*, 138; Sine, “Grassroots Multiracialism,” 247-248; Frank Spector, *The Story of the Imperial Valley* (New York: International Labor Defense, 1931), 5.

¹⁵⁹ Quoted in Sine, “Grassroots Multiracialism,” 241. As Andrés has written, interracial solidarities and collaborations “floundered on the shoals of ethnic and racial animosity, nationalistic fervor, and cutthroat competition for jobs.” However, in the Imperial Valley of the Great Depression, a “corridor of radicalism” opened, as all sectors of the valley’s working class felt the sting of want. Andrés, *Power and Control*, 128.

¹⁶⁰ As late as the cantaloupe strike of 1928, significant racial and ethnic divisions existed among farm workers. For instance, ethnic Mexicans and Japanese vehemently disliked each other, while white packing shed workers desired no interracial cooperation with any group. Spector believed such “race discrimination” was a top-down phenomenon, erroneously attributing ethnoracial divisions solely to elites and thereby discounting the role white workers played in creating and maintaining said differences. Racialized thinking, then, was also bottom-up. The experiences of the Great Depression helped drastically blur difference, as the economic downturn severely impacted all groups, including many whites. Though some white shed workers and management remained adversarial toward non-white workers, the poorest of whites and financially ruined white family farmers more readily crossed the color line during this period precisely because whiteness no longer assured them a better living. Spector hinted at this, noting how shed workers briefly went on strike in solidarity and protest of work-rate speedups. Spector, *Imperial Valley*, 14-15, 21-22.

¹⁶¹ Laslett, *Sunshine Was Never Enough*, 99.

The multiracial and multi-ethnic meeting faced immediate opposition, as since the beginning of January 1930, boosters and business interests began to use legal and extra-legal means to crack down on all labor activism.¹⁶² During one farm worker's testimony at the April meeting, the hall's door swung open and in rushed a revolvers and sawed-off shotguns-wielding force of policemen, deputies, and vigilantes. Sheriff Charles L. Gillett stepped out from the armed crowd and ordered "all workers to throw up their hands" and "directed a violent search of each worker, after which every one of the 108 were chained in groups" and taken to the county jail. After appearances before the Imperial County grand jury, some of the imprisoned workers, including Japanese and Russian Jew communists Tsuji Horiuchi and Carl Sklar, were sent to Folsom State Prison on three counts of "criminal syndicalism" apiece, while most apprehended ethnic Mexicans were almost immediately deported to Mexico.¹⁶³ Years later Horiuchi and Sklar were expelled, albeit to the Soviet Union and not south of the border.¹⁶⁴ Little, then, had changed in Greater San Diego. Southern California's greatest promise remained exclusively

¹⁶² Mexican and Filipino workers, dissatisfied with poor wages and deplorable working conditions in the lettuce fields of the Imperial Valley, went on strike. With the ad hoc assistance of communists, the lettuce strike grew to 5,000 farm workers, many of whom had participated cantaloupe strike of 1928. Although communists wished for revolution, for most of the strikers, the attainment of bread and butter goals were far more imperative. Boosters and business interests, however, simply labeled the whole affair a communist plot and used vigilante terror and arrests to break the picket line. Because it was suspected that first amendment rights were violated, the American Civil Liberties Union entered the fray on behalf of many of the communist leaders. Daniel, *Bitter Harvest*, 111-117.

¹⁶³ California prison records indicate that Horiuchi and Sklar were not field workers in the Imperial Valley, but rather a gardener and mechanic, respectively. Their tenuous existence, however, mirrored that of farm workers, which is a significant reason why they organized with them. While Horiuchi and Sklar were eventually deported, some ethnic Mexicans experienced the reverse: originally slated for deportation, some instead were sent to state prison for decades. This was the case for Eduardo Herrera and Braulio Orosco, who were sent to San Quentin. Ibid., 5-6; "Complot Comunista en el Valle Imperial," *La Opinión*, 16 April 1930; "Tsuji Horiuchi," California State Archives, Folsom State Prison Inmate Identification Photograph Cards/Inmate 15451-16900, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed 1 September 2017, <http://ancestry.com>; Spector, *Story of the Imperial Valley*, 6.

¹⁶⁴ Of the Imperial Valley convictions, historian Kevin Starr writes: "In passing these draconian sentences, Judge [Von H.] Thompson stated that for [sic] such as these – Communists in conspiracy to destroy the economy of the Imperial Valley – anything short of a life sentence should be considered lenient." Horiuchi and Sklar received "lenient" treatment and were incarcerated in state prison for only three years; however, they were summarily deported upon their release. Spector himself, who had been tried and convicted for alleged criminal syndicalism, was eventually released from prison since it could not be proven that he had attended the communist-sponsored farm workers' meeting. Starr, *Endangered Dreams*, 68.

reserved for those who believed in, or at least did not challenge, the Booster San Diego worldview. Those workers who did raise their voice in opposition were forcibly removed.

Sheriff Gillett's raid on the meeting called by the Agricultural Workers Industrial League (AWIL), a group affiliated with the communist and militant Trade Union Unity League (TUUL), signaled an escalation of anti-worker policies and vigilante activities by Imperial Valley boosters and business interests during the 1930s.¹⁶⁵ Dorothy Ray, the 19-year-old woman who was sent to the Imperial Valley late in 1933, stated as much, noting that the "modern" strikes of 1930 and 1934 were extensions of labor disputes dating to the heyday of the Wobblies and the Mexican revolutionary period.¹⁶⁶ Ray attributed the willingness and zeal of ethnic Mexican farm workers in challenging boosters and business interests to experience and upbringing. "This was the generation who had come over from the Mexican Revolution," Ray explained, "anticlerical, very sophisticated politically and very anarchosyndicalist (sic), and unbothered" by labor organization. "The response of the Mexican workers," Ray continued, "was, 'Of course, we're for the revolution. When the barricades are ready, we'll be on the barricades, but don't bother us with meetings all the time. We know what to do, we know who the enemy is!'"¹⁶⁷

Indeed, a notable number of ethnic Mexican farm workers were either former Wobblies (or descendants of Wobblies), and/or active members of contemporary leftist organizations borne

¹⁶⁵ An umbrella organization under the Communist Party USA, TUUL organized semi-skilled and unskilled workers ignored or expelled from the AFL from 1929 to 1935. This, then, brought TUUL organizers in close contact with historically marginalized populations of the American working class, including but not limited to women, children, blacks, and as this chapter notes, ethnic Mexicans. According to TUUL literature, "Capitalist exploitation in the United States has resulted in the development, on the one hand, of a relatively small class of rich capitalists, and, on the other, of a great mass of impoverished workers, with large numbers of petty shopkeepers, farmers, etc., in between. For every billionaire Morgan, Mellon, Ford, or Rockefeller, there are scores of thousands of poverty-stricken workers." Thus, the TUUL program noted, militancy was required to combat "parasite capitalists." Among the unions created was the Agricultural Workers Industrial League (AWIL). *The Trade Union Unity League: Its Program, Structure, Methods and History* (New York: Trade Union Unity League, undated), 3, 18-20.

¹⁶⁶ The IWW by 1929, reported McWilliams, "was merely a tradition in the labor movement" and not a fully functional organization. Years of booster and business interests' anti-Wobbly activities had taken a toll on the union. McWilliams, *Factories in the Field*, 212; Healey, Tape II, Side Two, COHR.

¹⁶⁷ Healey, Tape II, Side Two, COHR.

out of the Mexican Revolution.¹⁶⁸ In short, contrary to La Unión leaderships claims in 1928, some farm workers were leftist radicals; and contrary to what federal writers claimed, they were not prey to communist organizers, but in fact already true believers of leftist politics who oftentimes taught young, white communists about leftist organizing.¹⁶⁹ Frank Nieto, who helped secure the assistance of Ray and San Diego communist Stanley Hancock, was a “selfless” veteran union organizer who helped establish ethnic Mexican unions throughout Greater San Diego’s factories, including those in the fields. Nieto imparted this knowledge of organizing on not only Ray and Hancock, but also on younger generations of ethnic Mexican activists, including San Diegan Roberto Galván, who some San Diego locals consider a predecessor to United Farm Workers founder César Chávez.¹⁷⁰

Nieto, Ray, and multiracial and multi-ethnic workers believed their leftist background did not invalidate their critiques of the social and labor system that had been constructed and reified in the Imperial Valley, but provided a lens through which to properly assess said system. Rather than stress the need for capitalism’s complete downfall, organizers and farm workers instead consistently brought attention to what capitalist progress entailed. They highlighted the

¹⁶⁸ Perhaps the most influential of these organizations was the Confederación de Uniones de Campesinos y Obreros Mexicanos (CUCOM), which was formed in 1933 after a previous incarnation, the Confederación de Uniones Obreros Mexicanos (CUOM), had faltered in 1928. Prior to CUOM’s collapse, the organization had built a 3,000-strong membership with 22 locals sprinkled throughout Southern California. Guillermo Velarde, the son of a Wobbly who had helped anarchists Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón hide from Los Angeles police, built on CUOM’s legacy as leader of CUCOM. Velarde and other ethnic Mexicans of these unions spread leftist ideologies and offered practical instruction in labor organizing. As Healey explains in her autobiography, these teachings were then patiently imparted on the young Anglo communists in the Imperial Valley. In one meeting, a Young Communist League member was handed old Partido Liberal Mexicano literature. Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold*, 85-86; Dorothy Healey and Maurice Isserman, *Dorothy Healey Remembers: A Life in the American Communist Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 45.

¹⁶⁹ Ray forcefully rejects the conclusion that communists attempted to coopt the labor movement in the Imperial Valley. She stated: “I notice that the history books on the agricultural organization always say that we dominated and controlled the Mexican workers there, which is not true at all. In the first place, we never went there without their inviting us in, and there was never a strike in which they did not play the most important role, more than anybody else.” Healey, Tape II, Side Two, COHR.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.; Healey, Reel 4, Interviews on the CAIWU in the 1930s, BANC; Carlos M. Larralde, “*El Congreso* in San Diego: An Endeavor for Civil Rights,” *Journal of San Diego History* 50 (Winter/Spring 2004), 20; Carlos Larralde, “Roberto Galvan: A Latino Leader of the 1940s,” *Journal of San Diego History* 52 (Summer/Fall 2006), 151.

problems the prevailing system continued to subject Imperial Valley's farm workers to, both at home and on the job. Migrant farm workers continued to live in makeshift and shoddy camps, while "resident" farm workers rested in "little shanties built over little dirt floors." Working conditions had worsened since 1928, as had wages, which according to Ray dropped to 10 cents per hour.¹⁷¹ The reason for such a plummet, at least according to agribusiness interests, was that farm income dropped by 51 percent by 1932. In turn, agribusiness interests argued, they had to slash both wages and basic services, including providing drinkable water.¹⁷² In a desert flush with fresh water from the Colorado River, little of it reached farm workers. As Ray recounts, "[There was] no drinking water except the irrigation ditches that would go through the field, and the irrigation ditches were used for everything, for toilets."¹⁷³ Frank Spector commented on the consequences of using a common water source for all purposes: "Disease and death among the children and adults are the camp-followers of the workers."¹⁷⁴ Labor organizers and farm workers dismissed grower explanations as excuses, but to no avail.

Unlike in the 1920s, in the 1930s ethnic Mexican farm workers could not turn to the Mexican consulate for substantive assistance. In 1930, the new Mexican consul at Calexico approved a repatriation ("voluntary" return) program for ethnic Mexican farm workers, which

¹⁷¹ Historian Mark Reisler, cites state relief records to show that Imperial Valley wages fell to 14 cents per hour, not 10 cents per hour as claimed by Ray. Regardless, Ray's conclusions remain valid, as wages had dramatically fallen from only a few years earlier when wages were already low. Healey, Tape II, Side Two, COHR; Mark Reisler, "Mexican Unionization in California Agriculture, 1927-1936" *Labor History* 14 (Fall 1973), 568.

¹⁷² Associated Farmers leader and staunch anti-communist Philip Bancroft painted "farmers" like himself as victims, at one point declaring: "[F]armers simply couldn't stand operating under union domination and survive as farmers. I don't know how a farm could operate if the union leader could call a strike at harvest time and make the farmer lose his entire crop. The farmer would simply have to meet whatever terms the labor leader laid down." In 1938 Bancroft ran on an anti-union, anti-picketing, and anti-New Deal platform, consistently buying prime radio air-time to spread his and the Associated Farmers' right-wing agenda. Still in a depression, California voters rejected his vision. Nelson A. Pichardo Almanzar and Brian W. Kulik, *American Fascism and the New Deal: The Associated Farmers of California and the Pro-Industrial Movement* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), 52-53; Carey McWilliams, "California Pastoral," *Antioch Review* 2 (Spring 1942), 103; Starr, *Endangered Dreams*, 209.

¹⁷³ Healey, Tape II, Side Two, COHR.

¹⁷⁴ Spector, *Story of Imperial Valley*, 12-13.

promised land south of the international border if the disaffected chose to quietly leave the Imperial Valley.¹⁷⁵ Several ethnic Mexicans took the opportunity in part because it was supported by the “practically disbanded, exterminated” Asociación Mutual del Valle Imperial, the new inoffensive name for the increasingly conservative and Mexican consulate-controlled La Unión.¹⁷⁶ The Asociación consistently stymied AWIL and TUUL organizer’s efforts to reach farm workers, and in general discouraged labor activism, which was one reason why the communist newspaper *Daily Worker* labeled the union’s leadership traitorous. In Spanish leaflets distributed in the valley, the communist press also critiqued the Asociación’s efforts to exacerbate and sow divisions between ethnic Mexicans and Filipinos; its cooperation with growers and the Department of Labor; and for communicating to Mexican nationals they had no right to strike because they were foreigners.¹⁷⁷ Therefore, when more militant ethnic Mexican

¹⁷⁵ Historians Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez have shown that repatriation was seldom a U.S. federal government effort; rather, city, county, and state agencies – with the assistance of charitable organizations – led drives to “return” ethnic Mexicans to their “homeland.” Repatriation efforts, Balderrama and Rodríguez note, had three purposes: “to return indigent nationals to their own country, in this case Mexico; to save welfare agencies money; and to create real jobs for real Americans.” Repatriation drives, however, often forced Mexican Americans born and raised in the United States to move to a country they may have been little or not at all familiar with. Several Mexicans in and out of government welcomed the return of ethnic Mexicans to Mexico because the repatriated potentially brought acquired skills with them. Anthropologist Manuel Gamio wrote that repatriates acquired “valuable experience in agriculture or industry; they learned to handle machinery and tools; they have discipline and steady habits of work. Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*, Revised Edition (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 120; Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States: A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), 184.

¹⁷⁶ The ineffectiveness of the increasingly conservative union was not lost on ethnic Mexican farm workers, particularly those further on the left. By early 1934, leftist workers consistently savaged the Mexican consulate in the Imperial Valley. “The Mexican Consul Terrazas,” one bilingual bulletin read, “is trying to organize the Mexican workers into a Mexican Union. In doing this, Terrazas is representing the Growers and the Vigilantes and not the people of Mexico in the United States, nor the Mexican workers. As in the past, the Consul will betray the workers into the hands of the growers.” “Report Rendered to the Honorable Federal Board of Investigation by the ‘Comite Mexicano de Bienestar Social’ (Mexican Social Welfare Committee), February 1935,” Folder 38, Carton 14, Taylor Papers, BANC; U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Education and Labor, *Violations of Free Speech and Rights of Labor, Part 55, S. Res. 266*, 74th Cong., 3rd Sess., 1940, 20185.

¹⁷⁷ While divisions between ethnic Mexicans and Filipinos were largely a result of job and wage competition, animosities could spring from social and cultural disagreements, too. For example, in early January 1934, some ethnic Mexicans in Brawley became upset when a few ethnic Mexican girls took part in a traditional Filipino parade. Vidal Valle, an ethnic Mexican in El Centro, explained that the young ethnic Mexicans had no reason to participate since the celebration had nothing to do with Mexico or Mexicans. Valle blamed both Filipinos and the fathers of the ethnic Mexican girls for the affront. “Mexican Labor Unions of the Imperial Valley,” Folder NF 69, Carton 37,

farm workers joined forces with equally militant Filipino farm workers and went on strike in 1930 to demand higher wages and basic worker protections, some of the more conservative members of the Asociación refused to sell food to strikers.

Nevertheless, ethnic Mexican and Filipino farm workers continued to forge connections with communists over the next few years. In January 1934, farm workers engaged in a strike in the midst of the lettuce harvest were joined by communist organizers Ray and Hancock, which infuriated boosters and business interests since the visiting leftists regularly declared that, contrary to popular narratives pushed by boosters and business interests, valley growers were not “starving little individual farmers” but active members of a corporate agricultural machine.¹⁷⁸ Additionally, the strike committee of the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU) – formerly AWIL – announced demands of higher wages for field and shed workers; equal pay for equal work regardless of race, gender, and age; agribusiness interests’ recognition of the CAWIU; guaranteed work days of at least 5 hours; free transportation to and from the fields; free clean drinking water; abolition of the contract labor system; and the release of incarcerated strikers. In a strike bulletin, which had been addressed to Mexicans, Filipinos, and “Americans” (whites and blacks), the strike committee stated:

All of us have been working in this valley under the most miserable conditions for years. The growers never paid us enough to save anything, but they make

Federal Writers’ Project Source Material on Migratory Labor, District No. 8, circa 1936-1939, BANC; “Protesta de la colonia en Brawley, Cal.,” *La Opinión*, 7 January 1934.

¹⁷⁸ Asked to speak about vigilantism in the Imperial Valley, Ray stated: “This was really where the vigilante activities got a great start. There was set up the Associated Farmers. Very few of them were ever farmers. Most of them were bankers, chamber of commerce types... there was a mobilization of what they’d call the citizens’ committees to break the strike. It was cleverly done, and tremendously significant and important. Our [workers’ organizers] need to counter that was equally important. In each case a strike was pictured as the prelude to Bolshevik revolution. It endangered every bank teller and clerk in the Woolworth stores equally. The issue was never that the agricultural farms were owned and controlled by huge big businesses; always what was pictured to the public were the starving little individual farmers, this little farmer who could not pay one cent more... These vigilante committees would be organized through all the interlocking organizations – the American Legions, the Kiwanis, and all these groups – of armed men to go out and beat up the strikers and the strike leaders. They would go into the community and carry on, the same as the Ku Klux Klan activities. This is what happened in the Imperial Valley.” Healey, Tape II, Side Two, COHR.

hundreds of thousands of dollars from our toil and sweat... [G]rowers are determined to use all of us as slaves... they can do this because they are organized, they have their police to terrorize the workers.¹⁷⁹

Indeed, on 9 January 1934, policemen, sheriffs, state patrolman and vigilantes attacked a caravan of hundreds of strikers en route to a meeting in El Centro. For the CAWIU strike committee, the means to overcome were simple and needed emphasis: “There is only one way that we can force the growers to pay us higher wages which we all need, that is thru (sic) our solidarity and a united front of all nationalities in all fields in the valley.”¹⁸⁰

In response, gun and tear gas-carrying local and state law enforcement and vigilantes came together once more and attacked the strike headquarters, Brawley’s Azteca Hall, forcing Ray, who was in a bilingual meeting with ethnic Mexican workers, to make a dramatic escape through a window at the back of the building. A tall and strong farm worker, who fellow farm workers called “Joaquín Murrieta,” lifted the young communist woman up so that she could jump into the arms of ethnic Mexican and Filipino farm workers waiting on the other side.¹⁸¹ For several nights the laborers took turns sheltering her from the police, who placed a \$10,000 reward for her and Hancock’s arrest. Despite the cultural differences and language barrier between them and white communists, farm workers did not entertain collecting the reward. To them, the young organizers were trusted allies.¹⁸²

In the face of a concerted campaign by law enforcement and business interests to silence and intimidate Ray, Hancock, and Nieto, organizers and farm workers continued to meet and

¹⁷⁹ A Special Appeal to the Workers of the Valley for a Central Strike on Monday,” January 15, 1934, Folder 7, Box 5, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, San Diego History Center (SDHC).

¹⁸⁰ Committee on Education and Labor, *Violations of Free Speech and Labor, Part 55*, 20142; “A Special Appeal,” Folder 7, Box 5, Women’s International League, SDHC.

¹⁸¹ Committee on Education and Labor, *Violations of Free Speech and Labor, Part 55*, 20180. For background on Joaquín Murrieta, a legendary figure in Chicana/o history, see Robert McKee Irwin, *Bandits, Captives, Heroines, and Saints: Cultural Icons of Mexico’s Northwest Borderlands* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), especially chapter two.

¹⁸² Healey, Tape II, Side Two, COHR.

evade police and vigilantes, until one morning the state highway patrol arrived at a worker camp Ray and Hancock were staying at.¹⁸³ Since they did not want to get caught in their ethnic Mexican host's house "because the family would be arrested and thrown across the border immediately," the pair "made a dash" and hid behind a tent home. However, the intense sun cast their shadow, which a nervous patrolman saw and approached to make the arrests. "We stood up," Ray recounted, "and there was the state highway patrolman going like this, just shaking all over with this submachine gun. They were terrified. We were the terrible Bolsheviks that they had heard about."¹⁸⁴

Nineteen-year-old Ray and 24-year-old Hancock were each charged with four separate crimes: inciting to riot, unlawful assemblage, vagrancy, and "rout," which Ray explained was a law from the 1870s that made it a crime for two or more people to gather together "to discuss an action which if consummated could result in a riot." Both Ray and Hancock were given the option to take a "floater," which would have allowed them to leave the Imperial Valley so long as they pled guilty and did not return for the duration of their subsequent sentences. The young communists – who Ray later in life critiqued as being too rigid in their applications of ideology – refused and were sent to the county jail in El Centro.¹⁸⁵ Jail conditions were deplorable, food

¹⁸³ Picketing and striking workers did attempt to gain permits for their demonstrations, but their requests were frequently denied by booster and business-controlled Imperial Valley governments. In one instance in late January 1934, an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union made a formal request upon the Sheriff of Imperial County and the Brawley Chief of Police for permission to hold a meeting at Azteca Hall. The application was denied. U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Education and Labor, *Violations of Free Speech and Labor, Part 54, S. Res. 266*, 74th Cong., 3rd Sess., 1940, 20044.

¹⁸⁴ Healey, Tape II, Side Two, COHR.

¹⁸⁵ Several young communists, including Ray, believed admitting guilt ran counter to communist ideology, thus to do so would be a betrayal to the cause. Older communists, however, did accept deals such as these because they reasoned they would be more useful to the cause free and in public. Among those who took a deal was CAWIU officer Pat Chambers. Besides Chambers, Ray, and Hancock, other white communist organizers were arrested and sent to jail, including Janet Elfman, a member of the Young Communist League. The latter, unlike the three mentioned, was not charged with criminal syndicalism or any other crime typically associated with leftist organizing, but rather prostitution. Local authorities found Elfman lodged with several Filipino men, which led them to conclude that she was a prostitute. According to Ray, after an invasive physical examination in the county

was poor in quality and quantity, water scarce, and rooms overcrowded since law enforcement arrested striking farm workers from the lettuce fields and, as of February 1934, the pea fields operated by companies like San Diego Produce. The scenes from the latter strike were notable since peas were harvested by a more diverse workforce, suggesting a multi-racial and multi-ethnic workers' movement. Indeed, according to one anti-worker eyewitness, there were "white men and niggers and Mexicans and Filipinos and southern white men all together in one union."¹⁸⁶ The blurring of ethnoracial divides prompted Ray to sarcastically but perceptively highlight how white workers became "incredibly courageous and thoughtful" and dropped their suspicions and hatreds of non-whites to embrace a multiracial and multi-ethnic farm worker movement.¹⁸⁷

In the jails, ill prisoners of all backgrounds, afflicted with contagious diseases like syphilis and tuberculosis, were not isolated from the general population, which became more problematic given the lack of due process. Many striking farm workers were held for weeks and months for reasons dubious, unknown, or a combination of the two.¹⁸⁸ Initially, Rosendo Rodríguez did not know exactly why he was incarcerated, but was then informed that his crime was not holding a passport. Others became aware of their crimes and verdicts through

jail, they "found out that she was a virgin. So they released her!" Healey, interviewed by Joel Gardner, Tape III, Side One, 24 October 24, 1972, COHR.

¹⁸⁶ Ethnic Mexican persons and families who refused to strike for the San Diego Produce Company were forced to leave the work camp by armed vigilantes. Although growers did offer a raise, strikers and the CAWIU determined that the wages offered would not have come close to covering the cost of living in the valley. "A Woman Views Imperial Valley," *The Open Forum*, 3 March 1934, Folder 16, Box 8, Women's International League, SDHC; "Se negaron a pizar en Calipatria," *La Opinión*, 16 February 1934.

¹⁸⁷ Ray consistently remarked that it was white workers who had the most to overcome to cross color lines. Healey, Tape III, Side One, COHR.

¹⁸⁸ Large numbers of women and men were "picked up" but not booked for any offense. Officially, 86 individuals (11 women and 75 men) were arrested between the 9th and 22nd of January alone, 48 of which were charged with disturbing the peace; 28 for vagrancy; 4 for resisting arrest; and 6 for trespassing. Several of these striking farm workers and allies were given additional local and state charges, with some bails set at a maximum of \$1,800. Committee on Education and Labor, *Violations of Free Speech and Labor, Part 55*, 20142-20143.

newspapers.¹⁸⁹ Because constitutional rights were being possibly violated, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and labor-friendly legal groups stepped in to help defend the imprisoned. Yet for some freed strikers, release from jail did not signal an end to their punishment. For instance, the night after completing a 90-day sentence, Antonio Solorzano was greeted at his home by eight armed vigilantes, who tossed Solorzano's one-year-old son aside and proceeded to viciously beat the farm worker. The terror continued the following week when, according to leftist reports out of the valley, "vigilantes made a night visit to the isolated chain gang camps, burned a fiery cross, left a knout and hangman's noose, with a note acknowledging the attack on Solorzano, and threaten[ed] death to Stanley Hancock [who was still in jail] and Frank Nieto."¹⁹⁰

Ethnic Mexican farm workers feared not only night-riding vigilantes, but also the actions of the state. Ray correctly noted that regardless of citizenship status, ethnic Mexicans were subject to forced removal and "voluntary deportation." By 1933, approximately 160,000 jobless, penniless, and migrant ethnic Mexicans, at the urging of city, county, and state governments, had left California by the latter method.¹⁹¹ After boosters and business interests lobbied the federal government for assistance in taking labor activism "to the grave," the Department of Labor

¹⁸⁹ Rodríguez suffered from tuberculosis, yet received no special care or attention. According to reports issued by the Los Angeles chapter of the American League Against War and Fascism, an organization comprised of communists and pacifists united against fascism and "race hatred," Rodríguez was confined in the "dark, damp, sunless tank for 24 days – getting no extra or different food – with, what the jail doctor admits, a case of far-advanced tuberculosis." *California's Brown Book* (Los Angeles: The American League Against War and Fascism, 1934), 14, Folder 8, Box 8, Women's International League, SDHC.

