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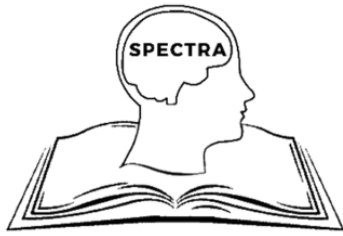
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A Vision without Borders: *Magonismo* and Mexican Women

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Abstract

Recent scholarship on the Magonista movement centers around the actions of the male leadership, without fully exploring their acceptance of women's involvement. In fact, Mexican women, through this intelligentsia movement, were able to challenge social expectations and fully participate in political activism during the Mexican Revolution. As a result, Mexican women understood their political power, and were motivated to create radical movements of their own. In the end, Mexican women practiced a feminism that was concerned with multiple issues that impacted Mexican communities on both sides of the U.S-Mexico border. In this work, I closely analyzed contemporary speeches, correspondence and newspaper articles that have shown the Magonistas' views on women and the women's perceptions of themselves as revolutionaries. In essence, my work closely follows the theory of Feminism Transfronterizo, which connects the Mexican women's notion of feminism with their activism against racial discrimination and U.S imperialism, and their involvement in labor organizing. Overall, my work shows that Magonista ideals taught women to fight for their communities experiencing institutional oppressions. Additionally, the Magonistas' support and invitation for women, reinforced the idea of women's worth as individuals and their potential for leadership. Thus, my work demonstrates that the Magonistas' vision for a more egalitarian society became universalistic with the inclusion of women. More importantly, Mexican women's participation in the Magonista movement expanded their perceptions of feminism.

Keywords: Magonistas, Mexican Women, *Magonismo*, Feminismo Transfronterizo

On June 6, 1906, Mexican Revolutionaries in an issue of a newspaper, *Regeneración*, published an article titled, "Ms. Juana B. Gutiérrez de Mendoza" ([Flores Magón, 1906](#)). In this article, they denounce Ms. Juana's wrongful accusations against Ricardo Flores Magón. According to the writers, Ms. Juana had accused Ricardo of allowing his personal interests guide his decisions as a revolutionary. To the writers, Juana's remarks caused great offense that they could no longer remain silent. They strongly felt that Juana's gender did not excuse her actions. On the contrary, the men were obligated to respond and defend their honor. Thus, the men proceeded by exposing the

untruthfulness of all the claims Juana had made against them.

These "Mexican Revolutionaries" in this picture were Ricardo Flores Magón and his followers, the *Magonistas*, who sought the end of President Porfirio Díaz's tyrannical rule over Mexico. A major way the *Magonistas* fought was by publishing inflammatory articles attacking the actions of the Mexican government. In these articles they also boldly denounced public figures who they believed to be worthy of scorn. This was the case with Ms. Juana Belen Gutiérrez de Mendoza who was called out for "engaging in defamation" against their leader, Ricardo Flores Magón. By the claims made in the June 15th

issue of 1906 and the fact that Ricardo is spoken of in third person. I have inferred that someone else, not Ricardo, wrote this specific article. It was published under the editorial authority of Juan Sarabia with the help of his secretary Antonio I. Villareal. Thus, Juan or Antonio could have been the ones who wrote the piece on Juana or directly oversaw the publication of it after it was written by someone else. Regardless of the uncertainty of the author, one aspect of the article “Ms. Juana Belen Gutiérrez de Mendoza,” which is clear is the fact that Juana caught the *Magonistas*’ attention.

“Catching their attention” is the specific aspect of the article that drew me in. It was fascinating to read how Juana Belen Gutiérrez de Mendoza’s opinions had been direct and detrimental to the pride of these men. It is telling the fact that these men decided to engage in public discourse with her in the first place. In my opinion, these men saw her as a worthy adversary. As such, it became worthwhile and necessary to engage in public discourse over her opinions. For me, it was immensely significant to not only acknowledge the boldness of Juana, but also to understand how a woman, in the early twentieth century, could speak up and oppose the men in positions of power. Understanding how this was possible is what drove my research.

Ultimately, in this paper I will argue that the intelligentsia movement, known as the *Magonistas*, invited women to participate in their movement and this strengthened the notion that women were capable leaders. As a result, Mexican women understood their political power during the Mexican Revolution, which motivated them to create radical movements of their own. In the end, Mexican women practiced a feminism that was concerned with multiple issues impacting not only their communities, but also with how their struggles were transnational. I will prove this argument by analyzing contemporary newspaper articles that demonstrate the *Magonistas*’ views on women as well as examine the articles written by women who were affiliated with the *Magonistas* or engaged in political discourse during the Mexican Revolution. In essence, my work closely followed the theory of *Feminsimo Transfronterizo* (transnational feminism), which connects the Mexican women’s notion of feminism with their activism against racial discrimination, U.S Imperialism, and their involvement in labor organizing. Understanding women’s roles within the

intelligentsia movement is significant as recent scholarship mainly focuses on the work of the male *Magonistas* and often criticize the extent of the *Magonistas*’ acceptance of women. Oftentimes, this criticism overlooks the impact the support for women intellectuals, within the movement, had in the development of feminism for Mexican women. I strive to address what scholars have overlooked.