¹⁹⁰ Organizers were often the last bailed out by communist groups and communist-aligned unions like the CAWIU, as they often focused on springing from jail local workers first. However, because Ray now required an almost immediate abortion (she originally declined to enter the Imperial Valley because she wanted to have the procedure), she spent only a week in jail before posting bail. Ibid. 15; Healey, Tape III, Side One, COHR.

¹⁹¹ Balderrama and Rodríguez conservatively estimate that upwards of 1 million ethnic Mexicans from across the United States repatriated to Mexico during the 1930s. As noted in the pages above, these individuals left not only because they were promised assistance by the Mexican government and aid societies, or were without money and/or work, but also because a hostile atmosphere toward ethnic Mexicans existed. They were denied work and relief, and subject to forced deportation. Indeed, some ethnic Mexicans repatriated because close family members had been deported. Reisler, "Mexican Unionization," 568; Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 151.

facilitated more removals of ethnic Mexicans when it helped bring closer together growers, law enforcement, the Mexican consulate, the Asociación, and a Mexican state-controlled Baja California union.¹⁹² Members of the anti-strike and anti-communist coalition, by communicating more effectively with one another, compelled several militant and leftist ethnic Mexicans to leave the Imperial Valley for Mexicali. Some of these repatriated ethnic Mexicans were subsequently sent to a Mexican penal colony after they petitioned the Baja California governor for land promised them.¹⁹³

Back in the Imperial Valley, the Asociación's and Mexican consulate's aversions to organizing did not deter all non-leftist ethnic Mexicans from offering their support to farm workers desirous of change. Several merchants and small businessmen who belonged to Club Democrata, a local pro-New Deal political group that catered to "American citizens of Mexican origin," urged fellow ethnic Mexicans to organize. A social welfare committee reported: "The Mexican workers of Brawley were emphatically told [by Club Democrata representatives]: 'It is not only your right, but your obligation to get together, in accordance with President Roosevelt's Program, and with the spirit of the NRA [National Recovery Administration], and go and deal collectively with your employers and make the necessary arrangements with them to obtain a

¹⁹² Quoted in Molina, *How Race Is Made in America*, 98.

¹⁹³ Socialist farm worker Felipa Velásquez viuda de Arellano formed an agrarian committee that petitioned for land. The governor of Baja California ignored petitioners, which prompted Velásquez and the agrarian committee to criticize him for supporting wealthy foreign landowners but not the poor. In retaliation, the governor had Velásquez, her eight children, and 26 men sent to Islas Marías, a penal colony that had once been the crown jewel of the Porfirio Díaz regime. Velásquez' critiques were not baseless, as Baja California's governing elite had long courted foreign investment. For instance, former Baja California governor Abelardo L. Rodríguez partnered with three American "Border Barons" who wanted to bring vice tourism to Mexico's far north. The Border Barons teamed with Rodríguez to establish Tijuana's Agua Caliente, an opulent resort and casino that catered to the United States' rich, famous, and corrupt, including but not limited to the mob. The gambling casino and resort remained open through Rodríguez's Mexican presidency (1932-1934), but closed in 1935 when his anti-gambling successor assumed power. González, *Mexican Consuls*, 168-169; Andrés, *Power and Control*, 140; Benny J. Andrés Jr., "Invisible Borders: Repatriation and Colonization of Mexican Migrant Workers along the California Borderlands during the 1930s," *California History* 88 (2011), 9-10; Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 199-200; Paul J. Vanderwood, *Satan's Playground: Mobsters and Movie Stars at America's Greatest Gaming Resort* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

better deal.” Beyond uplifting neighbors and the ethnic Mexican community, support for farm workers benefitted members of Club Democrata in two significant ways: 1) higher wages for farm workers would have boosted local revenues; and 2) their own rights would have been bolstered, as their rights were as only as strong as those of the most vulnerable.¹⁹⁴

As such, Club Democrata members welcomed the introduction of federal conciliator General Pelham D. Glassford to the valley in the spring of 1934. Organization officer Margarito C.L. Ruíz – the community leader concerned with the prevalence of prostitution in Brawley’s *barrio* – stated, “We don’t want to see federal soldiers here, but we are convinced that justice and permanent peace can come here only through a federal conciliator.” Aware of his precarious position in the Imperial Valley’s social order, as well as the growing association of Americanness with anti-communism, Ruíz added, “I have observed labor troubles for fourteen years here. Never is either side right... An outside man with the government behind him is necessary... to protect the valley against conditions that are leading to communism. As an American citizen, I am thoroughly against communism; and I have always been ready to defend my country at all times.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Created by the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 (NIRA), the NRA established basic and supplementary labor codes for companies to abide by. The NIRA ensured collective bargaining rights, among other fair practices, to workers until 1935, when the legislation was ruled unconstitutional. “Comite Mexicano de Bienestar Social” (Mexican Social Welfare Committee), February 1935,” Folder 38, Carton 14, Taylor Papers, BANC.

¹⁹⁵ Based on records from the U.S. Selective Service and the Bureau of the Census, Ruíz was a laborer who had been born in Texas but moved to Southern California. Draft registration cards for the First World War – which mistakenly listed him as “Margarite” – indicate that he worked in a razor blade factory for the Gillette Company in Los Angeles. Ruíz then moved to the Imperial Valley, where he joined the pro-New Deal Mexican American organization and lobbied for broad improvements in the local ethnic Mexican community. He remained politically active in his later years, as evidenced by a 1967 article in the United Farm Workers’ publication, *El Malcriado*. A secondary source also notes that an “M.C.L. Ruíz” of Brawley served on that town’s cemetery committee that attempted to protect the rights of plot holders. “Democrat Club Says Glassford Is Wanted Here,” Folder 3, Box 24, Pelham Davis Glassford Papers, 1905-1956, Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California – Los Angeles (UCLA); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, roll 118, page 20A, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed 1 September 2017, <http://ancestry.com>; U.S. Selective Service System, *Draft Registration Cards for Fourth Registration for California*, Records of the Selective Service System, 1926-1975, NAI 603155, Record Group 147, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed 1 September 2017, <http://ancestry.com>; U.S. Selective Service System, *World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*, M1509, California, Los Angeles, Roll: 1531193; Draft Board: 3, digital image, Ancestry.com,

Despite Glassford's declaration that he was in the Imperial Valley "to act as a medium for peace in labor disputes," boosters and business interests did not share in Ruíz's enthusiasm for the special conciliator.¹⁹⁶ They were skeptical of all outside investigators and representatives. Earlier in 1933, federal officials had determined that to quell labor discontent and weaken communist ties, agribusiness interests needed to adopt a series of reforms, including providing better wages and creating a pro-business union. While growers conceded to the latter and eagerly worked with the Mexican consulate to form an agribusiness-controlled, "good" union, the former was out of the question.¹⁹⁷ Imperial Valley boosters and business interests reasoned that they, and not the federal government, knew what was best for agribusiness and the local community. Glassford especially – a retired brigadier general who most recently served as the alleged communist-tolerating police chief of Washington D.C. – could not possibly understand what was most beneficial for the Imperial Valley.¹⁹⁸ In fact, to Imperial Valley boosters and business interests, Glassford was as dangerous as disgruntled workers organizing precisely because he may not have stood firmly behind their profit-making scheme.

accessed 1 September 2017, <http://ancestry.com>; "Don Sotaco and His Miseries," *El Malcriado*, 1 March 1967; Harrell Glenn Clawson, *Almost Eleven: The Murder of Sue Sayers* (Victoria, BC: Friesen Press, 2013), 210.

¹⁹⁶ "Gen. Glassford Is In Valley," *Imperial Valley Democrat*, 6 April 1934

¹⁹⁷ The Associated Farmers publicly encouraged labor organization, provided it was "good" and without communist or liberal influence. As such, they openly discouraged dialogue between ethnic Mexican organizers and the CAWIU and American Civil Liberties Union. Committee on Education and Labor, *Violations of Free Speech and Organization, Part 54*, 20066; González, *Mexican Consuls*, 177.

¹⁹⁸ The Bonus Army – a massive group of disgruntled biracial military veterans – marched to Washington D.C. in 1932 to protest the decision made by a budget-conscious Congress to delay payment of veterans' bonuses for 13 years. Because the Bonus Army episode was a national embarrassment, the White House, acting on intelligence from the U.S. Army and the Bureau of Investigation's J. Edgar Hoover that alleged communist infiltration of the movement, ordered the veterans' camps dismantled. Glassford, who sympathized with the veterans and believed they had the right to protest, did not act on the order. However, higher level federal officials, citing fears of mob violence, intervened, which allowed an overzealous and possibly insubordinate General Douglas MacArthur to roll military tanks into the camps. MacArthur's aide, Major Dwight D. Eisenhower, recounted: "I told that dumb son-of-a-bitch he had no business going down there." Two veterans died in the skirmish, and in "protest of the Hoover administration's methods of handling the veteran's 'bonus army'," Glassford resigned his police post. "Gen. Glassford Is In Valley," *Imperial Valley Democrat*, 6 April 1934; Paul Dickson and Thomas B. Allen, "World War I: 100 Years Later; Marching on History," *Smithsonian Magazine* (Feb. 2003), <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/marching-on-history-75797769/?all>, accessed 1 September 2017.

From April to June 1934, Glassford interviewed Imperial Valley boosters and businessmen, as well as CAWIU members and civil rights advocates, and concluded that there had “been injustice and suppression of constitutional rights.”¹⁹⁹ Boosters and business interests did not deny that farm workers were not extended any lawful protections. B.M. Graham, the Chairman of the Imperial County Board of Supervisors, told Glassford, “I do not believe the communists have any rights whatsoever under the constitution, because it is their avowed purpose to overthrow the government of the United States by force.” District attorney Elmer Heald related that farm workers who had confessed to or who he suspected of being CAWIU members and attendees of “a communistic school in Los Angeles” did not have constitutional rights. Alleged enemies of the state and capital, then, deserved the harsh treatment they received.²⁰⁰ Glassford publicized such sentiments and activities, which Ray acknowledged retrospectively, stating the federal conciliator did much to shed light on “the violations of law on the part of the sheriff, the district attorney, the judges, the whole environment.”²⁰¹

Glassford found that Imperial Valley growers used the local and national press to gain support for their anti-worker cause. In a story first published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* and

¹⁹⁹ Authorized for Immediate Release by Gen. P.D. Glassford – Brawley, Calif., 15 June 1934, Folder 1, Box 24, Glassford Papers, UCLA.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ray explains that the young white communists were ideologically rigid and particularly anti-New Deal and anti-Roosevelt. She said, “We saw the state apparatus – the government, in other words – as one undifferentiated reactionary instrument of the ruling class. For instance, during the Glassford hearings, we refused to appear to testify before them, even though it would have been an enormously effective platform... If in any way you dealt with the state body, you were contaminating your purity.” Ethnic Mexicans in the CAWIU, however, did meet with Glassford, as did liberals employed by and affiliated with the ACLU. In their sit-down with Glassford, ethnic Mexican CAWIUs refuted claims that the CAWIU indoctrinated them in leftist ideology. “We have joined the C&AWIU,” one interviewee responded, “which tell us absolutely nothing about communism.” The farm worker added, “Besides we the workers cannot tell if a man is a communist or not because when workers go to the field we all carry a sack.” In other words, communist or not, they all had similar experiences and grievances that required attention. Ray conceded that because of federal investigations during this period, “momentary breakthroughs” led to limited improvements in living conditions. Healey, Tape III, Side One, COHR; Dorothy Ray Healey, Tape III, Side Two, Gardner, 24 October 1972, COHR; “Testimony Taken on the 8th Day of April, 1934 at the Planters Hotel, Brawley, California at Conference between Federal Conciliator General Pelham Glassford, Members of State and Farm Bureau Investigating Committee and Representatives of the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union,” Folder 5, Box 25, Glassford Papers, UCLA.

then reprinted in the *Los Angeles Times* and *New York Times*, agribusiness interests charged that the ACLU had been working for the Soviet Union to foment communist revolution in California's agricultural fields. In response, the director of the ACLU stated, "Some zealous patriots in California have cooked up a story in an effort to start another red scare."²⁰² Indeed, Imperial Valley boosters and business interests, led by the Associated Farmers, Imperial Valley Anti-Communist Association, and the Growers and Shippers Protective Association, circulated fears of an imminent communist takeover. Elmer Sears of the Anti-Communist Association declared that over 3,000 (and possibly 10,000) valley residents, "aroused to battle the 'revolutionists'" who painted "an entirely false picture of conditions here in this great agricultural empire," were ready to expel subversives from the Imperial Valley.²⁰³ To attract support, boosters and business interests fabricated plots of "red" sabotage, charging that militant workers intended "to burn sheds, destroy railroad bridges, use chemicals in the fields to destroy plants, and prevent workers from picking."²⁰⁴ Chester S. Williams, an educator and pacifist who visited the desert, warned Glassford that growers and their allies were capable of a "burning Reichstag trick": destroying property, such as railroad bridges, and pinning the blame and subsequent "terror" on leftists.²⁰⁵

Imperial Valley boosters and business interests' smear campaign against the ACLU followed physical attacks and acts of intimidation. Earlier during the labor disturbance, Helen Marston, the founder of the San Diego chapter of the ACLU and the daughter of influential San Diego businessman George W. Marston, drew the ire of boosters and business interests. In an

²⁰² "Moscow Link Denied by Liberties Union," *New York Times*, 22 February 1934.

²⁰³ "Reds Face New Drive," *Los Angeles Times*, 14 March 1934.

²⁰⁴ "Labor War Brews in Imperial Valley," *New York Times*, 1 April 1934.

²⁰⁵ Chester Williams to General Pelham D. Glassford, 30 April 1934, Folder NF 46, Carton 37, Federal Writers' Project Source Material, BANC.

article for the *Open Forum*, a liberal Los Angeles publication, Marston recounted how on a visit to the Imperial Valley she was marked as an agitator and “practically surrounded by armed police and growers.” But before she and other worker sympathizers were forced out of the valley, a female farm worker told her about a pressing camp concern: the lack of potable water. “We could boil the water for drinking,” Marston quoted the woman saying, “only we have so few vessels.” Such encounters corroborated what Marston already understood: most strikers and picketers, contrary to what the business-friendly presses had argued, were not the vanguard of “a young Red revolution,” but rather persons who wanted basic necessities, rights, and dignity. Moreover, even the most ardent radical leftists had legitimate criticisms which merited consideration.²⁰⁶

While Marston – perhaps owing to her connections to San Diego’s elites – left the valley notably shaken but relatively unharmed, other farm worker allies and free speech proponents were not as fortunate.²⁰⁷ According to Marston, before four guest speakers could deliver their planned speech to 1,000 workers gathered at Azteca Hall in late January 1934, several strangers appeared at the hotel where the speakers were staying and quietly abducted them from their rooms. Among the kidnapped was A.L. Wirin, attorney for the ACLU. The vigilantes drove

²⁰⁶ “A Woman Views Imperial Valley,” *The Open Forum*, 3 March 1934, Folder 16, Box 8, Women’s International League, SDHC; “S.D. Women ‘Bumped’ Out of Valley in Labor Clash,” *San Diego Union*, 19 March 1934.

²⁰⁷ Safely out of the Imperial Valley, Marston noted that armed and possibly inebriated vigilantes cornered her and ACLU attorneys and proceeded to run their guns up and down the “agitators’” bodies for about half an hour, until finally they were let go and told to never return. However, for Marston the intimidation did not end there. Members of the Brawley and El Centro chambers of commerce trekked west to the city of San Diego to visit Arthur Marston, Helen’s brother and the manager of the Marston Company, a department store. They hoped to pressure the Marstons by threatening to withdraw their business with the company. Their efforts failed. Arthur allegedly stated, “We have no authority over my sister Helen’s private (sic) and civic life. We respect her principles and convictions and we do not dictate to each other. She does not intrude upon our store management. In these times of economic depression I believe there is a current belief in your area that loyal citizens should trade at home, with the benefit to local merchants. Your business with the Marston Store is a drop in the bucket whereas it might be appreciated at home. Therefore I am going to suggest that you cancel your accounts here and take your business to Imperial Valley merchants.” Marston then walked out of the room and did not return. “In San Diego, 1935: An Historical Footnote by HCS,” Folder 14, Box 8, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom Collection, SDHC; González, *Mexicans and Consuls*, 181.

Wirin several miles into the unirrigated desert, beat him, and threatened him with death if he did not abandon the valley. Wirin, stranded and badly hurt, somehow found his way through the dark of the night to Calipatria and immediately contacted the governor of California, James Rolph, to inform him that vigilantes had struck once more. State and local law enforcement and officials, however, did not attempt to find the perpetrators in this case, nor in any of the other cases in which vigilantes followed and beat persons critical of Imperial Valley boosters and business interests.²⁰⁸

Glassford himself became a target of booster condemnation and vigilante intimidation. “As might be expected,” wrote the federal representative, “an exposure of the policies of intimidation and labor suppression, by the big interests in Imperial Valley, has resulted in an effort upon their part to personally discredit me.”²⁰⁹ Boosters and businessmen were certainly unimpressed by a critical report Glassford submitted to the Imperial County Board of Supervisors, in which he stated:

After more than two months of observation and investigation in Imperial Valley, it is my conviction that a group of growers have exploited a ‘communist’ hysteria for the advancement of their own interests; that they have welcomed labor agitation, which they could brand as ‘Red,’ as a means of sustaining supremacy by mob rule, thereby preserving what is so essential to their profits – *Cheap labor* (author’s emphasis); that they have succeeded in drawing into their conspiracy certain county officials who have become the principal tools of their machine.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Several other women and men were physically assaulted by vigilantes, including ACLU attorney Ernest Besig on 7 June 1934. Besig worked with Glassford to investigate the circumstances surrounding the arrest of seven ethnic Mexican organizers for vagrancy. Since Besig was denied access to the prisoners, he left shortly after arriving to the valley. As he was waiting for his transfer to a Southern Pacific Railroad line, Besig was viciously beaten by a vigilante who had followed him since he first arrived at his El Centro hotel. Although Glassford was able to deduce who the assailant was, no charges ever materialized. “Radical Leader Leaves Valley Today after Kidnapping at Brawley,” *Calexico Chronicle*, 24 January 1934; “El plagio es comunicado a Roosevelt,” *La Opinión*, 25 January 1934; “T.A. Reardon Reports No Serious Conditions,” *Calexico Chronicle*, 27 January 1934; “Wirin Posts Reward for ‘Kidnapers’,” *Los Angeles Times*, 25 May 1934; Committee on Education and Labor, *Violations of Free Speech*, Part 55, 20146-20148; Gray, “American Civil Liberties Union,” 273-277.

²⁰⁹ Authorized for Immediate Release by Gen. P.D. Glassford, Folder 1, Box 24, Glassford Papers, UCLA.

²¹⁰ Committee on Education and Labor, *Violations of Free Speech*, Part 55, 20148.

Yet despite these findings, and a problematic concession that it was “deplorable that many workers are not able to earn sufficient [wages] to maintain even a primitive, or savage, standard of living,” Glassford – himself a grower in Arizona – left the valley advocating agribusiness-friendly solutions: a government-controlled union; importation of foreign workers only in times of need; and deportation of all surplus labor. Not only did Glassford effectively condone prevailing conditions, but he also excused grower illiberalism, as evident in his endorsement of some the remarks made by previous investigators. In February 1934, investigators had stated: “It is regrettable that men who have put heroic effort into the reclamation of desert wastes are threatened with the loss of their hard-earned fortunes.”²¹¹ Glassford agreed with this assessment. The myth of the good, capitalist-yeoman farmer found in the pages of *The Winning of Barbara Worth* lived on. The potential for substantive reform was stunted.

Although Depression-era farm worker activism did not end in mid-1934 – even gaining some support from previously anti-leftist publications like the *San Diego Sun* following the murder of two farm workers in the city’s “backyard” in 1935 – vigilante terror and anti-free speech tactics took their toll on farm worker organization.²¹² CAWIU organizers, while ardent

²¹¹ In contrast to Glassford’s report, the February 1934 investigation, conducted by Simon J. Lubin, William J. French, and J.L. Leonard, was far more favorable toward farm workers, as it scathingly denounced the Imperial Valley’s boosters and business interests’ illiberalism. In one section, it read: “Merely to exist is not worth while (sic). Value attaches to living when there are possible the will and the effort toward improvement. Under a democracy, that will must be the people’s will, to the realization of which, free expression is an absolute essential. Freedom to assemble and to speak our thoughts and convictions must not be interfered with, especially by those who, as peace officers, are sworn to uphold the law... We uncovered sufficient evidence to convince us that in more than one instance the law was trampled under foot by representative citizens of Imperial County and by public officials under oath to support the law.” Ibid., 20142; “Lubin Slanders Imperial Valley Citizens,” *Brawley News*, 24 March 1934.

²¹² An editorial in the *San Diego Sun* referred to the disputes between predominantly white shed workers and lettuce growers and shippers as a bloody “civil war.” According to later reports in the *Sun*, as well as in communist bulletins circulated in San Diego and Los Angeles, workers Paul Knight and E.K. Hamaker were murdered by extralegal forces; police and vigilantes raided packing houses; 26 workers were arrested and two strikers deported. The newspaper opined that growers were to blame for such trends since workers had a right to organize “if a majority wishes to do so.” Landowners of the valley had an obligation to collectively bargain – “and not with firearms.” Copy of “Stop This Civil War,” *San Diego Sun*, 19 February 1935, Folder 2, Box 24, Glassford Papers, UCLA; Copy of “Imperial Valley Faces” *San Diego Sun*, 1 March 1935, Folder 2, Box 24, Glassford Papers, UCLA; Committee on Education and Labor, *Violations of Free Speech, Part 55*, 20188.

allies of farm workers, eventually became too focused on strikes and not labor organization. Further disrupting meaningful organization, the Mexican consul at Calexico, in coordination with Imperial Valley growers and shippers, strong-armed ethnic Mexican farm workers away from the worker-favored CAWIU and into the Asociación.²¹³ As conservative labor rose to prominence, Imperial Valley agribusiness interests banded closer together, officially forming a local chapter of the Associated Farmers in 1936. Leadership included the sheriff and superior court judge of Imperial County and various other boosters and business interests. One of the more critical orders of business for the newly formed Associated Farmers of Imperial Valley was inquiring as to the cost of machine guns. Its president explained that the organization wanted to donate the weapons to set up a local “National Guard, or something.” The “unstable condition in the Mexican territory” and potential “revolution” allegedly frightened the border community.²¹⁴

In some respects, the movement of peoples further contributed to the decline in labor activism in the Imperial Valley. The forced relocation of labor leaders, either to prisons or abroad, was deeply debilitating. As historian Natalia Molina highlights, the U.S. Border Patrol ramped up its efforts at deporting undesirables like Mike Gutiérrez, a valley labor organizer arrested and jailed for five months in 1934 who had contracted syphilis sometime thereafter. In March 1940, a Border Patrol agent, quite possibly at the urging of the Associated Farmers, showed up at Gutiérrez’s home and arrested him on grounds he had a communicable disease and was therefore a health risk and likely to become a public charge – an accusation used against many ethnic Mexicans during the Depression to increase their deportability.²¹⁵ Impoverished

²¹³ González, *Mexican Consuls*, 193.

²¹⁴ Committee on Education and Labor, *Violations of Free Speech, Part 55*, 20207-20213.

²¹⁵ Immigration officials learned of Gutiérrez’s case of syphilis after the labor organizer renewed his border-crosser card. Gutiérrez had used a health card, which showed he had been treated for the communicable disease, to prove continuous residence in the United States. Despite appeals from organized labor and civil rights organizations, Gutiérrez and three other Mexican nationals treated for syphilis were ordered deported. Molina, *How Race is Made in America*, 99-111; for other studies on the association of ethnic Mexicans with disease and degeneration during the

and surrounded by squalor through no fault of their own, ethnic Mexicans certainly made use of public resources, medical or otherwise, when possible. The Indigent Commissioner of Imperial County reported that a third of those seeking and receiving aid were ethnic Mexicans. In El Centro, “150 Mexican and colored families” were “either on direct relief or on the SERA [California’s State Emergency Relief Administration] rolls.” However, many ethnic Mexicans who sought aid in the Imperial Valley did not receive public assistance because they were deemed racially, culturally, and, as seemingly evidenced in their affiliations with leftists, politically un-American. Ethnic Mexicans’ foreignness marked them both as undeserving of state resources and outside the bounds of citizenship and its privileges.²¹⁶

To be clear, relief was generally discouraged in farm working communities regardless of the composition of the workforce since corporate farmers preferred agricultural laborers work for cheap. However, perhaps in an effort to drive a wedge between farm workers, agribusiness-influenced relief agencies did provide some relief to “many of the [white] refugees [who] have been on relief in Texas, Oklahoma, and elsewhere.” In the Imperial Valley, SERA, which worked closely with the Associated Farmers, almost exclusively aided only whites, ignored virtually all ethnic Mexicans, and forced Indians onto a reservation in Yuma, Arizona.²¹⁷ Not only did “Okies” receive preferential treatment for federal and local welfare, they also tended to take jobs – at lower wages – once held by ethnic Mexicans.²¹⁸ As the Depression wore on, many

first half of the 20th century, see Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), especially chapter two.

²¹⁶ “The Future of Mexican Immigration,” Folder 1, Carton 11, Taylor Papers, BANC; Henry A. Harris to Paul Taylor, 25 April 1935, Folder 25, Carton 14, Taylor Papers, BANC;

²¹⁷ During a tour with Margartio C.L. Ruíz, sympathetic liberals noted that SERA did virtually nothing for Brawley’s ethnic Mexicans. H.E. Drobish, Director of the Division of Rural Rehabilitation to Dr. Lowry Nelson, Regional Advisor, 17 April 1935, Folder 14, Carton 15, Taylor Papers, BANC; “Report of Tour in Brawley,” 29 April 1935, Folder 16, Carton 15, Taylor Papers, BANC; Andrés, *Power and Control*, 122.

²¹⁸ Illustrative of this point is the case of cotton. In 1937, when 105,185 white migrants entered California to pick cotton, newspapers suddenly became concerned with the level of destitution found in farm worker camps. The ethnic Mexicans they had replaced received no such attention from the press. Furthermore, these predominately

desperate and dependent white migrants to the Imperial Valley, no longer at the very bottom of the socioeconomic ladder, were unable or unwilling to steep themselves in the multiracial and multi-ethnic radical tradition of Greater San Diego.

Caravans of Hope

By the late 1930s – after a series of failed development schemes, engineering blunders, government bailouts, dubious business practices and foreclosures, and a concerted anti-strike campaign that spurred the demise of the CAWIU in 1935 – Imperial Valley boosters and business interests appeared to have finally and fully turned a speculative dream and promise into a lucrative realization. Two rebellious commodities – river waters and workers – were now under their power and control, making productive industrial farms a reality. Government actions less than a year after American entrance into World War II further cemented agribusiness' reign over the Imperial Valley. In 1942, the federal government adopted the Bracero Program, which imported workers from Mexico to replace the American labor sent to war, and completed the Alamo Canal's replacement, the All-American Canal.²¹⁹ The publicly-financed and appropriately-named waterway, which ran entirely within the United States along the southern international border, provided corporate farms in the valley with yet more water with effectively no obligation to provide a single drop to Mexican farmers. As Greater San Diego congressman

white newcomers (blacks and ethnic Mexicans moved west, too, though in far smaller numbers) swelled an already glutted pool of farm workers. Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold*, 163.

²¹⁹ The All-American Canal was not a wartime project, as it was planned many years earlier as part of the Boulder Canyon Project Act of 1928, which funded the construction of not only the All-American Canal, but also the Hoover and Imperial Dams. The canal was completed after the dam, using persons on work relief as its main source of labor. Although resident “aliens” were eligible for said relief work, these persons generally did not work on construction of the All-American Canal since public aid required a minimum of one-year residency. Mexican American bodies, however, were suddenly American enough to serve in the military. Andrés, *Power and Control*, 122; for a short description on Greater San Diego's Mexican American G.I.s in World War II, see José Rodolfo Jacobo and Richard Griswold del Castillo, “World War II and the Emerging Civil Rights Struggle,” in *Chicano San Diego: Cultural Space and the Struggle for Justice*, ed. Richard Griswold del Castillo (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 104-105.

and canal endorser Phil D. Swing remarked: “That is the way God planned it, when he put Mexico on the lower end of the [Colorado] river, that Mexico should get what water was left after we got done using it.”²²⁰

Although Congressman Swing spoke specifically about Mexico and Mexicans in Mexico, he effectively captured the prevailing sentiment amongst most of Southern California’s boosters and business interests who thought little of the ethnic Mexicans in their midst. While boosters and business interests continued to benefit from government projects and policies, ethnic Mexicans were denied access to state resources when even low paying jobs were unavailable. In a way, then, the epigram Greater San Diego booster William E. Smythe wished away – “California is the rich man’s paradise and the poor man’s hell” – had become more applicable in the 1930s than it had been before, especially when considering the number of ethnic Mexicans who had since the early 20th century trekked to Southern California, to only find empty promises. With the prospects of employment or state relief low and deportation high during the Depression, some disillusioned ethnic Mexicans like Juan Hernández opted to end their respective lives.²²¹

²²⁰ Swing’s influence on Greater San Diego during the first few decades of the 20th century is notable. Before he took over military booster William Kettner’s 11th congressional district, which covered San Diego and Imperial Counties, in 1921, Swing was district attorney of Imperial County (1911-1915), chief counsel for the Imperial Irrigation District (1916-1919), and superior court judge of Imperial County (1919-1921). Swing held congressional office until 1933, several years after he had helped steer the passage of the Boulder Canyon Project Act of 1928. U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Irrigation and Arid Lands, *Protection and Development of the Lower Colorado River Basin: Part 1, H.R. 1149*, 67th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1922, 12; U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, *Protection and Development of the Lower Colorado River Basin: Information Presented to the Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, H.R. 2903*, 68th Cong., 1st Sess., 1924, 10; Martin, “Growth By the Gallon,” 240-245.

²²¹ *La Opinión* reported that Hernández, whose last job was probably with the Simons Brick Company just outside of the city of Los Angeles, had grown despondent and, with his wife and four young children away visiting relatives, penned a suicide note that stated, “Life has no point for me,” loaded a gun, and shot himself twice, once in the chest and once in the mouth. He somehow survived the suicide attempt but remained on life support. No newspaper followed up on Hernández’s case, but census records from 1940 listed Hernández’s wife, Soledad Hernández, as widowed, thereby suggesting Juan likely succumbed to his wounds. “Un Mexicano que intenta suicidarse,” *La Opinión*, 5 January 1934; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, Montebello, Los Angeles, California*, Roll: T627_239, Page: 8A, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed 1 September 2017, <http://ancestry.com>.

Labor organizer Luisa Moreno argued that undocumented sorrow and misery like that experienced by Hernández was common for ethnic Mexicans in the United States. In an address delivered at the Fourth Annual Conference of the American Committee for Protection of Foreign Born, held in Washington D.C. on 3 March 1940, Moreno highlighted the “hunger wages” paid to ethnic Mexican workers who helped build the American West and enriched “the stockholders of Great Western Sugar Company, the Bank of America, and other large interests.” She also noted that ethnic Mexicans helped subsidize the American experience by paying taxes directly and indirectly – unlike corporations that would consistently “bleed” taxpayers – even when denied state resources and rights. In short, ethnic Mexicans were both fundamental and positive members of American society, and “victims of a setup for discrimination.”²²² Yet Moreno, a field organizer for the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA), an interracial leftist union that inherited the radical tradition of the disbanded CAWIU, saw firsthand that “in the face of greater hardships, the ‘Caravans of Sorrow’ are becoming the ‘Caravans of Hope.’”²²³

While the Imperial Valley became a relatively quiet site for overt leftist labor activism in the late 1930s and into 1940s, Greater San Diego’s coast teemed with renewed activity, which Moreno observed when she arrived in San Diego in 1937. Much like El Congreso del Pueblo Habla Española, a path-breaking labor and civil rights organization co-founded by Moreno in

²²² Luisa Moreno, “Caravans of Sorrow: Noncitizen Americans of the Southwest,” in *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States*, ed. David G. Gutiérrez (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1996), 121-122.

²²³ The “Caravans of Sorrow,” according to Moreno, referred to the experiences of ethnic Mexicans in the United States, often left untold in “university libraries, files of government, welfare and social agencies.” For a brief period, the CAWIU helped tell the ethnic Mexican story. When the leftist union disbanded, UCAPAWA helped tell their story, as well as those of other non-whites across the United States. This was partially the case because in addition to being ideologically aligned, the CAWIU and UCAPAWA drew from the same ranks. Dorothy Ray Healey, for instance, became the vice president of UCAPAWA in 1939. Moreno, “Caravans of Sorrow,” 120, 123; Cecilia M. Tsu, *Garden of the World: Asian Immigrants and the Making of Agriculture in California’s Santa Clara Valley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 196; Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold*, 207.

1938, ethnic Mexican workers in San Diego sought “an improvement of social, economic, and cultural conditions, and for the integration of Spanish-speaking citizens and noncitizens into the American nation.”²²⁴ In the late 1930s and 1940s, ethnic Mexicans in San Diego such as Frank Nieto’s protégé, Roberto Galván, united with Moreno and UCAPAWA to challenge the world created by boosters and business interests. Specifically, they united with workers in San Diego’s second-largest industry, fish canneries, to change prevailing conditions. Not only did they collectively demand fair wages, safer work environments, and better living conditions, they also clamored for the guarantee of constitutional rights and full inclusion into the American polity. For boosters and business interests, such dreams sounded subversive and un-American.

²²⁴ Moreno, “Caravans of Sorrow,” 123.

4

(Un-)American Activities on the Waterfront: *Cannery Workers, “Communists,” and Anti-Communists, 1930s-1950*

The committees fearlessly and inclusively have exposed inciters and promoters of racial, religious, economic, and class strike, conducted either in the interests of foreign powers or by exponents of native totalitarianism.

- California Senate Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities, 1949

Strange things are happening in this land... Yes, tragically, the unmistakable signs are before us – before us, who really love America.

- Luisa Moreno, 1949

In October 1949 Luisa Moreno, a former vice-president of the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA), temporarily left her sun-kissed home garden in San Diego to issue a stern warning to unionists at a conference of the Congress of Industrial Organizations: “Strange things are happening in this land.”¹ It had been a particularly trying number of months for the former UCAPAWA leader. “I resigned in March 1947,” Moreno explained, “thinking erroneously that I had the right to become a housewife and enjoy the privilege of being a grandmother. But that was fantasy, for out of the blue sky, one early morning I received a summons to appear before Jack Tenney’s very un-American

¹ Juliette A. Williams to Whom It May Concern, 4 August 1949, Folder 53, Box 7, Robert Kenny Papers, Southern California Library of Social Studies Research, Los Angeles, CA (SCL); Address delivered by Luisa Moreno to the 12th Annual Convention, California CIO Council, 15 October 1949, <http://kennethburt.com/blog/?p=754>, accessed 1 September 2017; Moreno’s address also partially quoted in George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 251.

Committee.” Besides being called to testify before the California Senate Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities (CUAC) in 1948, Moreno had a warrant for her arrest issued by the Department of Justice, and, because the Guatemala-born woman had not yet secured American citizenship, was summoned to report to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) for an ominous “interview regarding immigration status.”²

Moreno, a former member of the Communist Party USA, co-founder of the Latina/o labor and civil rights organization known as El Congreso del Pueblo de Habla Española, and one-time organizer of multi-racial and multi-ethnic cannery workers in San Diego during the late 1930s and 1940s, had become a prime target of anti-communist crusaders that included not only CUAC, the Department of Justice, and INS, but also the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), the powerful fish cannery companies located on San Diego’s waterfront, and various local vigilante groups. Zealous in their shared pursuit to stamp out “inciters and promoters of racial, religious, economic, and class strike,” anti-communist forces also targeted other ethnic Mexican leftist leaders in San Diego, notably cannery worker Roberto Galván.³

In this chapter, then, I explore how San Diego boosters and business interests, tied ever tightly to the military-industrial complex, leisure tourism, and fish canning, concluded that leftist activism – by Moreno, Galván, or any other labor organizers and workers – had no place in their model community. To continue to squeeze out “the next little dollar,” San Diego’s boosters and business interests labeled outspoken workers subversives engaged in un-American activities.⁴

² “Data on Luisa Moreno Bemis,” Folder 53, Box 7, Kenny Papers, SCL.

³ Committee on Un-American Activities, California Senate, *Fifth Report of the Senate Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities* (Sacramento: California Senate, 1949), 1.

⁴ Here I borrow from historian, theorist, and political activist Mike Davis, who has written about San Diego’s close economic, social, and political ties to the military and war. Davis argues that San Diego’s working class is left marginalized precisely because of its deep dependence to the military-industrial complex. See Mike Davis, “The Next Little Dollar: The Private Governments of San Diego,” in *Under the Perfect Sun: The San Diego Tourists Never See*, by Mike Davis, Jim Miller, and Kelly Mayhew (New York: New Press, 2003).

Such was the case with the cannery workers of San Diego's lucrative, and second most important industry, fish canneries. As I demonstrate, while fish cannery workers – predominantly comprised of ethnic Mexican women – were simply tapping into a “cannery culture” that both fostered community and called for greater labor and civil rights, boosters and business interests saw only radical leftism. Conveniently for these profit-seekers, the “maelstrom of Cold War anti-communism,” to use historian Zaragosa Vargas' words, provided an opportunity to attempt to assert greater control over an increasingly vocal ethnic Mexican working class that they had once reluctantly welcomed to San Diego.⁵

The Barrioization of San Diego

In 1905, when San Diego was growing yet still little more than a backwater to Los Angeles, teen-aged James Russell Johnson arrived in the tiny Southern California city and settled in the neighborhood of Logan Heights, which rested just southeast of downtown. Reminiscing over his first several years in San Diego, Johnson remembered crossing the border during the Baja California revolution, when he bought a serape from an *insurrecto*. He also recalled the dealings of his father's contemporary, promoter William E. Smythe, who in the first two decades

⁵ Zaragosa Vargas, “Mexican Americans Caught in the 50s ‘Witch Hunt’,” *The Oregon State University Center for the Humanities Newsletter* (Fall 2006), 1. Black working class and civil rights organizations have garnered the most attention from historians examining the impact anti-communism had on non-whites in the United States. To be sure, black leftists and civil rights proponents encountered significant federal surveillance and repression, but as Zaragosa Vargas has found, so too did some Mexican Americans. In *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights*, Vargas argues that through labor organizations Mexican Americans were better able to fight for civil rights. Involvement in labor activism in turn attracted some attention from anti-communists in and out of government. This is unsurprising considering some Latina/o groups were modeled after black counterparts. Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); for domestic black radicalism during the Cold war, see Robert W. Cherny, William Issel, and Kieran Walsh Taylor, eds., *American Labor and the Cold War: Grassroots Politics and Postwar Political Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Michael J. Heale, *McCarthy's Americans: Red Scare Politics in State and Nation, 1935-1965* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998); Jeff R. Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948-1968* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 2003); James Zeigler, *Red Scare Racism and Cold War Black Radicalism* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015); for black American leftists abroad, see Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), especially chapter five; Rebecca Mina Schreiber, *Cold War Exiles in Mexico: U.S. Dissidents and the Culture of Critical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

of the 20th century attempted to create in southern San Diego County a market-oriented and tax-free farming cooperative of white investor-farmers, or Little Landers.⁶ It was not the only white enclave Johnson remembered, as he said of Logan Heights: “There was one Mexican family that lived up in the middle of the block where we were, and it is the only one that I remember being in that area.”⁷ Although such an observation invites some skepticism considering ethnic Mexicans had long lived in San Diego and played a notable role in its making, Johnson’s central point need not be lost: despite its close proximity to the U.S.-Mexico international border, San Diego was a segregated town in the first handful of years in the 1900s, and many white residents had little contact with ethnic Mexicans. Yet as the next section argues, capitalist progress drastically changed the demographics of the region, particularly starting in the 1920s. Belief in a booster worldview that sought maximum profits and tranquility would ensure that despite such demographic shifts, segregation and other forms of social control would be deemed necessary.

Logan and Its Environs

In the early 20th century, ethnic Mexicans lived in several small enclaves throughout the city. Writers for the New Deal’s Federal Writers’ Project (FWP) noted that several families with

⁶ The elder Johnson, Brigham “Briggs” M. Johnson, was so impressed with San Diego’s potential that he immediately returned to Mesa, Arizona and sold his contracting business to relocate to Southern California. After stopping to help stem the flooding in the Imperial Valley in 1906, Johnson joined his family in San Diego and sold real estate. However, he did not work with Smythe or invest in his ventures, including the overwhelmingly white Little Landers Colony. Smythe pitched Little Landers as a city-adjacent utopia comprised of individual private farms tilling “the choicest land” in unison for the common welfare. Farmers – former teachers, professors, lawyers, doctors, preachers, artists, bankers, and other professionals – were to spend less than they earned, and significant profits were to be secured through the subdivision and sale of Little Lander land. The profits from expansion were “to create new public improvements without taxation.” Smythe enticed hundreds of investor-farmers and formally incorporated the venture in 1909. The “paradise of the common man” quickly fell on hard times due to a lack of funds, water, and farming knowledge, yet because of its cross-border trading with Tijuana, survived until 1918. Little Landers, Incorporated was disestablished since it owed considerable federal taxes. James Russell Johnson, Sr. interviewed by Robert G. Wright, 30 August 1980, transcript, San Diego History Center Oral History Project, San Diego History Center (SDHC); William E. Smythe, *The Little Landers of... Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Little Landers of Los Angeles, 1913), n.p.; Lawrence B. Lee, “The Little Landers Colony of San Ysidro,” *Journal of San Diego History* 21 (Winter 1975), 26-48; Richard Griswold del Castillo, “Revolution to Economic Depression,” in *Chicano San Diego: Cultural Space and the Struggle for Justice*, edited by Richard Griswold del Castillo (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 78.

⁷ Johnson, Oral History Project, SDHC.

ties to the old *californios* had historically congregated in San Diego's Old Town, while more recent arrivals preferred to settle in New Town (downtown) and along waterfront areas in Logan Heights since that is where most commercial activity and urban development took place.⁸ Additionally, prior to 1910 ethnic Mexican communities were established in more affordable southern San Diego County, including San Ysidro, National City, Chula Vista, and Imperial Beach.⁹ The location of their homes allowed early 20th century ethnic Mexican women to work as domestics, while many ethnic Mexican men struggled to make ends meet in the growing city by working for the San Diego Gas & Electric Company, the "street railway, and on water works, or for general contractors at a minimum wage of \$2.00 a day."¹⁰ Ethnic Mexican men also worked on the construction of magnate John D. Spreckels' binational San Diego & Arizona Railway. Slowed by a host of obstacles, the "locura de Spreckels" ("Spreckels' folly") was finally completed in November 1919. Although Spreckels drove the ceremonial "golden spike," ethnic Mexican workers from Greater San Diego and elsewhere completed much of the vital work, building the 23 tunnels and 14 bridges, and laying the hundreds of miles of track that connected San Diego to the Imperial Valley and markets in the east.¹¹

⁸ As noted in chapter one, the economic, political, and social decline of the *californios* effectively blurred the line between the old ethnic Mexican California elite, and the poorer and more recent arrivals. Federal Writers' Project, *San Diego: A California City* (San Diego: San Diego Historical Society, 1937), 56.

⁹ Rudy P. Guevarra, Jr., *Becoming Mexipino: Multiethnic Identities and Communities in San Diego* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 46.

¹⁰ College Woman's Club of San Diego, *Pathfinder Social Survey of San Diego: Report of Limited Investigations of Social Conditions in San Diego, California* (San Diego: Labor Temple Press, 1914), 34.

¹¹ Besides the difficult geography, Spreckels' railway construction was slowed by revolutionary activity in Baja California, massive flooding in 1916, financial troubles which the Southern Pacific Railroad papered over, and the temporary seizure of the railroad by the U.S. federal government during World War I. Under the control of the federal government, all construction on railroad was halted; however, after a personal visit by Spreckels to Washington D.C., the federal government reversed its decision and granted the railroad a special exemption. The San Diego & Arizona Railway was returned to Spreckels for its completion. The rationale provided by Washington D.C. was that the railway was vital to military operations, as it serviced the U.S. Navy's Pacific Fleet. María Eugenia Castillo, "El ferrocarril San Diego-Arizona y el ferrocarril Tijuana-Tecate: Un corredor de herencia cultural binacional," *Frontera Norte* 16 (July-December 2004), 119-121.

When the San Diego & Arizona Railway was finished, ethnic Mexicans continued to work for the company, as the rail line required workers to maintain it.¹² They also turned to other industries for employment. Many split time between the Imperial Valley, where they worked as seasonal farm workers on corporate farms, and San Diego. In San Diego, a sizeable number of ethnic Mexican men found work as day laborers for construction companies busy building the rapidly growing Southern California city – from 1910 to 1920, the total population of the city of San Diego ballooned from 39,578 to 74,361, and in 1930 reached 147,995.¹³ The ethnic Mexican population grew too, as over the same twenty year period the “Mexican” population (nationals and U.S.-born) grew from 1,222 in 1910 to 9,266 in 1930.¹⁴ These numbers, however, are likely an undercount: owing to their mixed immigration statuses and the mobile nature of their work, not to mention their legal racial classification as white, population numbers were always inexact.¹⁵

While population figures were imprecise, settlement patterns were more easily discernible. In the late 1910s and 1920s, ethnic Mexican enclaves established earlier in the century (i.e. San Ysidro, Chula Vista) continued to grow, and newer *colonias* in relatively rural Lemon Grove, Escondido, Encanto, and El Cajon emerged as well. Yet Logan Heights remained

¹² Ethnic Mexicans worked for the San Diego & Arizona Railway well into the 1950s. Griswold del Castillo, “Revolution and Depression,” 80.

¹³ According to the California governor’s Mexican Fact-Finding Committee, by 1928 16.4% of construction workers were ethnic Mexicans, though most of these jobs were found in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Regardless, in San Diego, construction work was still quite available. Federal Writers’ Project, *San Diego*, 57; Mexican Fact-Finding Committee, *Mexicans in California: Report of Governor C.C. Young’s Mexican Fact-Finding Committee* (San Francisco: California, State Building, 1930), 95; LeRoy E. Harris, “The Other Side of the Freeway: A Study of Settlement Patterns of Negroes and Mexican Americans in San Diego, California,” (PhD diss., Carnegie-Mellon University, 1974), 85.

¹⁴ Although the ethnic Mexican population of San Diego remained numerally small, it is worth highlighting that their percentage of the total population increased from 1910 to 1930. In each decade, their percentages of the total populations were 3.1%, 3.7%, and 6.3%, respectively. Harris, “Other Side of the Freeway,” 85.

¹⁵ Ethnic Mexicans were often obscured in census data, as they were often included in figures on whites, blacks, and Indians. The only instance when “Mexican” was listed as a racial category of identification was the 1930 census. Clara E. Rodríguez, *Changing Race: Latinos, the Census, and the History of Ethnicity in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

the center of the ethnic Mexican community in San Diego. Connie Zuñiga, a longtime resident of Logan Heights remarked: “[Y]ou look at the history of Mexicans in San Diego; they all started out in Logan Heights.”¹⁶ This was partially because a strong Mexican base already existed, but it was also one of the few residential areas open to them. By the 1920s, most Anglos and white ethnics, including James Russell Johnson and his family, had established or concentrated in other parts of the city, such as the neighborhood of Little Italy in west downtown, the Portuguese-dominated neighborhood of Point Loma, Mission Valley (which includes the area near Mission San Diego and the Presidio), and large sections of northern San Diego County.¹⁷ Ethnic Mexicans – but also blacks, Filipinos, Chinese, and Japanese – moved into the aging, but relatively affordable and centrally located structures of Logan Heights. As historian Rudy P. Guevarra, Jr., notes, although Logan Heights was dominated numerically by ethnic Mexicans, it was also a vibrant multi-racial locale complete with businesses, social gathering spots, and support centers.¹⁸

Perhaps the most important of these centers was Neighborhood House, which longtime Logan Heights resident María E. García described as “the heart of the Latino, Mexican-American and Mexican community [in San Diego].”¹⁹ Founded in 1914 by sisters Helen and Mary Marston, members of the College Women’s Club, and faculty and students from the

¹⁶ Quoted in Guevarra, *Becoming Mexipino*, 45.

¹⁷ The Johnsons moved south to San Ysidro. Closer to the border, James Russell Johnson made frequent visits to the line and Tijuana. Johnson, in fact, was one of the several hundreds of San Diegans who congregated at the line to watch skirmishes between the anarcho-syndicalist *insurrectos* and counterrevolutionaries. “you could see the revolutionaries,” Johnson stated, “coming down on their horses there and hear when they were firing... I don’t think there [were] any heavy [weapons] of any kind, just regular guns.” When the fighting quieted, Johnson ventured into Tijuana and witnessed the burial of bodies, as well as the *insurrectos*’ “cleaning out” of all the saloons. Johnson, Oral History Project, SDHC.

¹⁸ Federal Writers’ Project, *San Diego*, 56-58; Guevarra, *Becoming Mexipino*, 46.

¹⁹ María E. García, “A History of Neighborhood House in Logan Heights: 1918-1929,” *San Diego Free Press*, 10 May 2014, <https://sandiegofreepress.org/2014/05/a-history-of-neighborhood-house-in-logan-heights-1918-1929/>, accessed 1 September 2017. García has published a series of articles on Neighborhood House for the *San Diego Free Press*, a leftist newspaper and website, and recently published a book expanding on said articles. See María E. García, *La Neighbor: A Settlement House in Logan Heights* (San Diego: San Diego Printers, 2016).

Catholic Bishop's School in northern San Diego County, Neighborhood House was modeled after Jane Addams' Hull House in Chicago.²⁰ The institution offered cooking and sewing classes for adults and children; child care; night school; English language instruction; and basic health care. It also served as a meeting spot, hosting evening dances and club meetings for young girls and "young Mexican men for the purpose of discussing civic questions."²¹ Part of the white, middle class, Protestant progressive Americanization movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Logan Heights' settlement house especially focused on immigrant women, instructing them in American political and cultural values. This, reformers believed, not only safeguarded the nation's well-being, but also redefined and affirmed their own position in the American polity.²²

Helen Marston, the daughter of affluent San Diegan George W. Marston and later defender of Imperial Valley farm worker activism during the Great Depression, seemingly did not hold such views. Although she grew up believing in the common stereotype that ethnic Mexicans were lazy and, as University of Southern California sociologist Emory S. Bogardus explained, steeped in "unAmerican (sic) ways" that could lead to "revolutionary and anarchistic

²⁰ Jean M. Smith, "The Voting Women of San Diego, 1920," *Journal of San Diego History* 26 (Spring 1980), <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/1980/april/voting/>, accessed 1 September 2017; Molly McClain, "The Bishop's School, 1909-2009," *Journal of San Diego History* 54 (Fall 2008), 252-253.

²¹ Neighborhood House pamphlet, Folder 16, Box 19, Family Service Association of San Diego Records, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Access, San Diego State University (SDSU); Mary H. Taylor to E.P. Chartres-Martin, 31 March 1921, Folder 6, Box 26, San Diego County Department of Public Health Records, 1876-1981, SDSU; "The Neighborhood House," Folder 10, Box 18, Leonard Fierro Papers, SDSU.

²² Historian Gayle Gullett claims that white, middle class, and Protestant women reformers in California placed themselves at the center of the Americanization effort. Gullett writes: "According to activists, American values could not take root unless immigrant wives and mothers taught them in the immigrant home; moreover, that instruction could not effectively occur unless women reformers had first instructed immigrant women. Women progressives perceived Americanization as crucial to the nation's well being and dependent upon women's political activism. The Americanization campaign, they concluded, offered them a vehicle for sponsoring legislation, managing programs, and even holding office – in short, for achieving full citizenship." Gayle Gullett, "Women Progressives and the Politics of Americanization in California, 1915-1920," *Pacific Historical Review* 64 (Feb. 1995), 71-74. See also Stephanie Lewthwaite, *Race, Place, and Reform in Mexican Los Angeles: A Transnational Perspective, 1890-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009), especially chapter one.

tendencies,” her time as a resident worker at Neighborhood House cemented her already shifting opinion.²³ Counter to what Bogardus and fellow white progressives believed, ethnic Mexicans were not thriftless, untrustworthy dangers to the United States. In 1920, she wrote in social work magazine *Survey* that ethnic Mexican men worked “desperately long stretches” in the city’s various industries, and that ethnic Mexican women carried “the double burden of home with its many babies and of work in the fish canneries, whither they go, day or night, at the sound of whistles.”²⁴

Indeed, ethnic Mexicans in Logan Heights struggled to make ends meet. According to the Heller Committee for Research in Social Economics, a group of economists and law professors concerned with the study of consumer economics, the typical ethnic Mexican family of Depression-era San Diego – “a father, mother, and three or four children under sixteen, the parents born in Mexico, the children in California” – lived off about \$1,300 a year. The father was a low-skilled or semi-skilled worker who earned about \$1000 per year, while the mother, corroborating Marston’s first-hand account, may have been “gainfully employed, usually in a cannery, for part of the year.”²⁵ The Heller Committee claimed that most ethnic Mexican children in Logan Heights did not contribute to household income, but this finding is not entirely

²³ Much to Marston’s dismay, many reformers – including some of those at Neighborhood House – continued to believe the idea that ethnic Mexicans’ were culturally inferior. As Bogardus wrote in 1919, “The Mexican laborer is often shiftless and thriftless; his past environment has not stimulated him to be otherwise... He is brought into our country as an unskilled laborer, works irregularly and seasonally, lives in unhealthy and un-American ways, and after drifting about, may settle in the United States permanently... paid wages, but left to become a victim of shiftlessness or of revolutionary and anarchistic tendencies.” Bogardus did believe that with the assistance of white Americanizers, racial uplift was possible. Emory S. Bogardus, *Essentials of Americanization* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1919), 181-182.

²⁴ Helen D. Marston, “Mexican Traits,” *Survey* 44 (August 2, 1920), 562-563; see also Kyle E. Ciani, “Revelations of a Reformer: Helen D. Marston Beardsley and Progressive Social Activism,” *Journal of San Diego* 50 (Summer/Fall 2004), 103-123; and Josie S. Talamantez, “Chicano Park and the Chicano Park Murals: A National Register Nomination,” (M.A. thesis, California State University, Sacramento, 2011), 34-35.

²⁵ Heller Committee for Research in Social Economics of the University of California and Constantine Panunzio, *How Mexicans Earn and Live: A Study of the Incomes and Expenditures of One Hundred Mexican Families in San Diego, California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1933), 66.

accurate. Ethnic Mexican youths found creative ways to make money, from selling discarded ice from a local business (at a lower rate), to peddling newspapers after school. Jesus Ochoa did the latter, selling copies of the *San Diego Sun* for three cents apiece. It was not a particularly financially lucrative endeavor – he usually made less than 10 cents per day – but it did allow him to cross paths with celebrities he admired, like Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy.²⁶

When not in school or hustling on the street, ethnic Mexican youth were at Neighborhood House, which Armando M. Rodríguez described as a “kind of fun place.” Rodríguez, who had arrived in San Diego from Durango, Mexico in 1927, noted the importance of the multiculturalism of both Neighborhood House specifically, and Logan Heights generally. As a youngster, Rodríguez learned to speak English in large part because of a friendship he had struck up with neighbor Jimmy McGuire, the “son of an Irishman and a German lady.” The time spent at Neighborhood House was formative. “I became so involved with sports and girls,” Rodríguez recalled, “that my whole life changed.” Not only did he become a bit of a sports star, he also grew socially, ultimately forming Club Amigable, the first ethnic Mexican social club at his high school.²⁷ Rodríguez’s story was not unusual: Jesus Ochoa learned to play baseball at Neighborhood House, and years later he caught the attention of Major League Baseball teams. Ochoa related, “[T]he Cincinnati Reds were interested in me, and they sent me to one of their spring trainings.”²⁸

²⁶ Jesus Ochoa, interview by Rene Zambrano, San Diego, 6 April 2001, transcript, Voces: Oral History Project, University of Texas – Austin (UT), http://www.lib.utexas.edu/voces/template-stories-indiv.html?work_urn=urn%3Autl%3Awwlatin.148&work_title=Ochoa%2C+Jesus, accessed 1 September 2017.

²⁷ Armando M. Rodríguez, interview by Richard Griswold del Castillo, 13 February 2011, Part/Tape 1, “Raising Our Voices: The History of San Diego State and San Diego in Sound,” SDSU.

²⁸ The Reds were one of two teams interested in the young first basemen, with the other ball club being the Brooklyn Dodgers. Ultimately the Reds passed on Ochoa, but were willing to try him out later. Ochoa missed his tryout with the Dodgers due to his meeting with the Reds. The young Mexican Americans’ big league dreams were definitively cut short when he joined Marines. Ochoa, Voces: Oral History Project, UT.

Ochoa evaded the Depression-era repatriations, or voluntary deportations, that disrupted the ethnic Mexican communities throughout the American Southwest. Of the repatriations in San Diego, Logan Heights resident Luis L. Alvarez recalled:

[M]any people were asked by both the Mexican government and told by the American government that they could return to Mexico and have free transportation and be able to take all of their properties, personal property without having to pay any duty or anything of the kind. Many people took up the idea and went back to Mexico and many found out later on that things that had been promised by the Mexican government were not fulfilled. Later on they tried to get back but it was too late for them to get back; they had to go through the regular procedures of immigration requirements.²⁹

The repatriation drives in San Diego were pushed in part by local boosters and business interests, who pressured the local Mexican consulate to remove from the Southern Californian city ethnic Mexicans they deemed to be alien public charges.³⁰ In coordination with its counterpart in Los Angeles, the San Diego consulate relocated ethnic Mexicans, even American citizens, south of the border as cheaply as possible. For example, in San Diego eight hundred repatriates were packed on the small gunboat, ironically named *Progreso*, to bring costs down to as low as \$8 per head. For many repatriates, more generous travel accommodations would have done little to ease their minds. One despondent Mexican American passenger shouted that she would rather die than go to a land she did not know.³¹ Meanwhile, back on shore more fortunate ethnic Mexicans would watch on. In one instance, seven or eight-year-old John Rubalcava spotted his friends and waved back, not fully grasping what he was witnessing.³²

²⁹ Luis L. Alvarez, interviewed by Jesse F. Soriano, 25 April 1978, transcript, Raising Our Voices, SDSU.

³⁰ Richard Griswold del Castillo, "Revolution to Economic Depression," 93.

³¹ Besides the cramped quarters, provisions on these vessels were deplorable. Sailing conditions were not always ideal either, as on one occasion a repatriation ship was shipwrecked in Baja California. Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*, Revised Edition (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 123.

³² John Rubalcava, interviewed by Rene Zambrano, San Diego, 10 September 2000, transcript, Voces: Oral History Project, UT, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/voces/template-stories-indiv.html?work_urn=urn%3Autl%3Awwlatin.095&work_title=Rubalcava%2C+John, accessed 1 September 2017.

Many ethnic Mexicans were repatriated against their will, but others left voluntarily. The *Los Angeles Times* reported in 1931: “Pressed by economic adversity, stirred with fear at recently renewed activities of immigration authorities and perplexed by what they regard as anti-Mexican sentiment, the Mexicans have been leaving Southern California in amazing numbers for more than three months.”³³ In San Diego County, a total of 1,913 Mexicans and Mexican Americans were repatriated that year despite the fact only half that many were on relief.³⁴ Although job shortages was reported as the main reason for relocation, the anti-Mexican climate certainly factored into decisions to leave for Mexico. In San Diego, some whites, like Helen Marston, rejected negative perceptions of ethnic Mexicans, but many others held firm to them. For instance, in early 1929 Edwin B. Tilton, the assistant superintendent of schools in San Diego, spoke to economist Paul S. Taylor about the ethnic Mexican pupils in his district. “He is inferior,” the administrator claimed, “an inferior race, no doubt... a cross between Indians and Spanish.” Because of their perceived inferiority, many white parents did not want their “white lily daughters” to mix with “all the Mexicans and Negroes,” which necessitated segregation.³⁵

³³ The article states that up until then, 35,000 ethnic Mexicans were repatriated from Southern California. Unfortunately, the article does not explain how it arrived at such numbers. Historian Kelly Lytle Hernández has estimated that in 1931 (the year the article was published), voluntary departures stood at 11,719 as of the 30th of June. The total number of ethnic Mexican departures, however, were many thousands more. To echo historians Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, calculating the number of repatriates is difficult given many undoubtedly escaped official records. Balderrama and Rodríguez conservatively estimate that over 1 million ethnic Mexicans were repatriated, but the figure could easily be double. “Great Migration Back to Mexico Under Way,” *Los Angeles Times*, 12 April 1931; Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Migra!: A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 122; Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 149-150.

³⁴ Camille Guerin-González, *Mexican Workers & American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 84, 145.

³⁵ Tilton discussed with Taylor the need for Sherman School, a “Mexican School” for ethnic Mexican (and a few black) schoolchildren. At Sherman School, as with all other “Mexican Schools” of California and Texas from the 1920s to 1940s, these children were given an inferior education in shoddy facilities. Interview with Edwin B. Tilton, San Diego, California, 15 February 1929, Folder 5, Carton 10, Paul S. Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California – Berkeley (BANC); for a brief overview of “Mexican Schools” in California, see Phillippa Strum, *Mendez v. Westminster: School Desegregation and Mexican-American Rights* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010), 13-21; Gilbert G. González, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation* (Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1990).

Although there were positive interactions with white students, school segregation was likely the norm in 1930s San Diego County.³⁶ Indeed, ethnic Mexicans in the small citrus farming community of Lemon Grove were forced to legally challenge the practice in 1931, several years before the landmark school desegregation cases *Mendez v. Westminster* (1947) and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). On 5 January 1931, ethnic Mexican schoolchildren at Lemon Grove Grammar School were stopped at the door and directed by the principal to go to the new, but inferior, wooden structure erected specially for ethnic Mexicans. Upon learning of the district's new segregation policy, the parents of the affected children formed the *Comite de Vecinos de Lemon Grove*, removed their children from the school, contacted the Mexican consul at San Diego, and wrote an editorial in the widely-circulated Spanish-language newspaper *La Opinión*, where they rallied moral and financial support for their prospective court case. They argued that there was no reason for their children to be separated "from children of other nationalities."³⁷ Administrators countered in the *San Diego Sun* that "the strike is being carried on by an intense Mexican national organization which is organized among the Spanish-American elements along the coast."³⁸

³⁶ Several ethnic Mexicans living in Logan Heights and in other sections of San Diego city and county have commented on how there could be – and were – positive exchanges between Mexican and white schoolchildren. One student frequently traded bean tacos for sandwiches since "the white kids liked the tacos." However, de facto segregation certainly existed in San Diego County. Both Luis L. Alvarez and Armando Rodríguez stated that while officially there was no legal segregation, it did effectively exist. Alvarez noted that his public school "was more or less segregated in [sic] a voluntary basis, the people seemed to stay in tune with their race of their own will." Rodríguez recalled: "I and my sister Catalina attended Lincoln Elementary School that had special classes for the foreign born." The ethnic Mexican who traded tacos for sandwiches also was discriminated against because he was of Mexican descent. He, too, had to attend classes for "foreigners." Griswold del Castillo, "Revolution to Economic Depression," 85; Alvarez, *Raising Our Voices*, SDSU; Rodríguez, *Raising Our Voices*, SDSU; Andrew Esparza, interviewed by Rene Zambrano, transcript, *Voces: Oral History Project*, UT, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/voces/template-stories-indiv.html?work_urn=urn%3Autol%3Awwlatin.028&work_title=Esparza%2C+Andrew, accessed 1 September 2017.

³⁷ "No Admiten a los Niños Mexicanos," *La Opinión*, 25 January 1931.

³⁸ "Pupils Strike Over Special Schoolhouse," *San Diego Sun*, 10 February 1931.

Charges of possible ethnic Mexican subversion were not new in San Diego. Since the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848, worries of a re-conquest lingered; the Mexican Revolution mapped leftist takeover onto those fears. In his interview with Paul S. Taylor in 1929, Superintendent Hilton had declared, “If there was trouble with Mexico they [ethnic Mexican students] would go back and fight us.”³⁹ During the court case, *Roberto Alvarez v. Lemon Grove School District* (1931), the school district argued that Mexican schools would help Americanize “backward and deficient” children, but the judge was unconvinced and ruled the school reintegrate.⁴⁰ Demonstrating the level of anti-Mexican sentiment, after the defeat of the Lemon Grove school board, California Assemblymen George R. Bliss introduced a bill to legalize school segregation on grounds ethnic Mexicans were Indians. The Bliss bill, then, attempted to legally enshrine a social reality: ethnic Mexicans were not considered white, and were therefore undeserving of state resources. The bill passed the state Assembly, but died in the Senate. Many California educators denounced Bliss’s bill as un-American, but rather than refute the sponsor’s racialized logic, they instead repeated progressive era values that stressed the need for racial uplift, or Americanization.⁴¹ As one ethnic Mexican schoolboy cogently commented: He was perceived as “different and worse” – an alien.⁴²

Ethnic Mexican youth, however, did not view themselves or their families as foreign. They spoke English, adored American movie stars, and played baseball, among other things.

³⁹ Tilton, Taylor Papers, BANC.

⁴⁰ The ruling did not end “separate but equal” in education, however. Instead, the narrow ruling applied only to Lemon Grove Grammar School, which necessitated the later cases listed above. For a more detailed account of the events leading up to the segregation of Lemon Grove students and the subsequent court case, see Robert R. Alvarez, Jr., “The Lemon Grove Incident,” *Journal of San Diego History* 32 (Spring 1986), 116-135; Guevarra, *Becoming Mexipino*, 79-81; Michael E. Madrid, “The Unheralded History of the Lemon Grove Desegregation Case,” *Multicultural Education* 15 (Spring 2008), 15-19.

⁴¹ “Bliss Bill Held Anti-American,” *Los Angeles Times*, 7 April 1931.

⁴² Quoted in Strum, *Mendez v. Westminster*, 4. The full quote reads: “A minority is somebody everyone else thinks is different and worse.”

Their parents may have been born in Mexico, but they were as devoted to their communities as most native Americans. Moreover, when given the chance their parents contributed through their labor, which proved critical to the growth of Greater San Diego. In the Imperial Valley, ethnic Mexicans toiled in the “factories in the field,” or industrial farms. In the city of San Diego, where industrialization had remained relatively light in comparison to other emerging cities like Los Angeles, the fish canneries were the dominant factories.⁴³

Cannery Row

Just as James Russell Johnson was settling in with his family in Logan Heights, 50-year-old David H. Hume left his home in Nova Scotia to test his luck in San Diego. With his adult son, Walter, by his side, the elder Hume approached the Southern California town’s city council and requested a permit to start a small business in an industry he had some previous experience in: fish canning. “We tried to get a location in town,” explained the younger Hume, “but the City Council would not grant us a location in town because they felt that the smell of the fish might interfere with the tourist trade.” Granted a permit but pushed to the outskirts of the bay on Point Loma, near a colony of fishermen, the Humes completed their first sardine cannery in 1907. After years of trying to perfect the most efficient canning method – and after the city government observed that fish odors were relatively contained – the operation was allowed into town in 1910, where it expanded in size and branched into tuna canning, becoming the Neptune Seafood Company. The Humes also hoped to increase their production to 300 cans of fish per

⁴³ Harris, “The Other Side of the Freeway,” 84-86.

day.⁴⁴ Thus began San Diego's relationship with the fish canning trade, which from 1932 to 1950 was the city's second largest employer, behind only the U.S. Navy.⁴⁵

In June 1911, San Diego welcomed another cannery, the Pacific Tuna Canning Company.⁴⁶ Since fishing crews, particularly highly-skilled Japanese, continued to produce impressive hauls off the coasts of Southern and Baja California, and since domestic and international demand for canned fish continued to grow (particularly during and after the First World War, when the U.S. military needed to feed its troops), new canning companies kept springing up along San Diego's south bay.⁴⁷ The locations of these factories was troubling. As the San Diego County Department of Health reported in 1921, "All the fish canneries are... very close to the city sewer outfalls." Raw sewage was "very much in evidence at these locations" that used the waters to clean the approximately 16 million pounds of fish delivered annually.⁴⁸ This reality, however, did not halt the construction of new fish canneries along the bay, forming

⁴⁴ David H. Hume had previously lived in San Francisco and in Washington, the latter of which provided him an opportunity to work in the salmon canneries of Puget Sound. In San Diego, Hume saw there was a market for a previously nuisance of a fish: tuna. There were several types of tuna found around San Diego, including albacore, bluefin, yellowfin, skipjack, and bonito. Because availability varied, fishermen supplied any of these types of tuna to the local canneries. For simplicity, I do not distinguish between them hereafter. Walter Hume, interviewed by Edgar Hastings, 28 March 1957, transcript, San Diego History Center Oral History Project, San Diego History Center (SDHC); Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, Division of Fish and Game of California, *The Commercial Fish Catch of California for the Year 1928* (Sacramento: California State Printing Office, 1930), 75.

⁴⁵ Guevarra, *Becoming Mexipino*, 113.

⁴⁶ The Pacific Tuna Canning Company opened for business with a workforce of 26 employees. The new factory hoped to produce 200 cans of albacore a day, or about 100 cans less than Neptune. "Fish Canning Firm Now Ready for Operation," *San Diego Union*, 4 June 1911.

⁴⁷ August Felando, a longtime manager of the American Tunaboat Association of San Diego, and Harold Medina, a member of a well-known Portuguese fishing family, write that Japanese were the dominant fishermen in Southern California. In 1912, former Japanese professor Masaharu Kondo founded the M.K. Fisheries Company in San Diego and teamed with Mexican businessman Aurelio Sandoval to fish along Southern and Baja California. By 1914, Japanese fishermen formed the Japanese Fishermen's Association of San Diego, creating a virtual monopoly of albacore fishing. San Diego cannery attempted to break the Japanese Fishermen's Association's hold on the industry, creating the "Tuna Exchange" in 1915. The Tuna Exchange was an albacore-buying agency that hired white fishermen from northern California to fish for them. Japanese prevailed since they were superior fishermen. August Felando and Harold Medina, "The Origins of California's High-Seas Tuna Fleet," *Journal of San Diego History* 48 (Winter/Spring 2012), 3-11; Richard Crawford, "San Diego Had Its Own Cannery Row," *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 18 June 2009.

⁴⁸ "Annual Report of the Department of Public Health to the Mayor of the City of San Diego, California, for the Year of 1921," Folder 6, Box 26, San Diego Public Health Records, SDSU.

a cannery row. As Guevarra notes, “by 1925, eight canneries operated in San Diego, including Neptune, Pacific Tuna Canning Company, Van Camp, and Westgate.” Cohn Hopkins and Sun Harbor followed soon thereafter, which added to the already 12,000 tuna cannery workers employed seasonally and, due to technological advances in fishing and canning, increasingly year-round.⁴⁹

Anglo, Portuguese, Italian, Japanese, and Filipino men and women worked in the canneries, but the majority of the cannery workforce were ethnic Mexican women from nearby Logan Heights and its surrounding areas. Although their race and gender confined ethnic Mexican women to the lowest-level jobs – cleaners and packers – cannery work presented an opportunity to, as historian Vicki L. Ruiz points out, blur traditional gender roles, socialize and build networks, and provide a sense of dignity missing in other industries with comparable wages, such as farm work and domestic service.⁵⁰ As Helen Marston noted, San Diego’s ethnic Mexican women significantly contributed to household income. In many cases, they were the main or only breadwinners, working on a piece rate system earning on average the equivalent of about 33 cents per hour, which at times was more than the average male cannery worker.⁵¹

Family pressures often pushed ethnic Mexican women into the canneries. Marta Carolina Rubalcava commuted to the waterfront to work 12-hour shifts at the Van Camp Fish Cannery, perhaps grudgingly welcoming long hours due to the fact she had 10 children to raise. Jesus Ochoa’s step-father passed away, which forced the boy to peddle copies of the *San Diego Sun*

⁴⁹ Guevarra, *Becoming Mexipino*, 114.

⁵⁰ Gendered and racialized wage disparities were the norm in all California canneries. Ruiz found that fruit and vegetable canneries paid ethnic Mexican men less than not only men, but less than white women (including immigrants). Patricia Zavella, *Women’s Work and Chicano Families: Cannery Workers of the Santa Clara Valley* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 57-62; Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 25-32.

⁵¹ Guevarra, *Becoming Mexipino*, 119.

and his mother, Isabel Ybarra, to join Rubalcava at Van Camp. Soledad Villanueva-Ramírez became a packer for the Sun Harbor Fish Cannery since her husband struggled to make enough in “pick and shovel” work. Villanueva-Ramírez’s earnings did not prevent her family from relying on charity. Her son, José Ramírez, recalled surviving on turnips and what he alleges was horse meat.⁵²

Mothers were not the only ones engaged in cannery work. Older female children became “ladies in white” – a reference to the white uniforms and caps cannery women workers wore – as well. This, too, was partially out of necessity, as some teenaged women had to work to support their families. In other cases, teens simply heard in the neighborhood that the canneries were willing to hire any young ethnic Mexicans, and so they took the opportunity. Emma López stated: “You didn’t need a high school diploma, so why are you wasting time when you can go to the cannery and make the big bucks. So a lot of them quit school to go to the cannery and work.” López’s recollections touch on two points worth noting. First, young ethnic Mexican women viewed cannery work as empowering because it had the potential to make them more independent both economically and socially. Cannery work had the potential to provide a break from what Ruiz terms the “familial oligarchy,” whereby elders of all genders attempted to maintain some level of tradition and “purity.”⁵³ Conversely, López’s remarks suggest cannery work reminded ethnic Mexicans, regardless of gender, of their limitations in San Diego: Employment opportunities in the city were few for a group long considered inferior. Thus, even

⁵² Rubalcava, Voces: Oral History Project, UT; Ochoa, Voces: Oral History Project, UT; José Ramírez, interviewed by Rene Zambrano, San Diego, 14 July 2000, transcript, Voces: Oral History Project, UT, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/voces/template-stories-indiv.html?work_urn=urn%3Autl%3Awwlatin.080&work_title=Ramirez%2C+Jose, accessed 1 September 2017.

⁵³ In other words, young ethnic Mexican women attempted to carve out a space for themselves away from what felt like, and what may have been, overbearing elders. This space, of course, could be small considering cannery work was often a family affair, with the prospect of mother and daughter side-by-side quite possible. In fact, it was common for cannery work to span multiple generations. Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 52.

the most promising ethnic Mexican high school graduates believed cannery work their only option. Armando M. Rodríguez, the ethnic Mexican who learned about sports and girls at Neighborhood House, was one such example.

Sometime after graduating high school and briefly joining his repatriated father in Mexico, Rodríguez made his way back to San Diego. Knowing that his job options were severely limited, he went to the canneries and secured a position. Like all male employees, he did not perform low paying “women’s work,” which consisted of cleaning (trimming) and/or packing fish meat into tin cans. Instead, men like Rodríguez performed tasks such as cutting tuna heads and fins off, gutting, and cooking. Additionally, men washed and labelled cans and stacked and loaded in the warehouses.⁵⁴ Also like most men, Rodríguez on average earned more per hour than women. Even when unions stepped in and secured more worker-friendly contracts in later years, women earned less by the hour than men.⁵⁵

The rise of the canning industry in San Diego did create other canning-related employment opportunities for nonwhites, particularly nonwhite men. Marta Carolina Rubalcava’s husband, for instance, worked at a foundry on the waterfront.⁵⁶ Ethnic Mexicans also sailed the high seas in search of a big catch. The degree of independence fishermen had, however, lessened over time as canners grew more powerful and asserted their control over who caught the fish needed for their factories. As early as the mid-1920s and 1930s, not only was

⁵⁴ Rodríguez, *Raising Our Voices*, SDSU; Armando Miguel Rodríguez, interviewed by Rene Zambrano, San Diego, 2 August 2000, transcript, Voces: Oral History Project, UT, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/voces/template-stories-indiv.html?work_urn=urn%3Autlo%3Awwlatin.091&work_title=Rodriguez%2C+Armando+Miguel, accessed 1 September 2017; Del Monte Food Products, “The Fighting Tuna,” Archive.org, https://archive.org/details/Fighting_Tuna_The, accessed 1 September 2017; Guevarra, *Becoming Mexipino*, 116.

⁵⁵ Zavella, *Women’s Work*, 57-62.

⁵⁶ Rubalcava, Voces: Oral History Project, UT.

lucrative tuna fishing no longer dominated by Japanese fishermen – replaced by “Americans,” Portuguese, and Italians – it was not much of a small family affair at all.⁵⁷

Tuna fishing had become an expensive and competitive commercial enterprise that required not just the skill to sail the high seas, but also capital and technology, including cutting edge “tuna clippers,” sturdy cotton twine nets, steel purse lines, and power hoisting ropes.⁵⁸ San Diego canners and banks, notably C. Arnholt Smith’s U.S. National Bank, began to finance fishermen, providing them the loans to pay for permits, top-of-the-line boats and equipment, and the fishing expeditions themselves. Fishing trips were no longer confined to local waters; rather, voyages could last a year and require travel to as far south as the Galápagos Islands. The goal of the canneries was to maximize fishing time (to catch more fish) and drive costs down, mainly by evading taxes levied by countries like Mexico.⁵⁹ Joaquín S. Theodore, a Portuguese immigrant who began catching tuna for Van Camp and Sun Harbor in 1925, confessed that fishermen had

⁵⁷ There was much money to be made in San Diego’s tuna industry. For example, in 1920, when San Diego’s tuna industry had yet to hit its peak, canneries were valuing total summer catches alone at an astounding \$2.5 million. Such figures, then, garnered the attention of peoples throughout the country and globe. Japanese fishermen had long dominated, but other groups, notably Portuguese and Italians, began to wrestle away control of the high seas. According to the Division of Fish and Game of California, Americans (race/ethnicity unspecified), Portuguese, and Italians comprised the top three nationalities of San Diego-based licensed fishermen in 1935. Japanese fishermen still had a presence in San Diego, but it had been reduced. Japanese, however, remained the top licensed fishermen group in Los Angeles – a city with its own thriving tuna industry out of San Pedro (Port of Los Angeles). “Tuna Fishers Have Easy Time,” *Healdsburg Tribune*, 14 September 1920; Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, Division of Fish and Game of California, *The Commercial Fish Catch of California for the Year 1935* (Sacramento: California State Printing Office, 1937), 144.

⁵⁸ Felando and Medina, “Origins of California’s High-Seas Tuna Fleet,” 16-19, 22-23.

⁵⁹ Contract fishermen financed by the canneries were paid only a share of the haul. For fishing trips in South America (completed under the flag of Peru and with nonunion crews), catches were processed there and then transshipped to San Diego using refrigerated freighters. The canneries themselves were oftentimes financed by San Diego-based U.S. National Bank, which was owned by “Mr. San Diego,” C. Arnholt Smith. Smith arrived in San Diego in 1907, after he fled with his family from Washington State, where his father faced prison time. Interested in business from an early age, Smith eventually became a manager for Bank of America. In the early 1930s he engineered a deal to take over a bank of his own, U.S. National Bank. Besides the bank, he eventually owned the Westgate cannery, silver mines, and the local baseball team, the San Diego Padres, among other properties. Later in life, Smith was indicted on a host of “white collar” crimes and convicted of embezzlement. Davis, “The Next Little Dollar,” 69; Felando and Medina, “Origins of California’s High-Seas Tuna Fleet,” 19-20; “San Diego Tycoon C. Arnholt Smith Dies,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 June 1996; see also Steven P. Erie, Vladimir Kogan, and Scott A. MacKenzie, *Paradise Plundered: Fiscal Crisis and Governance Failures in San Diego* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

little agency. Fishermen, Theodore stated, “had to do what the canneries tell them.” That always meant completing the job both efficiently and inexpensively since, “like [the canners] say, everybody is in business to make money.”⁶⁰

To squeeze out every last dollar, tuna canneries also asserted control over workers in their factories, which by the 1930s could produce over 100 cans *per minute per vacuum-sealing device* – a drastic increase from the 300 cans per day produced by Neptune in 1910.⁶¹

Technological advances on the cannery assembly line contributed to the explosion in production, as did the seeming perfection of a labor management system built around a booming instrument: The whistle. The cannery whistle was central to production and profit, as its sound, which reverberated through the *barrio*, had the power to determine the course of one’s day. “Whenever you heard that whistle blowing in the morning,” John Alvarado recalled, “that meant the boats were in and to come to work.”⁶²

Even the number of times a whistle was blown informed workers as to how many tons of fish they could expect to help can that day. Katie Asaro, an Italian cannery worker, recounted, “When the boats came in, sometimes there would be two, three, or four boats at the same time and the cannery would be flooded with fish and it had to be packed.” Not only was the volume of work irregular, so too were shift start times. Asaro explained: “You know, the canneries in those days... used to blow the whistle no matter what hour [the boats] came in... and the women, a lot of women, would get up and, regardless of the time, even 2AM in the morning, and they would go and work.”⁶³ John Cota told a similar story: “It didn’t matter when that boat came in...

⁶⁰ Joaquín S. Theodore, interviewed by Robert G. Wright, transcript, San Diego History Center Oral History Project, SDHC.

⁶¹ Del Monte, “The Fighting Tuna.”

⁶² “Tuna Canneries’ Lasting Legacy,” *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 26 September 2009.

⁶³ Katie Asaro, interviewed by Robert G. Wright, 24 March 1990, transcript, San Diego History Center Oral History Project, SDHC.

[W]hen the fish came in we had to start working, and we didn't stop until we were finished. It was a different life but that's the way it was."⁶⁴ Indeed, the whistle was a reminder of the way it seemingly had to be for cannery women carrying "the double burden." At the sound of a whistle, mothers had to simultaneously please their cannery bosses by promptly heading for the cannery (lest they not want their job anymore), and take the steps necessary to ensure their children were safe and had what they needed while she was away.⁶⁵

When cannery workers did descend on the waterfront factories, they performed their designated tasks in a machine-like manner. As noted previously, race and gender determined what job one had. Although all positions in a cannery were demanding, the "women's work" of cleaning and packing may have been the most difficult due to its seemingly never-ending, fast-paced monotony. Lined up in long rows, cleaners in their white garb stood at preparation tables, where they were required to trim cooked fish down by about 60%, leaving only the "choicest meat." Cleaners then placed the trimmed fish on trays, which were loaded on a conveyor belt that passed them through a cutting machine that sliced the tuna meat into the perfect packing size. From there, the trays were taken to the canning tables, where more women workers jammed meat into individual tin cans and, when finished, placed them on trays (See Figure 4.1).⁶⁶ An inspector stood at every stage to not only ensure standards were met, but to keep track

⁶⁴ Quoted in Robert Quintana, "The Pillar Remembered: The Story of the Cannery Workers," *La Prensa San Diego*, 14 August 1998.

⁶⁵ On how the cannery whistle disrupted and dictated mother cannery workers' daily lives in northern California, historian Carol Lynn McKibben writes: "[Women cannery workers] described the chaos at home when the cannery whistles blew at any hour of the day or night calling them to work. Women froze in the midst of cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, and tending children. Or they were jolted wake in the middle of the night. It might be two in the afternoon or two in the morning, but if the cannery whistle blew, one dropped everything and got there within forty-five minutes in order to keep one's job. Women scrambled – not knowing if they would be away from their homes and children for five hours or fifteen." Scenes like these were undoubtedly played out in San Diego, too. In fact, the child day care center at Neighborhood House was established partly because reformers like Marston recognized that ethnic Mexican mothers were breadwinners of their respective families. Carol Lynn McKibben, *Beyond Cannery Row: Sicilian Women, Immigration, and the Community in Monterey, California, 1915-99* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 39-40; Ciani, "Revelations of a Reformer," 105.

⁶⁶ Del Monte, "The Fighting Tuna."



Figure 4.1. Women canning tuna at Cohn-Hopkins Company, 1931. Courtesy of the San Diego History Center, San Diego History Center Photographs Collection.

of a worker's progress. Each time a tray was completed, the overseer punched a hole through a tray count sheet pinned to a worker's back. On the piece rate system, more holes meant bigger paychecks, thus cannery women found it imperative to work with speed and precision.⁶⁷

Cleaning and packing jobs were not only repetitive, they were also demanding on the body. For one, cannery women worked long hours, sometimes without breaks. Westgate employee Katie Asaro explained, "So we used to work as long as ten in the night [following a morning start time]. There was no break for supper, for eating at night."⁶⁸ The lack of an evening meal break meant both no sustenance and no foot relief for workers who stood for hours,

⁶⁷ Quintana, "The Pillar Remembered," *La Prensa San Diego*.

⁶⁸ Asaro, Oral History Project, SDHC.

cleaning and packing virtually uninterrupted. Hands suffered as well, particularly for cleaners, as they had to tightly grip a filleting knife for the duration of their shift, repeatedly skimming fish meat down to its finest cut. It was not uncommon for a cannery worker to return home and complain of unusually sore hands – the first signs of arthritis. Aspirin pills and potential earnings helped cannery women, as well as cannery men, to continue to work long shifts and occasional seven-day work weeks, necessitated in part by special orders from the ever-growing U.S. military, San Diego's main industry.⁶⁹

Cannery pay was so relatively good, especially during the lean years of the Great Depression, that laborers were willing to bear with yet another pervasive, albeit less severe, issue: the smell. In the early 20th century, the Humes were able to satiate city leaders and limit the smell of raw and cooked fish, but by the 1930s there were multiple large canneries sprawled along San Diego's less scenic sections of waterfront, which made containing powerful "burnt fishy" odors difficult.⁷⁰ Not only did it smell at the canneries and the surrounding neighborhood, workers themselves took the smell with them wherever they went, from the bus, to the corner store, to the home. Their clothes, hands, and hair absorbed the factory's odors. For the children and young relatives of cannery workers, the smell and messy appearance of family members

⁶⁹ Bea Avina romantically recalled: "The conditions weren't exactly great, but nobody seemed to mind because the pay was so good." Quoted in Quintana, "The Pillar Remembered," *La Prensa San Diego*; Guevarra, *Becoming Mexipino*, 119.

⁷⁰ In 1928, a San Diego fish cannery owner, Knut Hovden, traveled to northern California to attempt to open a new sardine cannery there. Hovden faced intense opposition from the town's residents, who did not want to have to deal with the smell that came with a fish cannery. To allay concerns, Hovden wrote a letter to the local chamber of commerce, which was reprinted in the local paper. The letter explained how fish canneries had modernized and thus eliminated most smells, though conceding that some "burnt fishy" odors would naturally result. However, Hovden argued, more odors would emanate from someone cooking five pounds of fish in their home than would come from his proposed cannery. The canner even claimed that visitors to his cannery, K. Hovden Company, expressed astonishment once inside, for they could not believe it did not "smell fishy." Finally, Hovden closed by stating that residents opposed to his proposed cannery were wrongly accusing him of creating a nuisance that had not yet occurred. Encapsulating the thought process of cannery owners of the period, Hovden maintained that he had every right to do as he pleased, as there were no laws prohibiting him from opening a new cannery. Thus, residents could accept the investment in their town and prosper, or they could raise a loud but ultimately futile fuss. "Denies There Are Odors to Cannery," *Sausalito News*, 21 January 1928.

could be a source of profound embarrassment, reinforced by teasing children and unsympathetic adults. Children complained to their parents, but they were quickly reminded that fish kept them from going hungry and landing on the street. Thus, shame gave way to remorse. As for the cannery workers themselves, most expressed varying degrees of discomfort with the smell, yet they developed a certain level of immunity to it. Asked how she and other cannery workers lived through the overbearing smell, Asaro declared, “Well, when you get used to it then it didn’t bother us because we were all in the fishing business. I don’t know we were in it, it doesn’t bother you.”⁷¹

In a way, then, the cannery experience, including the fish smell, had the potential to unify and create the feeling of a cannery family. Canneries fostered such sentiments by using company propaganda to circulate workers’ newsworthy events, such as weddings, births, religious ceremonies, and even fundraising campaigns. Tuna companies also sponsored social events, like dances and parties. Off work and outside of the company’s gaze, cannery workers socialized and built multicultural networks.⁷² Marty Cota, for instance, fondly recounted the diverse feasts. “I remember when it came down to having parties,” Cota described, “people from each different ethnic group would bring their particular type of food and everyone would share... It was incredible.”⁷³ Eloisa Osuna, who worked in San Diego canneries for 35 years,

⁷¹ Guevarra, *Becoming Mexipino*, 119; Asaro, Oral History Project, SDHC.

⁷² It is important to note that ethnic and racial tensions did exist in the canneries. For instance, in Monterey, California canneries, women workers from Sicily did not always associate with other groups. In fact, they formed a workplace ethnic enclave specifically for Sicilians. In other words, Sicilian cannery workers even differentiated themselves from other Italians, thereby resisting a new national identity. This, however, was rather common. McKibben, *Beyond Cannery Row*, 40; see also Paul Spickard, *Immigration, Race, and Colonialism in American History and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2007), chapter five.

⁷³ Quoted in Quintana, “The Pillar Remembered,” *La Prensa San Diego*.

remembered similar social scenes, stating, “We used to have picnics after work with our families... We were very close to each other.”⁷⁴

The closeness and shared experience, historian Vicki L. Ruiz contends, were critical to building intra-ethnic and interethnic solidarities. Ruiz notes that in the 1930s and 1940s, ethnic Mexican women cannery workers’ shared work culture and mutual interests, particularly with immigrant women of similar generation, contributed to the formation of a “cannery culture.” Gender-based job segregation, extended family ties, and common neighborhoods often brought women together, who helped each other cope with “the double burden” and, as Ruiz adds, “at times resist the prevailing conditions of work.” This collective identity, forged by kinship, friendship, and the cannery’s assembly line, contributed to their efforts to unionize, which federal writers visiting San Diego noted was “generally... resented and opposed” by employers.⁷⁵ This was an understatement, as union organization once more drew the vehement and violent ire of Booster San Diego. As in years past when San Diego was led by John D. Spreckels, a new generation of boosters and business interests, adhering to the same worldview that sacrificed democratic principles for the sake of capitalist growth and profit, labeled outspoken workers dangerous and un-American leftists subversives.⁷⁶ Booster San Diego therefore believed the voices of these so-called dangerous persons had to be quieted.

⁷⁴ “Tuna Canneries’ Lasting Legacy”; Manuel Cavada, interviewed by Olivia Puentes-Reynolds, National City, 6 June 2010, transcript, Voces: Oral History Project, UT, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/voces/template-stories-indiv.html?work_urn=urn%3Autl%3Awwlatin.737&work_title=Cavada%2C+Manuel, accessed 1 September 2017.

⁷⁵ Ruiz, *Cannery Women*, xvi, 32; FWP, *San Diego*, 52.

⁷⁶ Spreckels died in 1926, but as Mike Davis accurately points out, other moneyed interests had risen to prominence beginning in the 1920s. As previously noted, C. Arnholt Smith became a major player through his banking ties with Bank of America. Former anti-IWW vigilante Reuben Fleet relocated his company, Consolidated Aircraft, to San Diego in 1935. His time as an Army officer on the San Diego-Baja California border had informed him that San Diego’s weather and anti-worker stance were ideal for the growth of his business, which after having arrived in Southern California, refused to hire ethnic Mexicans. Ira C. Copley, a powerful Midwestern publisher, retired congressman, and former militiamen that had helped lead the violent suppression of the Pullman railroad strike of 1894, purchased the Spreckels family’s *San Diego Union and Tribune* in 1928. Although he remained relatively aloof with regard to the newspapers’ content, the locals left in charge were no friends of labor. Eventually, Copley’s

Reds and Pinks Hit

Isidora and Cordelia Shippam, English sisters who in 1904 had immigrated to the United States as young children, grew up in a small home their father had built just east of downtown San Diego and slightly north of Logan Heights. Years past and though they did not lead a particularly glamorous life, they also never had to work. However, their situation changed when their parents died – in 1927 and 1933, respectively – and the Great Depression showed no sign of ending. In need of work, the Shippam sisters, like many other immigrant women at the time, turned to the fish canneries, where they would spend essentially the next two decades at Van Camp Seafood Company, Isidora as a packer and Cordelia as a cleaner.⁷⁷ Unlike other cannery workers, they were not introduced to cannery work by a friend or close relative; rather, they simply “got on because [union workers] had had a strike, and some of the women wouldn’t go back.”⁷⁸

Although this was probably the case for some cannery strikers, it is also probable that others simply were not welcome back. After all, San Diego canners had grown accustomed to

adopted son, James S. Copley, took over the merged *San Diego Union-Tribune*. The San Diego History Center states, “Copley’s politics were unabashedly conservative, Republican and pro-American.” According to investigative journalists for *Penthouse*, Copley’s fervid anti-communism led him to grow concerned over its spread domestically and in Latin America. In turn, he allegedly allowed agents for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) to pose as reporters for his news agency and publications. Carl Bernstein, the famed Watergate reporter, also charged that the Copley press worked with the CIA and FBI. Davis, “The Next Little Dollar,” 53-59; Joe Trento and Dave Roman, “The Spies Who Came in from the Newsroom,” *Penthouse* 12 (August 1977), 44-46, 50; Carl Bernstein, “The CIA and the Media,” *Rolling Stone*, 20 October 1977; San Diego History Center, “James S. Copley (1916-1973),” [Sandiegohistorycenter.org](http://www.sandiegohistory.org/archives/biographysubject/jscopley/), <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/archives/biographysubject/jscopley/>, accessed 12 September 2017.

⁷⁷ First the Shippams worked at the California Packing Company, but after six months they switched to Van Camp. Cordelia left cannery work altogether for three years during World War II. During that time, she worked as a machinist for Consolidated Aircraft, earning “pretty good money” (\$1.15 per hour). When the war ended, she returned to Van Camp. Isidora Shippam, interviewed by Marguerite Reeves, 30 December 1980, transcript, San Diego History Center Oral History Project, SDHC; Cordelia Shippam, interviewed by Marguerite Reeves, 30 December 1980, transcript, San Diego History Center Oral History Project, SDHC.

⁷⁸ Ibid. Based on the two interviews, it is not clear when exactly they began working at the cannery, as the Shippam sisters presented a fragmented recollection and the interviewer did not seek clarification or follow up on noteworthy points. As a result, while it is possible the sisters were scabs (Cordelia differentiates between themselves and striking unionists), this cannot be determined given the paucity of evidence.

virtually no worker activism in their factories.⁷⁹ With few exceptions, San Diego labor, led by the conservative Labor Council, had walked in lock-step with Booster San Diego. Indeed, since the Free Speech Fight of 1912, in which boosters and business interests passed restrictive anti-worker ordinances and used vigilante violence to remove leftist workers and civil rights advocates from Greater San Diego, labor strife had been minimal. However, beginning in the throes of the Great Depression, a cannery culture and radical tradition of leftist activism combined to bring about labor organization on the waterfront. The first of these attempts at unionization occurred in 1934.

Days in 1934

On the morning of 23 April 1934, the tuna canneries' whistle blew and workers headed for the waterfront. At San Diego's largest cannery, Van Camp Seafood Company, members of the Fishermen and Cannery Industrial Workers' Union "began voicing complaints of wages and working conditions and urging a general strike." According to news reports, many of the cannery workers ignored the 450 "agitators" and attempted to enter the cannery to begin their shifts, yet the women and men of the Fishermen and Cannery Industrial Workers' Union continued to protest. The manager of the cannery called the police, who headed to the cannery with tear gas and clubs in hand. As one union member, Elena Navarette, readied to address co-workers, the 28 policemen arrived and prevented the ethnic Mexican woman from speaking. Navarette allegedly proceeded to lunge at a police lieutenant with a knife, aiming to slash his throat. Navarette missed and was immediately arrested on an assault charge. Once the scene

⁷⁹ In January 1918, cannery workers threatened strike, while canners threatened to lock out the workers. It appears that the strike/lockout was averted without much, or any, disturbance. In fact, in the subsequent years, save for a few disagreements with fishermen, San Diego canneries went unchallenged. The most significant obstacle to canneries, then, was the availability of fish. "Strike Is Near in San Diego Canneries," *Los Angeles Herald*, 8 January 1918.

quieted, the cannery's manager declared: "This trouble was inspired by Communists... They are coming, I believe, from Imperial Valley. Saturday night they held a meeting in National City and police there had to step in. There is no doubt that San Diego County is being flooded with Commounists (sic)."⁸⁰ The police immediately formed a perimeter around the county, but also focused on ethnic Mexican *colonias* within county lines, on the lookout for any more unionists. The following day, two women, Gertrude Estrada and Marie López, were arrested at Van Camp for "exhorting [cannery workers] to strike and passing handbills of flaming Red propaganda."⁸¹

Without question, Navarette, Estrada, and López, if not communists themselves, were certainly connected to leftists. The Fishermen and Cannery Industrial Workers' Union, a Pacific coast union that pursued more influence at every step of the food production process, was affiliated with the communist-aligned Trade Union Unity League (TUUL). Yet the trio of ethnic Mexican protestors did not call for the overthrow of capitalism; rather, they sought a raise in their pay and the recognition of their union. Van Camp brass countered by trying to strong-arm cannery workers into accepting a company union. To intimidate their workforce into agreeing to the union, Van Camp announced that cannery workers would not receive their paychecks, which they knew they could do since the federal government, despite its pro-labor rhetoric, had little to no desire to assist leftist workers, especially nonwhite leftist workers. In response to Van Camp's actions, members of the TUUL-affiliated union went on strike, re-emphasized their old demands, and added that they expected their delayed pay.⁸²

Shortly thereafter Van Camp management locked out the strikers and brought in the tear gas and club-carrying police to suppress any more labor strife. It seemed as though in a matter

⁸⁰ "Police Club Radicals and Hurl Gas Bombs in San Diego Cannery Riot," *Los Angeles Times*, 24 April 1934.

⁸¹ "San Diego Officers Tighten Lines and Seize Two More to Balk Red Strife," *Los Angeles Times*, 25 April 1934.

⁸² *Ibid.*

of days, what had been years in the making was for not. The frustrated secretary for the San Diego chapter of the Fishermen and Cannery Workers' Industrial Union, Peter J. Taylor, wrote to the Los Angeles Regional Labor Board on May Day: "On the present basis, of police terrorization and the lockout, it is apparently a crime for workers to organize and strike for higher wages and better conditions, even when they are striking for enforcement of the minimum wage law." Taylor also noted the injustice allowed by the state: "It is plain to the workers when the cannery employers violate the law, nothing is done. When the workers act in their own interest, the law intervenes with force and violence."⁸³ In this particular case, the threat of state sanctioned violence was enough to suppress visible cannery worker resistance and activism. Indeed, the Shippam sisters were able to slide into cleaner and packer positions since it is likely some leftist workers were blacklisted, while others were incarcerated on trumped up charges.

When the law did not intervene with force and violence against workers, vigilantes did, or at least threatened to do so. In late May 1934, policemen, sheriffs, a representative from the district attorney's office, members of the Chambers of Commerce, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the American Legion, among other patriotic organizations, formed the Anti-Communist Committee, San Diego's latest right-wing vigilante force.⁸⁴ On 19 October 1934 – the same day communist and farm worker ally Stanley Hancock was escorted part of the way back to San Diego following his imprisonment in an Imperial Valley jail – the Kiwanis, a service club, met in San Diego and "declared open warfare (sic) on Communism." They unanimously passed a resolution that "pledged the organization to seek legislation for the deportation of alien members

⁸³ Peter J. Taylor to L.A. Regional Labor Board, 1 May 1934, Folder 5382-14, Box 8, Records of the National Labor Relations Board, Record Group 25, National Records and Records Administration, Riverside (NARA); also quoted in Guevarra, *Becoming Mexipino*, 120.

⁸⁴ "Communist Fight Opens," *Los Angeles Times*, 28 May 1934.

of revolutionary Communist organizations and to deprive citizens who are proved to be members of such organizations of citizenship rights.”⁸⁵

This was the San Diego that United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA) organizer Luisa Moreno entered and had to navigate when she arrived in 1937. As the next section illustrates, Moreno entered San Diego ready to help the local ethnic working class. “Luisa Moreno,” Mexican American labor organizer Bert Corona stated, “was one of the most dedicated, well-organized, and competent labor organizers I have ever known. ... She was a formidable and charismatic speaker in both English and Spanish... She could convince others by the weight of her logic, her ease of words, and her speaking abilities.”⁸⁶ Moreno’s power of persuasion, however, was not derived solely from her rhetorical skills and bilingualism; rather, she was adept at convincing a person or group of her position because she intimately understood the experiences of those she represented. An immigrant and the chief breadwinner of her working-class family for much of her adult life, Moreno could relate to the lives of many of San Diego’s cannery women. Conversely, Moreno’s ability to understand both the cannery culture and the radical tradition of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands made her a threat to the Booster San Diego worldview. For that, she drew the attention of not just boosters and business interests, but also rival unions, and, eventually, anti-communists in state and federal government.

⁸⁵ “Guard Given Red Suspect,” *Los Angeles Times*, 20 October 1934; “Reds and Pinks Hit by Kiwanis,” *Los Angeles Times*, 20 October 1934.

⁸⁶ Historian Mario T. García conducted extensive interviews with his friend and colleague Corona. García later edited the interviews and published them as *Memories of Chicano History*. Unless otherwise noted, all citations of said work are the words of Corona. Mario T. García, *Memories of Chicano History: The Life and Narrative of Bert Corona* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 116-118; Jesús Mena, “Testimonio de Bert Corona: Struggle Is the Ultimate Teacher,” Folder 10, Box 21, Herman Baca Papers, Special Collections & Archives, University of California – San Diego (UCSD).

Becoming Moreno

Moreno was born Blanca Rosa Rodríguez López on 30 August 1907 in Guatemala to wealthy parents. Her elite background allowed her to study abroad, which she did at the age of nine. As a student at an Oakland, California convent, Moreno not only learned English, but also was educated in American-style racism and class discrimination that rendered Spanish-speakers inferior.⁸⁷ Many years later in the late 1920s and early 1930s, after she had rejected her privileged background and had become a young single mother who struggled as a garment worker in New York City's Spanish Harlem, Moreno built on these earlier experiences of her youth and developed a greater political consciousness that consistently leaned to the left.⁸⁸

Two events appear to have given her a strong push toward leftist ideology. Bert Corona recalled the first event, which occurred in the summer of 1930:

Luisa once told me about an incident that motivated her to work on behalf of unifying the Spanish-speaking communities. A Hollywood film called *Under a Texas Moon* opened in New York. Because the film was anti-Mexican, a group of Latinos led by a man by the name of Gonzálo González picketed the theater where the film was showing. The police came down on their horses and attacked the picketers with clubs. They fractured González's skull, and he subsequently died of this injury. To condemn the murder, a huge protest was organized, involving Puerto Ricans as well as Central and South Americans, and Luisa was part of it.⁸⁹

Moreno was one of "2,000 radicals" who marched in Harlem to protest not only the slaying of González, but also the alleged murder of a black communist by local police. Moreno heard a

⁸⁷ Moreno's father, Ernesto Rodríguez Robles, was an elite coffee grower, while her Colombia-born mother, Alicia López Sarana, was a prominent socialite. A child of privilege, Moreno's life was filled with essentially no discrimination. This changed at the California convent, when classmates referred to Spanish speakers like herself as "pigs." Nuns taught her about privilege and decadence when they did not share their sumptuous meals with her or any of the other girls. "Data on Luisa Moreno Bemis," Kenny Papers, SCL; Carlos Larralde and Richard Griswold del Castillo, "Luisa Moreno: A Hispanic Civil Rights Leader in San Diego," *Journal of San Diego History* 41 (Fall 1995), 285; Vicki L. Ruiz, "Una Mujer Sin Fronteras: Luisa Moreno and Latina Labor Activism," *Pacific Historical Review* 73 (February 2004), 2-3.

⁸⁸ The sweatshop conditions she and many other Spanish-speaking persons, especially women, experienced opened Moreno to the ideals of leftist politics. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 244.

⁸⁹ García, *Memories of Chicano History*, 117.

group of black leftists link the injustices faced by black Americans and ethnic Mexicans, as they stated that the two dead men were victims of a “new wave of hysterical Red hunting, suppression and persecution against all working class expression.”⁹⁰ The second event – the death of a Latina coworker’s infant as a result of having half its face eaten by a New York City rat – compelled her to more vigorously campaign for a change in workers’ material conditions.⁹¹ Thus, in 1930 she began to organize and joined the Communist Party.⁹²

Five years later, Moreno, perhaps dissatisfied with Communist Party orthodoxy, left the party and accepted an unpopular union organizing position in Florida with the more conservative American Federation of Labor (AFL).⁹³ In Florida, with the guidance of various Latinas/os, Jamaicans, Bahamians and others from the Caribbean, Moreno helped negotiate a favorable contract for 13,000 cigar workers; however, the AFL stepped in and revised the agreement to

⁹⁰ New York City police claimed the black man, Alfred Luro, died of apoplexy. The police department did not contest the killing of González. They explained that the Mexican communist was gunned down (not hit in the head) by Patrolman Edward O’Brien during a protest demonstration. In response, black leftists declared, “The murder of the Communist Gonzales (sic) three days after the beating to death of the young Negro Alfred Luro, at the hands of the police, constitutes the consistent policy of bloody brutality followed by the United States Government and city officials throughout this country.” The American Civil Liberties Union joined leftists in denouncing the wave of police brutality in the city and country, calling for the firing of O’Brien. Two days later, González was laid to rest without any indication that O’Brien would face punishment. “2,000 Reds March in Harlem Funeral,” *New York Times*, 2 July 1930; “Funeral for Red Today,” *New York Times*, 4 July 1930.

⁹¹ As Ruiz notes, the accuracy of this story is unclear, as in interviews Moreno recalled several instances where rats played prominent roles in her “radicalization.” I conclude that given the fact that Moreno was 1) rather poor for most of her life; and 2) a hands-on organizer who wanted to immerse herself in the world of the poor workers she struggled on behalf of, the centrality of rats in her transformation is more plausible. Many workers had little to no control over how long and when they worked, nor where they could afford to live. With few options and resources, poor workers had little choice but to leave children behind with unreliable childcare. Ruiz, “Una Mujer sin Fronteras,” 6.

⁹² Moreno built her own union, La Liga de Costureras. The tiny union was originally affiliated with the communist-influenced Needle Worker Trade Industrial Union, but later switched to the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU). La Liga was so small it received virtually no attention or funding from the larger organization, which worked to Moreno’s favor. Moreno essentially taught herself the basics of organizing and remained relatively autonomous. A significant ILGWU collection is housed at Cornell University. Unfortunately, the collection contains no known documents relating to Moreno (then Rodríguez) and *La Liga*, which perhaps attests to Moreno’s anonymity. International Ladies Garment Workers Union Records, 1884-2006, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Martin P. Catherwood Library, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; Ruiz, “Una Mujer sin Fronteras,” 6.

⁹³ Intensely private about her own life and inclinations, Moreno’s exact reasons for leaving the Communist Party are unclear. Ruiz does not cite Moreno’s rationale for abandoning the organization, but she does note that Moreno’s “commitment to Marxism never wavered.” *Ibid.*, 9.

make it more amenable to factory owners, infuriating Moreno.⁹⁴ She urged workers to reject the new contract, and the AFL responded by transferring Moreno to Pennsylvania. She left the state with a stronger conviction that the strongest union was a locally-run, multiracial and multi-ethnic union.

Moreno also left Florida with a new name and identity meant to facilitate what she believed to be her life's work to advance labor and civil rights for the multiracial and multi-ethnic working class of the United States. As Ruiz has noted, "With her light skin, education, and un-accented English, [Moreno] could have 'passed' as white: instead she chose to forego any potential privileges predicated on race, class, or color." Thus, Rosa Blanca ("White Rose") Rodríguez of favored birth had morphed into Luisa Moreno ("dark"), a leftist organizer poor in finances, but rich in integrity and determination.⁹⁵ It was as "Luisa Moreno" that she quit the AFL in favor of its main rival, the more left-leaning and inclusive Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), in 1937.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ The Cuban independence movement was deeply influential in Florida cigar factories, as revolutionary rhetoric helped workers overcome racial and ethnic divides in the deeply divided South. Ybor City, a neighborhood in Tampa, a cigar-making hub, became a significant center of radical and anti-imperialist thought in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Louis A. Pérez, Jr., "Reminisces of a *Lector*: Cuban Cigar Workers in Tampa," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 53 (April 1975), 443; Irvin D.S. Winsboro and Alexander Jordan, "Solidarity Means Inclusion: Race, Class, and Ethnicity within Tampa's Transnational Cigar Workers' Union," *Labor History* 55 (July 2014), 271-293; Nancy A. Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880s-1920s*, Paperback Edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 65.

⁹⁵ The name change was both practical and symbolic. It was practical because, according to Moreno herself, she wanted a stark break from her abusive ex-husband, whom she had recently divorced. When she attempted to collect from him her weekly \$5 in child support, he threatened her with physical violence. Such threats "made necessary [the] change of name to Luisa Moreno." The name change was symbolic in that Moreno wanted to disassociate herself from her past privileges of race and class. This, then, was also practical because it had the potential to bring her closer to workers she hoped to organize. "Data on Luisa Moreno Bemis," Kenny Papers, SCL; Ruiz, "Una Mujer sin Fronteras," 8.

⁹⁶ From 1935 to 1938, the CIO was named the Committee on Industrial Organization, but for simplicity I have only used the name used since then, the Congress of Industrial Organizations. According to historian Robert H. Zeiger, for a time the CIO grudgingly accepted communist influence since the leftists strongly supported the CIO program of "energetic industrial unionism, antifascism, and coalition with progressive political and social forces." Robert H. Zeiger, *The CIO 1935-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 25, 253.

Not long after, Moreno joined one of the more radical CIO affiliates most attuned to the specific concerns of nonwhites and women, the newly created UCAPAWA.⁹⁷ As a UCAPAWA organizer and later vice-president, Moreno organized across race, ethnicity, nationality, and gender throughout the country, including the American Southwest, earning the respect and trust of workers familiar with either the ideologies of Ricardo Flores Magón and the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM), Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), other leftists, or simply those familiar with the difficult life of those living on the margins.⁹⁸ In Texas, Moreno organized alongside local communists like Emma Tenayuca to force pecan shellers to agree to pay scales that met federal minimum wage standards, and to recognize the local UCAPAWA.⁹⁹ She also lived the life of an ethnic Mexican migrant worker in the Rio Grande Valley, sleeping under trees, sharing food, and contending with a “lynch spirit” that hovered over migrant farm workers.¹⁰⁰ Moreno was also arrested in south Texas while leading a strike of Mexican cotton

⁹⁷ In Denver, Colorado on 9 July 1937, Mexican, Filipino, Japanese, blacks, and other underrepresented minorities in more established unions, voted to form UCAPAWA. Historian David Gutiérrez has written that UCAPAWA was critical to incorporating Mexican American women and men “into the ranks of an American labor organization.” David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 110.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 245-255.

⁹⁹ Moreno and Tenayuca did not agree on strike tactics, which contributed to a rift between the two organizers. Despite the frictions between the two and labor organizations, the pecan shellers earned a victory, albeit temporary. “Data on Luisa Moreno Bemis,” Kenny Papers, SCL; Zaragosa Vargas, “Tejana Radical: Emma Tenayuca and the San Antonio Labor Movement during the Great Depression,” in *Texas Labor History*, eds. Bruce A. Glasrud and James C. Maroney (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2013), 219-244.

¹⁰⁰ Ethnic Mexicans in the American Southwest were well acquainted with the threat of violence in general, and lynching in particular. According to historians William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, from 1882 to 1930, “the danger of lynching for a Mexican resident in the United States was nearly as great, and in some instances greater, than the specter of mob violence for a black person in the American South. Because of the smaller size of the Spanish-speaking population, the total number of Mexican victims was much lower, but the chance of being murdered by a mob was comparable for both Mexicans and African Americans.” Mexicans were lynched for a variety of reasons, from allegedly violating white women, to providing labor competition/unrest, to owning sought-after lands or a mining claim. The last official lynching of a Mexican in the United States occurred in New Mexico on 16 November 1928, not long after Moreno had arrived in New York City. Rafael Benavides, who lay on a hospital bed recovering from a gunshot wound given to him by a sheriff’s posse, was abducted by four men and taken to the outskirts of the city (Farmington/Aztec). The kidnappers placed a rope around Benavides’ neck and hanged him from a locust tree. Newspapers reported that Benavides allegedly snuck into a white woman’s house while her husband was out hunting, beat her unconscious and “carried her on horseback into a canyon and left her there unclothed.” The woman eventually regained consciousness and presumably identified a Mexican man as her assailant. William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, “The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin or Descent in the

pickers. In a scene reminiscent of those in 1930s Imperial Valley, Corona recalled: “The authorities tried to get her to leave the county by promising to release her if she signed a statement vowing never to return. She refused, and so she remained in jail.”¹⁰¹ Moreno’s dedication alone, however, were not always enough to continue the workers’ struggle. As a result, with funds low and union success unlikely, UCAPAWA leadership pulled Moreno from Texas and began readying her for her next organizing effort: the canneries and packinghouses of California.¹⁰²

“Dreams and optimism are the fibers of life...”

Although the Fishermen and Cannery Industrial Workers’ Union had been defeated in 1934, cannery women did not refrain from dreaming of, and planning for, a stronger union that truly represented them – not just cannery workers, but *women* cannery workers. Women constituted approximately three-quarters of the canneries’ workforce, thus cannery women reasoned that they should have a significant amount of input in union affairs. Cleaners and packers oftentimes ensured workers’ meetings were not dominated by men simply by being blunt. Salvador Torres recalled when men attempted to interject in discussions, “the women would tell them men to ‘shut up’ and they would discuss issues in the fish room and packing room. They would actually say, ‘shut up.’”¹⁰³ Moreno, then, would be organizing alongside women as dedicated and active as she.

When Moreno arrived in San Diego, she touched base with a local ethnic Mexican leader she had briefly crossed paths with on a previous trip to California. Roberto “Bob” Galván, like

United States, 1848 to 1928,” *Journal of Social History* 37 (Winter 2003), 414; “Suspect in Abduction Lynched,” *Los Angeles Times*, 17 November 1928. See also William D. Carrigan, *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence Against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Nicholas Villanueva, Jr., *The Lynching of Mexicans in the Texas Borderlands* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017).

¹⁰¹ García, *Memories of Chicano History*, 118.

¹⁰² Ruiz, “Una Mujer sin Fronteras,” 11.

¹⁰³ Quoted in Guevarra, *Becoming Mexipino*, 122.

many other ethnic Mexicans in San Diego, arrived in Southern California during the Mexican Revolution. A child refugee, Galván traveled north from León, Guanajuato, crossed the U.S.-Mexico international border at El Paso, Texas, and then made his way west. He and his family settled in Logan Heights in 1918, where the young shy boy would spend most of his time reading and staring off into space.¹⁰⁴ When he grew up, Galván developed a reputation for being the person to turn to when in need of assistance. “Uncle Bob was the most helpful person in Logan Heights. That quip about ‘giving the shirt off his back’,” Mike Ybarra wrote, “they got it from my Uncle Bob. At the cannery Van Camps (sic) in San Diego where my Uncle Bob worked as warehouse man was no exception. Again he was called to help for many reasons, interpreter, explaining to the bosses about work conditions, etc. As president of the local for the CIO Union, Bob was kept very busy.”¹⁰⁵ Contrary to Ybarra’s claim, Galván was not the president of the United Fish Cannery Workers Union, UCAPAWA Local 64, but instead the union’s secretary and, later, treasurer.¹⁰⁶ It was a union that accomplished both little and profound success in San Diego’s cannery industry.

With a natural opening given Galván’s employment at the company, Moreno logically began aggressively organizing at Van Camp, listening to the “ladies in white,” getting a sense of what they wanted out of a collective body. A veteran labor organizer, Moreno understood that it took time to build a solid, democratic and communally invested base on which to move on; therefore, Local 64 was not established until May 1939. The following month a strike was finally called.¹⁰⁷ On the 21st of June, 650 cannery workers went on strike at Van Camp,

¹⁰⁴ Carlos Larralde, “Roberto Galvan: A Latino Leader of the 1940s,” *Journal San Diego History* 52 (Summer/Fall 2006), 150.

¹⁰⁵ Untitled note written by Mike Ybarra, Folder 3, Box 23, Baca Papers, UCSD.

¹⁰⁶ Larralde, “Roberto Galvan,” 152.

¹⁰⁷ As labor historian Zaragosa Vargas points out, Moreno and Dorothy Ray Healey’s success in the canneries of Los Angeles was due to their practice of democratic trade unionism, which included a great number of workers in the decision-making process. Enrique Meza Buelna, “Resistance From the Margins: Mexican American Radical

demanding higher pay for all workers, in addition to better hours and work conditions. The strike, which was strategically called during the busy summer fish canning season, “tied up operations and there was danger that 160 tons of fish, cooked and ready for canning, would have to be destroyed.” Although the police did show up, no violence took place.¹⁰⁸ Instead, the cannery company, increasingly concerned over lost profits, relented and agreed to bargain with Local 64 only a few days into the strike. This move by Van Camp management allowed the cannery to resume operations as soon as a supply of fish was received.¹⁰⁹ Although it took over a year for a contract to be agreed to and signed, the cannery workers at Van Camp were successful in getting Local 64 recognized and a closed shop established. Additionally, workers were guaranteed an eight-hour workday, overtime pay, seniority rights, and improved working conditions, which the *UCAPAWA News* proudly noted was a first in the canneries. Pay increases were also secured, but women were still paid less on average per hour than men.¹¹⁰

Given the impressive result at San Diego’s largest fish cannery, it seemed only reasonable to believe that Local 64 would meet great success in the city’s other canneries, including the few fruit and vegetable canneries present. Therefore, over the next few years Moreno carried out organizing efforts at the California Packing Corporation, Marine Products Company, Old Mission Packing Corporation, and Westgate. According to *UCAPAWA News*, as early as December 1939, about half of Old Mission Packing Company’s workers signed up to be represented by Local 64, and many other cannery workers were joining its ranks.¹¹¹ While

Activism in Los Angeles, 1930-1970,” (PhD diss., University of California, Irvine, 2007), 8; Vargas, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights*, 153.

¹⁰⁸ “Strike Halts Fish Canning,” *Los Angeles Times*, 22 June 1939; Vargas, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights*, 153.

¹⁰⁹ “Strike in Air Plant Averted; Settlement Forecast in San Diego Union Row; Fish Cannery Peace Seen,” *Los Angeles Times*, 26 June 1939.

¹¹⁰ Ruiz, *Cannery Women*, 81; Guevarra, *Becoming Mexipino*, 122; “Van Camp Signs Improved Pact with UCAPAWA,” *UCAPAWA News*, May-June 1940.

¹¹¹ “Local 64 Gains Many New Members,” *UCAPAWA News*, December 1939.

Moreno may have been successful at garnering the attention and interest of some cannery workers – perhaps even getting them to agree to join the United Fish Cannery Workers Union – overall, the well-funded and entrenched AFL remained dominant. Historian Rudy P. Guevarra, Jr. has shown that, contrary to claims made by other historians and even Moreno herself, Moreno was not successful in making the UCAPAWA affiliate the dominant union in San Diego’s canneries. Save for Van Camp, the AFL, according to its official local publication, *Labor Leader*, controlled all the other canneries.¹¹²

The local AFL, however, had changed from the early 20th century, when it had accused the “foreigner”-dominated IWW and other leftist organizations of fanning the flames of discontent, thereby threatening the Booster San Diego vision of economic growth. Since nonwhites, particularly ethnic Mexicans, had come to dominate San Diego’s second largest industry, the AFL began to realize that in order to continue being a force for labor in the Southern California city and county, it had to break from its narrow craft and white base to become more inclusive.¹¹³ The emergence of the CIO nationally, and the United Fish Cannery Workers Union locally, undoubtedly pushed the AFL in this regard as well. A fierce competition for the memberships of the multiracial and multi-ethnic cannery workforce thus ensued between the leftist Local 64 and the AFL’s more conservative Fish Cannery Workers’ Local 21251.

The AFL poured funds and enlisted the leadership of ethnic Mexican and Filipino organizers to gain support of the rank-and-file in San Diego’s many canneries. This had the

¹¹² Guevarra, *Becoming Mexipino*, 210-211n199; Larralde and Griswold del Castillo, “Luisa Moreno and Beginnings,” 160; Larralde and Griswold del Castillo, “Luisa Moreno,” 290; “Cannery Workers Notes,” *Labor Leader*, 11 October 1940; “Cannery Workers Notes,” *Labor Leader*, 1 November 1911

¹¹³ Mary Catherine Miller, “Attitudes of the San Diego Labor Movement Toward Mexicans, 1917-1936,” (Master’s thesis, San Diego State University, 1974), 62.

consequence of developing a new class of ethnic Mexican organizers.¹¹⁴ Ultimately, the AFL's outreach to ethnic Mexicans scored them victories at Sun Harbor, Westgate, California Packing Corporation, the Tuna Fishermen's Packing Corporation, and winning back control over Old Mission Packing Company. In turn, organization under a responsive AFL secured for cannery workers a 5 cent per hour raise. Next, the AFL local set its sights on Van Camp. Though they made a strong push to gain control at San Diego's largest fish cannery, arguing that Van Camp workers could get a raise too, Moreno and Galván garnered enough support for Local 64 to stave off defeat.¹¹⁵

The competition between the AFL and UCAPAWA – and labor and cannery owners – ceased when the United States entered World War II. The *Labor Leader* declared, “No Strikes for Duration of War!”¹¹⁶ Just as had been the case during the First World War, war in 1941 brought about the suspension of civil rights and the stunting of union growth, as all energies and resources were diverted to the war effort. The military purchased massive amounts of canned tuna to feed its troops, but also decreased fish cannery production after the Navy commandeered fishing boats to use them for patrols. Additionally, the federal government decreased the number of catches after it detained local Japanese – many of whom were fishermen and cannery workers – and sent them first to the Santa Fe Depot in downtown San Diego for processing, and then to internment camps.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Not all union leaders were comfortable with the competition between the two factions. This was the case with Armando M. Rodríguez's sister, who left union work not long after Moreno arrived to consult. Rodríguez, *Raising Our Voices*, SDSU.

¹¹⁵ “Westgate Peace Threatened,” *Labor Leader*, 15 March 1940; “No Vote at Westgate; CIO Out!,” *Labor Leader*, 26 April 1940; “S.D. Canneries in AFL Pact,” *Labor Leader*, 25 October 25, 1940; “New Gains Loom for AFL Cannery Workers Militant AFL Union Shows Big Membership Increases in '40,” *Labor Leader*, 2 September 1940.

¹¹⁶ “No Strikes for Duration of War!,” *Labor Leader*, 2 January 1942.

¹¹⁷ Felando and Medina, “Origins of California's High-Seas Tuna Fleet,” 23; Gerald Schlenker, “The Internment of the Japanese of San Diego County during the Second World War,” *Journal of San Diego History* 18 (Winter 1978), <https://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/1972/january/internment/>, accessed 1 September 2017.

World War II brought extra scrutiny to the ethnic Mexican population, too. Dominated by the Booster San Diego dream since the early 20th century, San Diego had become, in the words of Carey McWilliams, “very, very conservative.” Historians Richard Griswold del Castillo and José Rodolfo Jacobo arrived at the same conclusion, contending that World War II made San Diego even more politically and culturally conservative, which was cause for concern for many ethnic Mexicans, who had already encountered their share of prejudice in San Diego.¹¹⁸ Indeed, when Moreno arrived to help cannery workers organize, she had to contend with a strong right-wing vigilante climate, led by the Ku Klux Klan. Historian Matt García has explained that the Klan in Southern California sought to maintain the existing social order by intimidating nonwhites, Catholics, and those who peddled alcohol.¹¹⁹ Like in other regions of Southern California, the San Diego Klan experienced a resurgence in the 1920s, in intense reaction to the waves of black southerners and immigrants, particularly ethnic Mexicans, who had descended upon San Diego. The son of a Klansmen remarked that his father’s Klan branch, the Exalted Cyclops of San Diego No. 64, responded to the growth of the ethnic Mexican population by “chasing the wet-backs across the border.”¹²⁰ It is likely that San Diego Klansmen agreed with the assessment of the Klan’s Imperial Wizard, Hiram W. Evans, who proclaimed that south of the U.S.-Mexico border, “thousands of Mexicans, many of them Communist,” were waiting to

¹¹⁸ Carey McWilliams, interviewed by Joel Gardner, 19 July 1978, Tape X, Oral History Collection, UCLA Library for Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles (COHR); José Rodolfo Jacobo and Richard Griswold del Castillo, “World War II and the Emerging Civil Rights Struggle,” in *Chicano San Diego: Cultural Space and the Struggle for Justice*, ed. Richard Griswold del Castillo (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 98.

¹¹⁹ Matt García, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 75-82.

¹²⁰ V. Wayne Kenaston, Jr., interviewed by Nancy B. Cuthbert, 8 February 1978, San Diego History Center Oral History Project, SDHC. Kenaston, the son of a high-level San Diego Klansmen, contended that the local Klan was not particularly racist. He stated, “I don’t recall any intimation or conversation of any basic prejudices of Orientals, or Spanish-Mexican neighbors, any other particular ethnic group.” He proceeded to explain that his father and other Klansmen did intimidate ethnic Mexicans across the border.

cross the international line to disrupt American life and labor markets.¹²¹ Indeed, following the raid of the California Klan's state headquarters in 1946, they found "America First" literature, "electrically lighted crosses," and copies of Evans's railings against immigration.¹²²

Klansmen not only acted as a vigilante deportation force, they also were a labor discipline unit. This, however, was not surprising to Moreno, who charged that some of the Klan's members were "tuna executives and growers." Bill Karn, for instance, was a grower, San Diego County Supervisor, and a Klan member.¹²³ Regardless of how many boosters and business interests were active members of the Klan (or any other right-wing group), extralegal squads did attempt to break up union organizing, which contributed to the delay in the formation of UCAPAWA Local 64 at Van Camp. Klan members did their best to make their presence known in nonwhite neighborhoods and settlements as well. Ethnic Mexican workers were regularly terrorized with public parades, night rides, and cross burnings, if not physically assaulted or killed. Moreno was often informed by Galván of the many Klan-related atrocities committed in San Diego County, which included the rape and/or murder of ethnic Mexican women border crossers, and the hanging and decapitation of recalcitrant workers. Yet in an often dark and divided world, Galván remained hopeful, stating, "Dreams and optimism are the fibers of life. Otherwise we will get dried up inside and eaten up by hate like the Klan." He likely needed to remind himself of what he preached: Bert Corona recalled that Galván himself

¹²¹ Evans was the Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan from 1922 to 1939. During his tenure, the Klan branched out beyond the South, spreading anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic, anti-unionism, and anti-communist ideology. H.W. Evans, *Attitude of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan toward Immigration* (Atlanta: Imperial Palace, 1926), 7.

¹²² Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, *The Facts*, 1 (May 1946), 12.

¹²³ Jimmy C. Patiño, Jr., "'A Time for Resistance': Globalization, Undocumented Immigration, and the Chicana/o Movement in the San Diego Borderlands," (PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 2010), 59.

was “almost hanged” after his car broke down on the way home from a local El Congreso meeting.¹²⁴

El Congreso del Pueblo de Habla Española, or El Congreso, was a path-breaking civil rights organization co-founded by Moreno and leftist ethnic Mexican Josefina Fierro in 1939.¹²⁵ At their first meeting, held from 28-30 April 1939 in Los Angeles, El Congreso aptly declared, “For the first time we were united.”¹²⁶ An umbrella organization that had brought together ethnic Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Spaniards, educators, religious leaders, white representatives from the CIO and its affiliates, Hollywood producers and writers, and students, among others, El Congreso engaged in substantive discussions on segregation in public facilities, housing, education, employment, and public welfare. Delegates raised concerns about police brutality and deportations. Galván discussed with other union leaders unfair labor conditions faced by workers in a variety of industries, including fish canneries.¹²⁷ Ultimately, El Congreso celebrated Latino cultures and defended the labor and civil rights of all Latinas/os, regardless of citizenship.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ The Klan intimidated agricultural workers in San Diego County as well, although this was not always welcome from San Diego County farmers who needed their labor. Unlike in the Imperial Valley, there was no oversupply of farm workers available in San Diego County. Quoted by Larralde, “Roberto Galvan,” 154; Guevarra, *Becoming Mexipino*, 124; Carlos M. Larralde and Richard Griswold del Castillo, “San Diego’s Ku Klux Klan 1920-1980,” *Journal of San Diego History* 46 (Spring/Summer 2000), <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/2000/april/klan/>, accessed 1 September 2017; see also María de la Luz Ibarra, “El Campo: Memories of a Citrus Labor Camp,” in *Chicano San Diego: Cultural Space and the Struggle for Justice*, ed. Richard Griswold del Castillo (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 117.

¹²⁵ Like Moreno, Fierro was familiar with the radical traditions of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands. When Fierro was an infant, her mother transported munitions from Calexico to Mexicali for the anarcho-syndicalist *insurrectos*. Later, Fierro’s mother became a *bordera*, or a woman who cooked and washed clothes, wrote letters, handled mail, and aided with banking, which immersed the young Fierro into the world of farm workers. Observing first-hand extreme destitution and inequality, Fierro wondered if there was “something other than capitalism, given the disaster of the depression.” García, *Memories of Chicano History*, 120-123.

¹²⁶ “First National Congress of the Mexican and Spanish American People of the United States,” April 28-30, 1939, Digest Proceedings, Folder 9, Box 13, Ernesto Galarza Papers, Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, CA (STAN).

¹²⁷ Larralde, “Roberto Galvan,” 152.

¹²⁸ Ruiz, “Una Mujer sin Fronteras,” 11; García, *Memories of Chicano History*, 112; Vicki L. Ruiz, “Nuestra América: Latino History as United States History,” *Journal of American History* 93 (Dec. 2006), 667-668.

Thus, during World War II, El Congreso members came to the defense of ethnic Mexican youths implicated in the Los Angeles Sleepy Lagoon murder case and Zoot Suit Riots of 1943. In 1942, 17 Mexican youth were indicted for murder of another ethnic Mexican youth. After dubious court procedures, prejudiced testimony, and much negative, anti-Mexican publicity linking Mexicanness with delinquency, the youths were convicted for an assortment of crimes, which the progressive Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee sought to overturn.¹²⁹ Moreno, who was a member of the defense committee alongside Carey McWilliams, Josefina Fierro, and Dorothy Ray Healey, to name a few, saw the treatment of the young ethnic Mexican men as a warning signal (See Figure 4.2). The UCAPAWA organizer explicitly linked civil rights with labor rights and declared, “The Sleepy Lagoon Case is a reflection of the general reactionary drive against organized labor and minority problems. This case now sows all sorts of division among the various racial, national, and religious groups among the workers.”¹³⁰

Moreno found the Zoot Suit Riots equally troubling, though unsurprising given existing racial tensions in Southern California. During the riots, American servicemen roamed the streets of Los Angeles and beat up pachucos, or ethnic Mexican youth in zoot suit attire that had been

¹²⁹ Officially known as the Citizens’ Committee for the Defense of Mexican-American Youth, the Sleepy Lagoon wrote: “Seventeen innocent Mexican-American boys have been convicted in a Los Angeles court for a crime they did not commit. These convictions arose from distorted, prejudicial and hearsay evidence and were accompanied by a consistent barrage of prejudice in the press.” Key to note is that Senator Jack B. Tenney’s California Un-American Committee argued that the 17 Mexican American youth were fascist or fascist-influenced gangsters, yet the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee would later be investigated by the Tenney Committee for communist ties. California Senate, *Report Joint Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities in California* (Sacramento: California State Printing Office, 1943), 203-204, 216.

¹³⁰ Quoted in Jacobo and Griswold del Castillo, “World War II and Civil Rights,” 100.



Figure 4.2. First Sleepy Lagoon Committee meeting, 1942. Reproduced from Carlos Larralde, “Josefina Fierro and the Sleepy Lagoon Crusade, 1942-1945,” *Southern California Quarterly* 92 (Summer 2010): 117-160. Original in Larralde private collection.

Note: Josefina Fierro in back row, second from left; Luisa Moreno in back row, fifth from left; Dorothy Ray in back row, sixth from left; Bert Corona in front row, fourth from left; and Gray Bemis in front row, fifth from left.

deemed extravagant and unpatriotic.¹³¹ In San Diego, where the local press ran sensationalist articles stating that pachucos were “not far removed from the old ‘alley gangs’ which frequented the back streets of every large American city earlier in the century” and were thus being

¹³¹ See Eduardo Obregón Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Kevin Allen Leonard, *The Battle of Los Angeles: Racial Ideology and World War II* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), especially chapters three and five; Luis Alvarez, *The Power of the Zoot: Youth Culture and Resistance during World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008). For the alienation of the pachuco from both (Anglo) American and Mexican cultures, see Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), chapter one.

“hunted,” Moreno and Galván helped lead the protest against the hundreds of unruly servicemen roaming downtown streets.¹³² San Diego city councilman also grew alarmed at the behavior of servicemen, who were not only targeting pachucos, but also “civilians in general.”¹³³ However, Navy leadership in San Diego ignored the complaint, then aimed to discredit it. A furious Moreno, consistently rebuffed in her efforts to broker a meeting between local and civic leadership and Navy brass, stated, “Without a stable political and social environment, nothing can be done. Political power belongs to those who can sustain growth and deliver prosperity. Then they can inspire loyalty and cooperation from the people.”¹³⁴ Moreno, then, sought a just peace and not a revolution she would eventually be accused of promoting.

Smears, Aliens, and Good Citizens

Once Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan finally surrendered to the Allies in 1945, the AFL and UCAPAWA, which had been renamed the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural, Allied Workers (FTA) in 1944, renewed their battles over the control of San Diego’s canneries, although without Moreno, who had temporarily gone on assignment north to Riverside and Orange County. The AFL had only strengthened its hold over the city’s canneries during the war, as it had merged cannery workers and fishermen into a joint union, the Cannery Workers and Fishermen’s Union. The AFL had also formed a partnership with the less-than-democratic

¹³² Of course, the contributions of ethnic Mexican men in combat and women on the home front were overlooked during this period of high racial tension (to say nothing of the decades since). Most of the cannery children mentioned in this work ended up enlisting in the military after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. “Zoot-Suiters Linked with Old Alley Gangs,” *San Diego Union*, 10 June 1943; “Zoot-Suiters Hunted in S.D.,” *San Diego Union*, 10 June 1943. For a brief overview of San Diego’s ethnic Mexican GIs and Rosita the Riveters during the Second World War, see Jacobo and Griswold del Castillo, “World War II and Civil Rights,” 104-110.

¹³³ Charles C. Dail to Rear Admiral David W. Bagley, 10 June 1943, reproduced in Maurico Mazón, *The Zoot-Suit Riots: The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 130-131.

¹³⁴ Quoted in Jacobo and Griswold del Castillo, “World War II and Civil Rights,” 103.

Teamsters, who used intimidation, violence, coercion, cheating during elections, and, perhaps most effectively, red-baiting to maintain and grow support.¹³⁵

Indeed, at the dawn of the Cold War the patriotic AFL-Teamster coalition helped keep focus on a critical point: UCAPAWA/FTA and much of its leadership hailed from radical leftist traditions. Not only had UCAPAWA/FTA come out of the communist-aligned Cannery and Agricultural Workers' Industrial Union (CAWIU), but several of its leaders, including Luisa Moreno and Roberto Galván, were former members of the Communist Party. Certainly, then, many ethnic Mexicans and non-white workers were aware that communism – or any leftist beliefs – was considered un-American and, thus, dangerous. The message seemed clear: tow the more conservative union line or else face some form of ostracism. In case there was any lingering doubt as to the perils of leftist politics, the AFL-controlled Labor Council emphasized communism's foreignness and subversion, reading to its membership the words of William Z. Foster, national chairman of the Communist Party USA: "The Red flag is the flag of the revolutionary class and we are a part of the revolutionary class. All capitalist flags are flags of the capitalistic class and we owe no allegiance to them."¹³⁶

When Moreno returned to San Diego, recently retired from labor organizing and ready to begin her life with her old friend and new husband, Gray Bemis, the local UCAPAWA/FTA was on life support, as membership began to dwindle. To finally put an end to the union's presence in San Diego, as well as to use Moreno and other leftist activists as an example, the fish canneries and other boosters and business interests encouraged various anti-communist

¹³⁵ Guevarra, *Becoming Mexipino*, 126.

¹³⁶ As early as 1938, the Labor Council had expelled several "Red sympathizers" from its ranks. It should be noted that the CIO, too, had begun to purge suspected communists from their rolls. "S.D. Unions Combat Red Infiltration," *San Diego Daily Journal*, 2 September 1948, Folder F6.51, Box 22, California Un-American Activities Committees Records, California State Archives, Sacramento, CA (CSA).

government committees to investigate the labor leaders.¹³⁷ Unlike in the past when state and federal governments were slow to take action against leftists in Greater San Diego, in the late 1940s the state was ready to intervene on behalf of Booster San Diego.

Moreno had caught the attention of anti-communists as early as the 1930s when she was organizing El Congreso. According to Bert Corona, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) caught wind of the initial Congreso event scheduled for March 1939 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and immediately claimed the convention would promote “violent riots and revolutionary activity.”¹³⁸ Rather than see El Congreso as a reformist organization that like other anti-fascist and left-leaning Popular Front organizations sought both a political economy akin to “moral capitalism” and “the fulfillment of the American promise of equity and cooperation,” anti-communists saw only an incendiary organization comprised of radical leftists bent on revolution.¹³⁹ Thus, Moreno, who unabashedly continued to push the leftist

¹³⁷ Larralde and Griswold del Castillo contend that in interviews they had with Moreno, she was clear that the San Diego canneries were behind state scrutiny on her. Considering her battles with the AFL, it would not be inconceivable if the unions had had some influence on the canneries operatives’ decisions as well. Carlos Larralde and Richard Griswold del Castillo, “Luisa Moreno,” *Journal of San Diego History* 41 (Fall 1995), 298.

¹³⁸ During the late 1930s, Moreno travelled through the American Southwest to rally support and raise funds for a national Latina/o conference that was to become El Congreso. Moreno eventually agreed to hold the conference at the University of New Mexico, at the invitation of two local professors, George I. Sánchez and Arthur L. Campa. When HUAC heard of the conference that was to be attended by Latinos and leftists, they forced the university to pressure Sánchez and Campa to “rescind the invitation to host the convention or possibly lose their positions.” The Albuquerque conference was subsequently cancelled, opening the door for Los Angeles to host the event. García, *Memories of Chicano History*, 109-110; for more on the fears of a *reconquista* in the early 20th century (and the present), see Benjamin Heber Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); and Leo R. Chavez, *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation*, Second Edition (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

¹³⁹ In 1964, historian Kermit McKenzie wrote that the Popular Front was “an imaginative, flexible program of strategy and tactics, in which Communists were permitted to exploit the symbols of patriotism, to assume the role of defenders of national independence... without demanding an end to capitalism as the only remedy, and, most important, to enter upon alliances with other parties, on the basis of fronts or on the basis of a government in which Communists might participate.” While McKenzie suggests that leftists were infiltrating the American political system, leftists themselves viewed their involvement simply as participation. Communists, socialists, CIO unionists, and others on the left believed that change could come from within the system. Kermit E. McKenzie, *Comintern and World Revolution, 1928-1943: The Shaping of a Doctrine* (New York: Columbia University, 1964), 159; Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 8; Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 239.

UCAPAWA/FTA, remained in anti-leftist sights. Agents for the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) followed her throughout her travels through California, unconvincingly hiding behind newspapers held up to shield their faces. Moreno had learned of the many surveillance tactics of FBI agents; therefore, she began to rent adjoining rooms when traveling; turned up the volume on a radio so as not to be heard; and tore up meaningless envelopes and paper to force agents who dug through her trash to piece together useless information. She also made sure no leftist-related mail was sent to her San Diego home.¹⁴⁰

Yet, as adept as Moreno became at toying with the FBI, Moreno, along with other San Diego leftists including Roberto Galván, was forced to stand before California state senator Jack B. Tenney's California Un-American Activities Committee (CUAC) in September 1948. She defended herself and her dreams for a more equitable and just San Diego and country. Moreno's public hearing began on the 10th of September, the third day of the San Diego hearings, which allowed her to study the committee's line of questioning. She noted that committee members were tough, but that Tenney was by far the toughest – a “bully.”¹⁴¹ With this information in mind, Moreno delivered answers to the committee with unflinching resolve. When pressed for information on UCAPAWA/FTA, Moreno replied that they should ask the union for that information. R.E. Combs, the chief counsel for CUAC, then abruptly asked Moreno if she was an alien resident and if she had ever been a member of the Communist Party. “The purpose of your Committee in asking this question, not only of myself, but to other witnesses,” replied the yet to be naturalized Moreno, “is to smear... a labor union that is working for the interests of the workers within this jurisdiction.” She continued:

I don't want to sit here for hours and hours and relate to you what sacrifices have been made to improve the miserable conditions of the workers... But I will say

¹⁴⁰ Larralde and Griswold del Castillo, “Luisa Moreno,” 297-298.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

this, that the pledge I took to the Constitution of the United States is not one only for myself, but it means also to protect the rights of all citizens and non-citizens... and because you deem it unlawful for a person to affiliate with certain groups or because you deem unlawful certain beliefs – I am sure if you search your consciences and your souls it will not be within the spirit and the letter of the Constitution.¹⁴²

Unmoved, Senator Tenney interjected, announcing to Moreno, “I will state that this question is going to be asked of you by the Immigration Department when you attempt to become a citizen of the United States... Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party or of the Communist Political Association?”¹⁴³

Moreno remained unnerved. After repeated threats from Tenney and Combs, Moreno began to tell of her childhood in Guatemala, which Tenney continuously interrupted, declaring he had no desire to know her history. She persisted: “All right, and a fear hung over the homes of the people [of Guatemala], not only the working people, but my family which was wealthy, and even in our home that fear of expressing yourself and even thinking –.” Still uninterested in hearing Moreno’s reasoned response, Tenney interrupted again and once more asked her to disclose if she had been a communist. Moreno continued, “But Mr. Tenney, things can develop, and today people may be here simply threatened with contempt, but tomorrow there will be concentration camps.” Moreno, then, was defending civil rights. The frustrated committee chair once more threatened Moreno by stating he would forward the transcript of her “contemptuous attitude for law and order” to immigration officials, to which Moreno replied, “Mr. Tenney, citizenship to me means a great deal, but the Constitution of the United States means more.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² California Senate, *Senate Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities in California*, Vol. 51, page 135, Folder 10, Box 31, CUAC Records, CSA.

¹⁴³ Ibid., page 136.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., page 137.

After Tenney quieted the burst of applause that erupted from the gallery, Moreno was deemed in contempt and dismissed.

Galván followed Moreno in the interrogation chair and proved to be equally as defiant. After the Logan Heights leader identified himself as a cannery worker, Combs immediately sought to establish Galván's affiliations with the Communist Party. After he stated he was not a member of the party, Galván was asked if he had ever been in the Communist Party, prompting the cannery worker to refuse to answer "on the grounds of possible self-incrimination." The committee then voted to grant him immunity if he answered truthfully, which made the witness suspicious. After a brief recess and consultation with his lawyer, Galván returned and once again refused to answer, pointing out that the Tenney Committee did not have the power to grant immunity. As with Moreno, the committee began to ask questions pertaining to Galván's immigration status, but like his friend, he remained unfazed.¹⁴⁵

After another break in Galván's testimony, Combs returned to the issue of the cannery worker's involvement with the Communist Party, attempting to establish if Galván had left the organization and who he may have known. Combs asked, "Are you acquainted with a Phil Usquiano?... Is it not a fact that you and Phil Usquiano were members of the Spanish Speaking Club of the Communist Party of San Diego?" Galván noted that he knew the individual Combs spoke of, but declined to answer if he had been a member of the Spanish club. After more pressure, however, Galván admitted that he had been in UCAPAWA/FTA and the CIO.¹⁴⁶ Seemingly satisfied, the committee dismissed him and called their next witness, the aforementioned Usquiano, a Mexican American trade unionist and active member of San

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., pages 140-150.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Diego's El Congreso.¹⁴⁷ Like Moreno and Galván before him, Usquiano attempted to regain some modicum of power in the proceedings, critiquing the intentions of CUAC and, by extension, the boosters and business interests of San Diego. The trade unionist fearlessly declared, "When you bring the Mexican people to testify before you, you want to smear them, you want to intimidate the Mexican people, but we won't be smeared and we won't be intimidated." The committee summarily held Usquiano in contempt and dismissed him. Usquiano, however, had a parting shot: "I will see you in Spain, you guys, with [fascist dictator Francisco] Franco."¹⁴⁸

Senator Tenney then declared that upon adjournment of the public hearing the committee would decide what actions to take "in reference to these witnesses who have so contemptuously and brazenly refused to answer proper questions propounded to them... [M]any of these witnesses have not only been in contempt of the Committee on one count, but several in many instances."¹⁴⁹ The San Diego press had already made up its mind regarding the innocence of those called to testify before the Tenney Committee. Days before the hearings began, one local publication published a story titled, "Communists Spread Tentacles Over S.D." The article informed readers that "The Communist Party is expanding in San Diego. It is alert and aggressive and it has plans which may affect you and every other citizen of this community.

¹⁴⁷ Phil Usquiano was born in Grant, New Mexico in 1910, but moved with his family to San Diego, where he spent the rest of his life struggling for the civil and labor rights of ethnic Mexicans of his community. He founded *Hermanidad Mexicana Nacional*, which according to Corona, "provided services for permanent residents and undocumented immigrants." He was also in close contact with ethnic Mexicans who later formed El Congreso's leftist successor, *Asociación Nacional México-Americana* (ANMA). Corona, who was one of ANMA's co-founders, stated the organization was dedicated to "achieving full rights and better conditions for the Spanish-speaking, primarily workers." However, Usquiano and others who became involved in ANMA did not confine themselves to solely helping ethnic Mexicans. For instance, during the Second World War, Usquiano and other leftist ethnic Mexicans in San Diego and Los Angeles aided Japanese Americans who wanted to escape internment by smuggling them from San Diego to Mexico. Larralde, "El Congreso in San Diego," 24; García, *Memories of Chicano History*, 169, 241.

¹⁴⁸ California Senate, *Committee on Un-American Activities in California*, pages 170-171, Folder 10, Box 31, CUAC Records, CSA.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pages 171-172.

These plans include Communist infiltration into every segment of San Diego's public, economic and social life."¹⁵⁰ Another news story explained that, though there was much to fear, San Diego's AFL was doing what it could to combat communism amongst the community's working class.¹⁵¹ Nevertheless, anti-communists were to remain vigilant during and after the public hearings. To assist concerned citizens in finding alleged communists, San Diego's dailies posted witnesses' addresses and pictures in bold print. Among those included were Moreno (identified as "Luisa Bemis"), Galván (identified as "Robert N. Galvan"), and Usquiano.¹⁵²

A week after the Tenney Committee finished its hearings in San Diego, its most popular newspaper, the *San Diego Union*, published an editorial extolling CUAC's work. One passage read:

While some persons are squealing "smear" by reason of the hearings, the public is entitled to know what really is going on among the subversives who take orders from Moscow. So long as there are insufficient legislation to provide proper penalties for actual disloyalty, the only alternative is to give such disloyalty full publicity in order that loyal Americans will know what they have to cope with. It is seldom the innocent who complain the loudest. The Tenney Committee is doing a necessary service for the State and the nation. It should have the help and encouragement of all good citizens.¹⁵³

The sentiment expressed in the *Union* was held by many who believed in the Booster San Diego dream. Retired Major General Ralph Henry Van Deman, for instance, wrote Tenney to explain that he thought the San Diego hearings had "done a lot of good, locally at least. It has,

¹⁵⁰ "Communists Spread Tentacles Over S.D.," *San Diego Daily Journal*, 30 August 1948, Folder F6.51, Box 22, CUAC, CSA.

¹⁵¹ "S.D. Unions Combat Red Infiltration," *San Diego Daily Journal*, 2 September 1948, CUAC Records, CSA; "Control of S.D. Unions Goal of Communists," *San Diego Daily Journal*, 3 September 1948, Folder F6.51, Box 22, CUAC Records, CSA.

¹⁵² "Among Those Defying Quiz by Invoking Constitution," *San Diego Union*, 11 September, 1948; Folder F6.51, Box 22, CUAC Records, CSA; "Four Face Possible Contempt Citations," *San Diego Tribune-Sun*, 11 September, 1948, Folder F6.51, Box 22, CUAC Records, CSA.

¹⁵³ "A Hard and Thankless Job," *San Diego Union*, 18 September 1948, Folder F6.51, Box 22, CUAC Records, CSA.

apparently, awakened a lot of very nice people who up to the time of the hearings, had taken little interest in the Communist menace.”¹⁵⁴

As for the zealous anti-communist Tenney, he followed through on his threats and forwarded the information he had accumulated on both Moreno and Galván to immigration officials. At the end of September 1948, the Department of Justice issued a warrant for Moreno’s arrest because she was an alien affiliated with a subversive organization, the Communist Party. She was freed on appeal, but a cloud remained over her and her citizenship application, which had not yet been rejected. Despite the uncertainty, Moreno continued to live her life in San Diego, tending to her garden and writing her autobiography in the small home her husband had recently built. Still under surveillance, she twice caught her Mexican gardener spying on her. On the second occasion, Moreno pressed him and he admitted that he had been promised by the San Diego branch of the FBI citizenship for himself and his family in exchange for collecting information on her. Moreno told him that she understood his predicament, and that he could report to the FBI what he wanted. Later that day, Moreno burned not only her in-progress autobiography, but also every paper and photograph that would have implicated union members and leftist friends.¹⁵⁵

The loyalty shown to fellow leftists was not reciprocated, as evidenced in the general lack of support for her following the issuance of warrant for deportation in 1949. McCarthyism, or the Second Red Scare, and anti-immigrant sentiments had surfaced, which left individuals like Moreno particularly vulnerable. As such, Moreno needed all the assistance she could get, but as her friend and fellow labor organizer Bert Corona recalled, the defense of labor leaders “in

¹⁵⁴ Ralph H. Van Deman to Jack B. Tenney, 23 September 1948, Folder F6.51, Box 22, CUAC Records, CSA.

¹⁵⁵ Larralde and Griswold del Castillo, “Luisa Moreno,” 296-297.

similar situations extended only to those of European descent and not Latinos.”¹⁵⁶ However, once Moreno appealed the warrant, a few friends and colleagues did come to Moreno’s defense, going so far as to set up a legal defense fund for her. One of those who helped the most was lawyer and activist Carey McWilliams, who penned a letter detailing Moreno’s selfless and tireless work for “the lot of Spanish-speaking workers in Florida and throughout the Southwest.” For McWilliams, Moreno did not deserve to be “ignominiously deported.”¹⁵⁷ Moreno, though, knew that her case was bleak, which is why she appeared before the California CIO convention in October 1949 and warned of the “strange things” occurring in the country.¹⁵⁸ She was the canary in the coal mine with regards to labor and civil rights.

Months passed without word of Moreno’s deportation case, which inspired in her a glimmer of hope. However, her finances were severely depleted and the anti-communist spotlight grew brighter, taking its toll on her. In January 1950, Moreno’s attorney, Robert W. Kenny, mounted yet another defense of his client by stressing her positive contributions to the country’s working class, her role as a mother and grandmother, and by dismantling the “expert” testimony of one “red ideologies” government witness, but to no avail.¹⁵⁹ The *San Diego Evening Tribune* reported on 27 June 1950 that Moreno, a “subversive... living quietly as a housewife” in the community, was again sought for deportation.¹⁶⁰ Immigration officials had denied her application for citizenship, and costly and onerous appeals were increasingly longshots. By early November, Moreno and Bemis had begun to gather their belongings and

¹⁵⁶ García, *Memories of Chicano History*, 119.

¹⁵⁷ Carey McWilliams, “Luisa Moreno Bemis,” August 1949, Folder 53, Box 9, Kenny Papers, SCL.

¹⁵⁸ Address delivered by Luisa Moreno to the 12th Annual Convention, California CIO Council, 15 October 1949.

¹⁵⁹ Robert W. Kenny, interviewed by Doyce B. Nunis, Jr., transcript, Oral History Collection, COHR.

¹⁶⁰ “Deportation Sought for Labor Leader,” *San Diego Evening Tribune*, 27 June 1950, Folder 58, Box 9, Kenny Papers, SCL.

vital records, such as Moreno's daughter's birth certificate, fully prepared to voluntarily leave the country.¹⁶¹

However, before she could depart for Mexico as planned, Moreno was arrested and detained, spending several days in a federal prison in Los Angeles. She was then released and allowed to exit the country voluntarily. Given a few days to go, Moreno collected a few possessions and jumped in a car with her partner. They reversed the journey made by her friend Roberto Galván and the many other ethnic Mexicans she had long struggled for and with on San Diego's cannery row and elsewhere, and headed east toward El Paso, Texas. On 30 November 1950, Moreno and Bemis entered Ciudad Juárez.¹⁶² Less than two weeks later a warrant for deportation was issued to Galván. After a lengthy legal battle and two-year incarceration in federal prison, the former cannery worker and Logan Heights-based activist was released and allowed to voluntarily depart the country too. Red-baited and vilified for his brief time in the Communist Party, a beleaguered and exhausted Galván walked into a rapidly growing Tijuana in 1954.¹⁶³

Dreaming of the Perfect Sun

In 1976, Bert Corona declared that deportation was "a weapon of repression... a special weapon of oppression, used against us [ethnic Mexicans, Latinas/os] in a very special way

¹⁶¹ Carol King, a friend of Moreno, attempted to secure the birth certificate of Moreno's daughter, Mytyl, but was unable to do so since she was not a parent or legal guardian. King wrote Moreno, informing her of the failed attempt. The fact that Moreno was looking to collect critical documents like a birth certificate signifies imminent departure, as does a letter writing wishing the recipient best of luck in "new ventures," which is what King did her letter to Moreno. Carol King to Luisa Bemis, 10 November 1950, Folder 53, Box 9, Kenny Papers, SCL.

¹⁶² Larralde and Griswold del Castillo, "Luisa Moreno," 300.

¹⁶³ Galván entered a booming Tijuana. According to census records, the Mexican border city's population in 1950 was 65,000; a decade later it reached 165,000. Only four years later, Tijuana's population was an astounding 235,000. Tijuana owed its population explosion to high national birth rates, migration, and, related, its proximity to San Diego. "S.D. Alien, Faces Deportation," *San Diego Union*, 25 May 1954; Larralde, "Roberto Galvan," 167, 170; Harry Crosby, et al., *Tijuana 1964: Una vision fotográfica e histórico* (San Diego: San Diego State University Press, Institute for Regional Studies of the Californias, 2000), 9.

because of Mexico being contiguous.” To support his claim, Corona looked at the recent history of deportations and immigration legislation, which included the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952, a law that allowed the federal government to deport immigrants and naturalized citizens engaged in subversive activities. Corona lamented that the law was used to deport “the finest leadership we had... Primarily workers (sic) leaders. In the packing houses, in the fields, in the canneries, in furniture, in all the major industries where we were working, where our people have been working traditionally, were deported to Mexico or to Central America.”¹⁶⁴ Indeed, even prior to the McCarran-Walter Act, Luisa Moreno and many other Latina/o working class leaders had been forced from the country on grounds they were subversives.¹⁶⁵ After its passage, the law was used to expedite the removal of many other ethnic Mexican, Latina/o, and immigrant worker activists, including Roberto Galván.¹⁶⁶

The McCarran-Walter Act of 1952, along with other early Cold War federal legislation like the anti-union Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 and the anti-subversive Internal Security Act of

¹⁶⁴ Remarks at the Los Angeles Workshop on “Impact of Mexican Migration on California Communities, 1976, Folder 11, Box 21, Baca Papers, UCSD. Corona also made note of the Immigration and Naturalization Service’s “Operation Wetback” of 1954, in which the INS and Border Patrol raided ethnic Mexican communities in the United States in search of undocumented immigrants to deport to Mexico. With the cooperation of the Mexican government, the Border Patrol apprehended 1,075,168 Mexican nationals in 1954, though those numbers dramatically dropped in each of the following two years. Also of note, apprehension numbers are not entirely reflective of the number of ethnic Mexican immigrants who left the U.S., as some voluntarily left as well for fear of being caught or to not break apart a family. Hernández, *Migra!*, 184-190.

¹⁶⁵ Among those historical actors mentioned here that were pushed out of the country was Josefina Fierro, who had since divorced her playwright partner, John Bright (himself a victim of anti-communist hysteria). Corona recalled: “Josefina, like Luisa Moreno, was accused by the federal government of being a subversive alien... Like Luisa, she found herself isolated and with little defense or support outside of certain Mexican-American groups. Consequently, Josefina decided to leave the country in the late 1940s rather than take the chance before the House Un-American Activities Committee.” Indeed, Fierro had grown tired of the constant FBI surveillance. She had also grown tired of white leftists and liberals, particularly those in Hollywood, who, when leaned on by the federal government, were quick to discuss and slander her. To escape the anti-communist hysteria, Fierro moved to Guaymas, Sonora. García, *Memories of Chicano History*, 124; Carlos Larralde, “Josefina Fierro and the Sleepy Lagoon Crusade, 1942-1945,” *Southern California Quarterly* 92 (Summer 2010), 146-148; for the House Un-American Activities investigations into the relationship between communism and Hollywood, see Gerald Horne, *The Final Victim of the Blacklist: John Howard Lawson, Dean of the Hollywood Ten* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

¹⁶⁶ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Un-American Activities, *Communist Political Subversion, Part 2*, 84th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1956, 8353.

1950, served to not only weaken leftist union organization, but also to intimidate non-white and non-citizen workers throughout the country.¹⁶⁷ Although these laws proved partially effective, as made clear by both the CIO's muzzling and the decline in UCAPAWA/FTA membership in San Diego (and nationally), not all workers and organizers were deterred from speaking out against inequality and the seemingly illiberal beliefs and practices of anti-communist forces. For instance, ethnic Mexican leader Phil Usquiano once more stepped before lawmakers to defend himself and those he represented. In a hearing before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1954, Usquiano was asked by, among others, former San Diego-stationed Marine and Congressman Donald L. Jackson, if he was a communist. After a tense exchange, wherein the labor leader continuously objected to the question, Usquiano finally retorted:

Mr. Jackson, investigating subversives and everything here in San Diego, I think it is up to you to report to Congress... there is such a thing as something subversive here. We have a little over 20,000 unemployed, and I think you ought to do something and report it to Congress because I think that that is more of interest to people than this smear that you are trying to put on... [M]aking stool pigeons [informants] out of persons to smear our acquaintances and friendships in places where we are together, or anything that you think we touch.¹⁶⁸

For Usquiano, to ensure labor rights, the people needed to have the freedom to freely associate, organize, and exchange ideas. As a result, anti-communists in and out of Congress were not going to stop him – or others like him – from exercising said freedoms. Such continued leftist spirit and determination would have little surprised Moreno. In September 1949, she remarked: “They can never deport the people that I’ve worked with and with those things that were

¹⁶⁷ Elizabeth R. Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: The Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 136-137; Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights*, 270-273.

¹⁶⁸ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Un-American Activities, *Investigation of Communist Activities in the State of California – Part 9*, 83rd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1954, 4907-4908.

accomplished for the benefit of hundreds of thousands of workers – things that can never be destroyed.”¹⁶⁹

While many cannery workers experienced a modest level of stability in the early years of the Cold War, several leftists had their personal lives significantly disrupted. Such was the case for the effectively deported Moreno and Galván, whose remaining years were both partially spent directly across the international border from San Diego in Tijuana. After working for a short time at one of Tijuana’s many curio shops, Galván worked as a certified legal secretary until his death in May 1958. Suffering from liver and kidney cancer and in dire need of surgery and radiation therapy, Galván secured a 30-day permit to re-enter the United States. He promptly re-crossed the international line to receive treatment in San Diego, but it came too late.¹⁷⁰ Moreno, who had made stops in her native Guatemala, Cuba, and Mexico City, arrived in Tijuana a few years after Galván’s passing.¹⁷¹ Fond of the perfect sun and longing for her garden and flowers, Moreno admitted, “I wanted to move to San Diego. But I realized that the deportation case was over me like an ugly cloud.”¹⁷² Thus, she settled for Tijuana, where she took a job at a trendy art shop located on Avenida Revolución, a minute’s walk from its intersection with Calle Flores Magón. In 1977, the former labor organizer moved to Guadalajara, Mexico to manage apartments. After a stroke, her second, Moreno moved back to Guatemala, quietly passing away in November 1992.

¹⁶⁹ Steve Murdock, “A Question of Deportment,” *Our Times*, 9 September 1949.

¹⁷⁰ Larralde, “Roberto Galvan,” 171.

¹⁷¹ A true believer of leftist politics, Moreno lived in Guatemala until 1954, when land reformer Jacobo Árbenz was overthrown with the aid of the U.S. State Department and Central Intelligence Agency. She then moved to Mexico City, but once her husband Gray Bemis died of poor health, she chose to relocate to Cuba, where she worked as an English translator for Fidel Castro’s new revolutionary government. Larralde and Griswold del Castillo, “Luisa Moreno,” 302-303.

¹⁷² Quoted in Larralde and Griswold del Castillo, “Luisa Moreno,” 303.

Conclusion

Every Little Dollar

The people of the United States should know about [the] POVERTY STRIP which is on the American side of the Mexican-American border. This STRIP OF POVERTY is 100 miles wide and runs for 1,200 miles from San Diego, Calif. (sic) to Brownsville, Texas. This STRIP is chiefly a farming, ranching and mining area. This is Barry Goldwater country where the great mass of people do not have any GOLD and neither is there much WATER. This is the area where the words “LABOR UNION” are considered DIRTY WORDS by the power structure which has both the GOLD and WATER.

- Ben Yellen, 1966

I don't believe that the American people will be had again. I believe the American worker of all races and colors will come to see that only in unity with those who are not yet organized, with those who are victims of racism and sexism, with the poor, with the aged and with the immigrants, can they defend their real life interests and together obtain a better life for all who are in need.

- Bert Corona, 1974

A physician from a Jewish neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York, Ben Yellen seemed an unlikely political activist on the U.S.-Mexico international border. After stints as a medic for the Civilian Conservation Corps and U.S. Army, 35-year-old Yellen arrived in the Imperial Valley in 1942. Settling in Brawley, Yellen joined the Imperial Valley Medical Society, secured a business loan from Bank of America, and opened a private practice that primarily served the poor, including ethnic Mexican farm workers. Through these interactions Yellen learned of the immense power and control wielded by wealthy valley agribusiness interests, including the subsidiaries of the United Fruit Company and Dow Chemical. In 1956, Yellen began to challenge these business interests by alerting sick and injured farm workers when they were

defrauded of insurance benefits. However, when workers complained to their bosses, they were summarily fired. In 1959, having had enough of the Brawley physician's troublemaking, the Imperial Valley Medical Society expelled Yellen from its ranks, leveling a spurious charge that the doctor had agitated farm workers in order to siphon them from other physicians authorized to treat braceros.¹

Yellen continued to practice medicine and to denounce the repressive and exploitative boosters and business interests of the Imperial Valley, whom he called "beggars in cadillacs (sic) and millionaire moochers" dependent on state subsidies and tax breaks to fund their lavish lifestyles and nightly visits to the Barbara Worth Country Club bar.² Over the next few decades, Yellen filed lawsuits to curb the power of agribusiness interests, and distributed newsletters that offered insight into how his time in Greater San Diego had shaped his views.³ According to Yellen, the country was headed down a destructive path, and he blamed avaricious agribusiness

¹ Yellen had observed that doctors authorized to treat braceros were ill equipped, incompetent, did not show up for work, or all of the above. In many cases, the long work schedules of the farm workers prevented them from even going to visit doctors, who were generally located far from the factory-farms owned by the United Fruit Company, chemical giant Dow Chemical, and other corporations. "Further Methods By Which the Continental Casualty Co. Exploits the Mexican Bracero," 7 May 1959, Folder 2, Box 1, Ben Yellen Papers, Special Collections and Archives, University of California, San Diego (UCSD); "Big Farmers Create Serious Big City Problems," 30 August 1969, Folder 2, Box 2, Yellen Papers, UCSD; Eric Mankin, "The Man Who Stands Up to Agribusiness," *Mother Jones* (February/March 1977), 31.

² "Propaganda by San Diego State College," 28 October 1965, Folder 8, Box 1, Yellen Papers, UCSD; Yellen to Chief of Police of the City of El Centro, CA, 19 December 1962, Folder 8, Box 3, Yellen Papers, UCSD.

³ One of Yellen's most successful legal battles involved forcing the Department of the Interior to enforce the Reclamation Act of 1902, which limited federal irrigation to lands of 160 acres or less per person (it did not permit absentee landlordism either). Yellen and the 123 jobless and landless Mexican Americans who filed suit scored a temporary victory, but in *Bryant v. Yellen* (1980), the Supreme Court ruled that the reclamation law did not apply to some private lands in the Imperial Valley, and recognized the public Imperial Irrigation District (IID) as a trustee of water rights for the benefit of landowners regardless of farm size. As historian Benny J. Andrés notes, agribusiness interests only grew in power from that point forward. Andrés writes: "The [Supreme Court's] decision disregarded a host of reclamation acts to the contrary and barely acknowledged that water entered the valley from Mexico. The decision downplayed multiple contracts approved by voters between the IID and the Interior Department that specifically referenced government projects were subject to the reclamation act. Two years later, Congress raised the minimum acreage under federal irrigation projects from 160 to 960 acres and eliminated the residency requirement. Finally, in 1987, the Bureau of Reclamation gave corporate agriculture all the water it wanted regardless of the landholding size." Mankin, "The Man Who Stands Up to Agribusiness," 31-35; Benny J. Andrés, *Power and Control in the Imperial Valley: Nature, Agribusiness, and Workers on the California Borderland, 1900-1940* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2015), 166.

interests, the state, the “prostituted” press like the *Brawley News* and *San Diego Union*, and later, in a startling shift in positions, the “500,000 Mexican peons” (though not Mexican Americans) laboring in the fields, who he said created the “strip of poverty” that was sure to spread beyond the U.S.-Mexico international border. In his railings against the Mexican braceros, “green carders” (daily commuters from Mexico), and undocumented farm workers, Yellen argued that they drove down “American” wages, prevented unionization, hurt local businesses by sending their earnings back home, and created “serious narcotic problems” by smuggling drugs from Mexico into the United States.⁴ Reflecting both a twisted bit of logic and the language of the times, the doctor declared in one newsletter, titled “We Want Capitalism,” that the region and country, dominated by a tight bond between big business and the state, were headed toward communism.⁵ Business elites, in the doctor’s estimation, were dangerous “reds” because they dominated farming in the valley, controlled the press, and worked closely with the state in a way that he thought emulated a Soviet example.

Yellen’s “communists” were a far cry from the true radicals and leftists who were harassed, detained, interrogated, and, in certain instances, forcibly removed from Greater San Diego. Indeed, since Yellen’s arrival to the Imperial Valley, leftists of all forms had come under intense scrutiny by both the local, state, and federal government. State senator Jack B. Tenney’s California Un-American Activities Committee began its concerted persecution of leftists in the 1940s, threatening San Diegans like Luisa Moreno with incarceration and immigrant

⁴ The reasons for Yellen’s abrupt shift in position regarding Mexican farm workers remains unclear. All that is known is that around 1959 or 1960, the Brawley physician had clearly changed his opinion about Mexican nationals working in the United States. “Immigration Service Creates Poverty Along Mexican Border,” 7 January 1966, Folder 9, Box 1, Yellen Papers, UCSD; “Big Farmers Create Serious Big City Problems”; Untitled newsletter, 10 October 1960, Folder 3, Box 1, Yellen Papers, UCSD; Untitled newsletter, 25 October 1960, Folder 3, Box, Yellen Papers, UCSD; “Public Law #78 Creates Serious Narcotic Problems,” 6 June 1961, Folder 4, Box 1, Yellen Papers, UCSD; “California Dept. of Employment Prevents Domestic Farmworkers from Working,” 12 October 1963, Folder 6, Box 1, Yellen Papers, UCSD.

⁵ “We Want Capitalism,” 4 July 1962, Folder 5, Box 1, Yellen Papers, UCSD.

troublemakers with deportation. The federal government's House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), first formed in the 1930s, also ramped up its campaign to uncover subversive activity in the early years of the Cold War.

Among those San Diegans ensnared in HUAC's crusade was San Diego State College psychology professor Harry Steinmetz, who allegedly had once belonged to the Communist Party USA and remained an active labor organizer for various groups, including the American Federation of Teachers. In 1953, Steinmetz was subpoenaed to appear before the House Un-American Activities Committee, and during the questioning he invoked his Fifth Amendment rights to avoid self-incrimination. Although Steinmetz escaped penalty then, he was not as fortunate in his hearing before the California State Board of Education several years later. While his friend, and Luisa Moreno's former attorney, Robert W. Kenney, warned him that he could not plead the fifth in the hearing, Steinmetz took the advice of his lawyer, A.L. Wirin of the American Civil Liberties Union, and pursued this strategy anyway. Steinmetz was promptly fired by San Diego State College: a decision local anti-communists celebrated, but only briefly. They soon were forced to turn their attention to the "reds" south of the U.S.-Mexico international border. As the *San Diego Union* claimed, leftists had infested Baja California "like a net of wasps" and potentially undermined the security of their city and state.⁶

⁶ Steinmetz had been the subject of redbaiting since the 1930s, when the conservative, ultra-nationalist, and often violent American Legion began its quest to have the professor and other leftist educators fired and jailed for their political beliefs. The American Legion of San Diego was well connected to anti-leftists in the Chamber of Commerce and state government, among other institutions, which gave their attacks extra force. As historian Christopher Courtney Nehls notes, San Diego "Legionnaires joined with commercial bosses to round up suspected radicals and drove them from town." Quoted in Jim Miller, "Just Another Day in Paradise? An Episodic History of Rebellion and Repression in America's Finest City," in *Under a Perfect Sun: The San Diego Tourists Never See*, by Mike Davis Kelly Mayhew, and Jim Miller (New York: New Press, 2003), 217-219; Paul J. Eisloeffel, "The Cold War and Harry Steinmetz," *Journal of San Diego History* 35 (Fall 1989), accessed 20 December 2017, <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/1989/october/cold/>; Christopher Courtney Nehls, "'A Grand and Glorious Feeling': The American Legion and American Nationalism between the World Wars (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2007), 112.

Indeed, as in decades past, the *San Diego Union* and *San Diego Evening Tribune*, now under the ownership of the deeply conservative and nationalist James S. Copley, led the attack against leftists throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s.⁷ Complicit in the harassment of leftists like Steinmetz, Moreno, and Roberto Galván, the two newspapers frequently discussed the subversive threats that plagued the country, as well as state and federal efforts to combat them, which the publications favored. For instance, in late August 1960, the papers gave detailed attention to the activities of the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade (CACC), an organization that had surpassed the John Birch Society as Southern California conservatives' right-wing institution of choice. Speaking at the "School of Anti-Communism series" held at the U.S. Grant Hotel – the site of Ben L. Reitman's abduction in 1912 – W.P. Strube Jr., the secretary of the CACC, warned attendees, which included lawmakers, law enforcement officials, educators, and military recruits, to read the Bible and "change the course of events." If they failed to heed scripture they would be "enslaved by the march of global communism." CACC leader Joost Sluis warned of the serious situation in Mexico: "I believe it is possible we may have another Cuba [Cuban Revolution] on our hands in Mexico with a contiguous border on the United States."⁸ Edward

⁷ Copley inherited the newspapers from his father, Ira, upon the latter's death in 1947. The elder Copley had purchased the dailies from the Spreckels family in 1928. "James S. Copley (1916-1973)," San Diego History Center, <https://www.sandiegohistory.org>, accessed 20 December 2017.

⁸ The executive director of the CACC was Fred Schwarz, an Australian who was a self-professed "authority on the Christian answer to communism" and friends with, among others, Ronald Reagan, who in 1961 spoke at a School of Anti-Communism in Los Angeles. Schwarz and other CACC leaders were convinced that Bible teachings offered the antidote to communism. The talks sponsored by the School of Anti-Communism held in San Diego garnered much support from boosters and business interests, including local law enforcement, the U.S. Navy, the school board, and mayor's office. "America Called in Danger Of Red Slavery By 1973," 28 August 1960, Folder 7, Box 1, Gwartney American Legion and Anti-Communism Collection, Library and Information Access, San Diego State University, (SDSU); "Anti-Red Class Told Of Threat In Hemisphere," 27 August 1960, Folder 7, Box 1, Gwartney Collection, SDSU; "Anti-Red School Backed By Admiral," 20 August 1960, Folder 7, Box 1, Gwartney Collection, SDSU; "Officials Laud Activity For Alerting Public," 25 August 1960, Folder 7, Box 1, Gwartney Collection, SDSU; *The Southern California School of Anti-Communism*, Folder 1, Box 5, Gwartney Collection, SDSU; Laura Jane Gifford, "Girded with a Moral and Spiritual Revival": The Christian Anti-Communism Crusade and Conservative Politics," in *The Right Side of the Sixties: Reexamining Conservatism's Decade of Transformation*, eds. Laura Jane Gifford and Daniel K. Williams (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 170-171; Steven J. Ross, *Hollywood Left and Right: How Movie Stars Shaped American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 63.

Peterson, Jr., a San Diegan who worked with local youth, declared that communists, regardless of where they were from, wielded “a subtle tool of war”: drugs. Peterson warned that lucrative drug trafficking, especially from Mexico, had the power to incapacitate the country’s youth and, by extension, its military.⁹

Much of what was preached at the School of Anti-Communism resonated with the audience because of recent world events, such as the Cuban Revolution, but also because of local history. As this dissertation has argued, the profitable and comfortable community boosters and business interests promoted in Greater San Diego rested on an anti-leftist foundation laid five decades earlier, during the Mexican Revolution, in response to the rebellious multiracial and multi-ethnic group of disinherited workers who united under the red flag of the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The Baja California revolutionary campaign had sought to overthrow not only the dictatorial regime of Mexican president Porfirio Díaz but also the oppressive multinational corporations that controlled the lives and livelihoods of the Mexican people on both sides of the border. These interests included those owned by San Diego’s John D. Spreckels, a businessman so powerful that California governor Hiram W. Johnson remarked that the “sole occupation” of many was “bending the knee

⁹ Peterson worked for a youth organization, which explains why he was particularly concerned with children and drug use. Unlike Yellen, however, Peterson did not focus on drug smuggling from Mexico, but rather drug trade emanating from communist China – although the audience likely would have made the connection between the United States and its southern neighbor, too. Peterson’s speech echoed past discourses that associated the Chinese with disease and degradation brought on by opium use. By the mid-20th century, marijuana and heroin had replaced opium as the substance of downfall. In both periods, the racialized “other” was blamed for bringing the demise of American civilization. “Drugs Linked to Red Aims,” 26 August 1960, Folder 7, Box 1, Gwartney Collection, SDSU; David T. Courtwright, *Dark Paradise: A History of Opiate Addiction in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 61-84.

to John D. Spreckels.”¹⁰ The Baja revolution had tried to offer the disinherited a means out of a life of poverty.¹¹

Johnson’s observations, however, were not entirely on point. Spreckels did possess extraordinary wealth and influence, but his power did not derive entirely out of sheer will, but rather, from the fact that those around him were of like mind and believed in unrestrained capitalist development regardless of the social costs. As historians of the American West have noted, boosters and business interests desired to squeeze out “the next little dollar” of profit, which necessitated the use of a labor management system that exploited racialized divisions within the working class.¹² San Diego’s powerbrokers, and those who aspired to join their ranks, used a host of measures to secure and maintain control over those who challenged their agenda.

Beginning in the early 20th century, Booster San Diego adopted anti-free speech and anti-vagrancy ordinances; condoned police brutality and indefinite incarcerations; and encouraged and participated in vigilante violence, resulting in the intimidation, torture, expulsion or deportation of workers, and in certain cases, death. Such illiberal measures impacted all workers (and progressives), but they had the greatest impact on non-whites, especially those of foreign birth. Indeed, since the Baja California revolution, the region’s boosters and business interests blamed Mexico and all “foreigners” – ethnic Mexicans, but also some “probationary whites” from southern and eastern Europe, and Asians – for undermining progress. This dissertation has demonstrated how San Diego elites, with the local press firmly behind them, cast anarchists,

¹⁰ Hiram W. Johnson to Ed Fletcher, 22 September 1913, Folder 2, Box 14, Ed Fletcher Papers, UCSD.

¹¹ Here I am paraphrasing remarks given by historian Melvyn Dubofsky, who noted that the IWW identified a “reserve army of labor condemned to a life... of poverty.” Quoted in Peter Harwood Morse, Jr., “Wobbly Identities: Race, Gender, and Radical Industrial Unionists in the United States, 1900-1920” (PhD diss., Binghamton University, 2006), 349.

¹² Here I borrow from urban theorist and historian Mike Davis, who writes that San Diego “private governments” have chiefly served business interests pursuing “the next little dollar.” Mike Davis, “The Next Little Dollar: The Private Governments of San Diego,” in *Under the Perfect Sun: The San Diego Tourists Never See*, by Mike Davis, Kelly Mayhew, and Jim Miller (New York: The New Press, 2005), 17-144.

socialists, and other “radical” unionists as subversives who threatened the stability, security, and progress of Greater San Diego and the nation. These backward and barbaric hordes, who worked through radical labor unions like the IWW, the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU), and the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA), imperiled the imagined community of economic prosperity and democratic republicanism pitched to upper and middle-class whites.

Non-white workers turned to these organizations in part because of a shared radical tradition. Workers moved between groups and shared knowledge on democratic organizing designed to overcome difference and challenge systemic inequality. But they also joined radical leftist groups because more conservative unions like the American Federation of Labor (AFL), which dominated Greater San Diego through its Labor Council, excluded them. The AFL was unconcerned with the plight of unskilled workers, many of whom were non-white and/or female. As this study argues, Greater San Diego’s white working-class chose not to align with non-white workers because they stood to lose what scholars George Lipsitz, David R. Roediger, and Elizabeth D. Esch have contended are the privileges of whiteness: their race conferred on them better wages, improved chances for upward mobility, and when necessary, access to local and state resources for the unemployed, which were especially critical during the Great Depression. By establishing different pay scales and paths for mobility, San Diego’s business interests succeeded in driving a wedge between the workers who potentially undermined their economic and social agenda. They also forestalled the creation of true multiethnic solidarity.

Moreover, when the powerful AFL sided with boosters and business interests, white skilled workers legitimized the claims made by their bosses: chiefly, that as the engines of the economy, business interests from Spreckels to Westgate Tuna had the right to shape politics and

civic life. Thus, harassment, incarceration, and deportation became the accepted *modus operandi* for dealing with recalcitrant workers and all those who threatened the economic agenda. In certain cases, their allies, even proponents of capitalism, were subject to ostracism. Thus, Ben Yellen, who called for an end to large-scale agribusiness in favor of small-scale market-oriented farming, was ridiculed as a nuisance and became a pariah. As one Brawley Chamber of Commerce member stated: “Oh, once in a while, his name will pop up if someone starts arguing. You’ll hear, ‘What’re you, another Ben Yellen?’”¹³

For all of his activism, then, Yellen never stoked much concern. After all, since the early 20th century when corporate engineers attempted to irrigate the desert, local and state governments consistently yielded to the demands of agribusiness lobbyists. By 1960 Yellen had also alienated himself from a sizeable number of farm workers by calling Mexican workers detriments to the working class. Certainly, his position against imported Mexican labor differed little from that held by United Farm Worker co-founder César Chávez, but Yellen was not an ethnic Mexican, farm worker, or union organizer, and therefore he could not amass much of a following.¹⁴ Yet by drawing distinctions between citizens and non-citizens of the United States, both men deviated from the radical tradition that had long circulated in the region. Past movements of solidarity in Greater San Diego had shown that when workers overcame racial, ethnic, linguistic, and national lines, they stood a better chance at successfully challenging the

¹³ Mankin, “The Man Who Stands Up To Agribusiness,” 33.

¹⁴ The United Farm Workers (UFW) was formed after the merger of Chávez and Dolores Huerta’s National Farm Workers Association and Larry Itliong’s Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, a predominantly Filipino farm workers’ union. Historian David G. Gutiérrez notes that the UFW’s calls for strict immigration enforcement rested on the argument “that the presence of a large pool of politically powerless noncitizen workers severely hampered efforts to unionize American citizen workers” used by growers to break strikes by American citizens. Like Yellen, Chávez argued for the repeal of the Bracero Program. Furthermore, the UFW reported undocumented Mexican farm workers to the Immigration and Naturalization Service. David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 197.

power and control of business interests. However, into the 1970s, Yellen and Chávez argued that labor and civil rights were exclusive to those holding American citizenship.¹⁵

Anarchist Ricardo Flores Magón had arrived at a far different conclusion in 1917, when he wrote in the PLM's *Regeneración*, "To the poor man, the country provides no benefit because it's not his." For Flores Magón, nationalism was a tool of oppression. He implored workers to cross all historical lines of division, including those between citizen and non-citizen, for it was the only way to achieve a greater freedom.¹⁶ In the first half of 20th century Greater San Diego, many sought to exploit ethnoracial and national differences for the purposes of creating an idyllic all-American community for the white upper and middle classes, but impoverished workers holding alternative, more inclusive dreams, challenged this vision. Although their efforts to create a more inclusive society were defeated, the legacies of Flores Magón, the PLM, and others who fought for social justice in the first half of the 20th century have endured.¹⁷

In May 1974, labor organizer Bert Corona traveled to Atlanta, Georgia to rally support for Latina/o immigrant workers in the country, linking their struggles with those of blacks, poor whites, and other groups who had been historically exploited. Like African slavery, Indian genocide, and Chinese exclusion, Corona argued, the treatment of Latina/o immigrants, particularly those undocumented, served to boost the profits of a select, white few. Scanning the room of diverse faces, Corona finally declared, "There is a challenge facing all of us here today! A challenge to overcome the forces that seek to divide the poor, the oppressed and the denied and to pit us against each other." Corona, who had grown up hearing about the PLM, was

¹⁵ Ibid. Chávez softened his stance toward undocumented Mexican workers in the mid-1970s. Yellen remained staunchly anti-immigration until his death in 1994.

¹⁶ "¿Patriotismo?," *Regeneración*, 24 February 1917.

¹⁷ Historian Devra Anne Weber rightly claims that memories of the PLM were "ubiquitous among Mexicans in border areas." Devra Anne Weber, "Wobblies of the Partido Liberal Mexicano: Reenvisioning Internationalist and Transnational Movements through Mexican Lenses," *Pacific Historical Review* 85 (May 2016), 225.

confident the working class could traverse such divisions. “Our reply,” he stated, “is that we stand together – that we refuse to blame another group of oppressed and poor for the failures of our economic system and government to plan for jobs for all... I believe we can overcome the forces that seek to keep us divided and ineffective and weak.”¹⁸ Corona, then, echoed an IWW refrain: the working class was only as strong as its weakest member.

Corona’s interest in assisting the most disadvantaged appealed to Jesse Díaz Jr., a sociology graduate student and labor activist in Southern California who had studied his Mexican American predecessors, particularly Corona. In April 2006, Díaz helped organize with the immigrants’ rights group March 25 Coalition a downtown Los Angeles protest of a federal bill that would have made undocumented immigrants felons and funded a 700-mile barrier along the U.S.-Mexico international border. The demonstration was one of many held across the nation in April and May 2006, as Latina/o immigrants were joined in solidarity by immigrants from Europe, Asia, and Africa – some of whom, like Polish immigrant Jerry Jablonski, had themselves crossed into the United States from Mexico. In certain cases, the protests had jumped the international line: during one International Workers’ Day demonstration, hundreds of demonstrators on both sides of the San Ysidro-Tijuana border crossing blocked traffic lanes to voice their opposition to anti-immigrant and anti-labor legislation. Asked why he struggled for all workers regardless of immigration status, fourth-generation Mexican American Díaz stated: “I know what it’s like to live in the shadows, man, I can feel it... I know what it’s like to live day

¹⁸ Speech titled “Scapegoating,” May 1974, Folder 8, Box 2, Bert Corona Papers, Special Collections, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA.

by day.”¹⁹ Díaz, then, harkened back to his intellectual forbearers from the PLM and IWW who insisted that working class liberation came only with unity.

¹⁹ “Immigrant Rights Boycott Organizer Stirs Controversy,” *Los Angeles Times*, 1 May 2006; “Immigrants Take to U.S. Streets in Show of Strength,” *New York Times*, 2 May 2006; “Hundreds of Thousands March Peacefully, Joyously,” *Los Angeles Times*, 2 May 2006.

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