By the early twentieth century, industrialization and urbanization within the United States and Mexico brought a semblance of prosperity and progress for certain segments of their populations; however, internal critics increasingly voiced how this progress for some, came at the expense of other vulnerable segments of the population. For Mexico, the Presidency of Porfirio Díaz (1877-1911) brought rapid technological developments to the nation by seeking to modernize and spearhead progress through the principles of liberal market capitalism, laissez-faire economics, and Positivist philosophy adopted from Europeans that formulated progress as the result of scientific experimentation. As the result of Porfirian policies, there was an increase in foreign investment from Great Britain, France, and Canada, and the U.S that encouraged the expansion of international trade, the construction of railroads, and the development of the Mexican Northern Mines ([England, 2015](#)). According to scholar Shawn England ([2015](#)), Mexico’s economy was heavily dependent on U.S investment which expanded from \$130 million in 1890 to \$500 million dollars in 1910 (p. 246). Unfortunately, the international wealth which poured into Mexico remained in the hands of a few, while the Mexican workers who contributed to the government’s “vision of progress” were horribly exploited.

In truth, modernization measures resulted in the loss of landownership and forced many Mexicans to the industrial sector, where workers were exploited by their employers that were oftentimes foreigners. Statistically by 1910, the end of Díaz regime, 95% of communal landowners had lost their lands ([Katz, 1974, p. 1](#)). This resulted from federal laws like the one passed in 1883 which granted titles to any company or individual who could purchase the land ([England, 246](#)). Granting of titles to anyone with purchasing power was detrimental to the peasants who could not prove ownership since traditionally lands were passed down within the family. More importantly, these Mexicans

lived in poverty and their lands were their main source of income. Consequently, laws like the one mentioned led to several landless workers who only had their labor to sell. With industrialization came a demand for labor and an opportunity to exploit the vulnerable. For instance, from 1877-1910 the production of rubber, coffee, tobacco, sisal, and sugar increased ([Katz, 1974, p. 14](#)).

Historian Friedrich Katz ([1974](#)) has stated that in the plantations of Southern Mexico cheap labor was on high demand since labor proved to be cheaper than machinery (p.14). High demand for labor drove a widespread search for potential laborers; although this was the case, these “job searches” led to inhumane contracting practices. Katz in his work has also explained that unemployed workers and expropriated workers from various regions were lured by empty promises of higher wages by employers (p.16). These laborers would be coerced into signing labor contracts while inebriated. They would practically become slaves of the plantation owners. John Lind who was an American official while visiting a plantation in Veracruz observed, “These men were put out in the morning, were worked under these overseers in that manner, and locked up at night in a large shed to all intent and purposes ([Katz, pp. 16-17](#)).” Here, Lind is describing the conditions in which contract laborers worked on the corn fields of a plantation owned by an American Sloane Emery. As he described the laborers were treated inhumanely while being forced to produce for Emery.

The situation at the plantation in Veracruz was only one example of several ways Mexican laborers were taken advantage of on plantations and other work environments. Working conditions proved to be even more disadvantageous for women laborers who were not only paid much less than Mexican and foreign men in factories but also were victims of sexual assault. Mexican women were vulnerable to sexual abuse in all work environments, like factories and haciendas. This will be discussed further in the paper. Meanwhile, the Mexicans who decided to migrate to the U.S faced similar living and working conditions as the laborers who remained in Mexico. In the U.S, Mexicans fell victim to a wage system based on racial prejudices which meant they would earn less than their white co-workers. In this way, their labor was constantly exploited while these communities remained

impoverished. Thus, the Mexican laborer fell victim to a system, in the U.S and Mexico, that took advantage of their work while leaving the worker in a state of consistently having to sell their labor.

Essentially, this environment fostered *Magonismo*, which became an anarchist movement that envisioned a society based on local autonomy and favored communitarianism. This philosophy was founded on indigenous ideals, an awareness of working-class struggles, and Margarita Magón’s guidance. As I will show in this paper, *Magonismo* and its followers became significant because it recognized the universal struggles of all Mexicans, north and south of the US/Mexican border.

The Magonistas Perceptions of Women

Ricardo Flores Magón’s attentiveness and concern with women’s issues was the result of his mother’s influence in his formative years, prior to becoming the leader of the *Magonistas*. Margarita Magón, mother of Ricardo and his brothers, motivated her sons to obtain a good education. For that reason, in 1893 she moved her family to Mexico City to enroll her sons in the National Preparatory school. As the result of her efforts, Margarita’s sons, Jesus and Ricardo, studied law at the National School of Jurisprudence. Margarita not only ensured her sons received the best education, but she also taught them to defend the less fortunate. She was known for her strong convictions rooted in principles of justice for rural populations ([Akers Chacon, 2016](#)). Margarita hoped that her sons would become leaders that would defend the peasants who were negatively impacted by Porfirio’s policies ([Akers Chacon, 2016](#)).

Margarita also instilled in her sons an unfaltering commitment to their beliefs. This was the case when Margarita was lying on her deathbed, while her sons were being persecuted for their criticisms against Díaz’s government. During this time, Margarita was offered the opportunity to see her sons again only if she convinced them to retract their public denunciations. Her response to this offer was, “Tell General Díaz that I would rather die without seeing my sons and what’s more, I would prefer to see them hanging from a tree or tall pole than have them retract or repent for anything that they have done against you” ([Akers Chacon, 2016](#)). She supported her sons’ actions even on her death bed.

Essentially, Margarita was a woman of strong convictions. This aspect of her personality influenced Ricardo's persistence in his opposition to the Díaz regime. Persistence, resilience, and rebellion would drive Ricardo's leadership as he formed the Magonista movement. Thus, Ricardo was influenced and guided by a strong, willful woman and he admired these traits in other women. In one of his writings, Ricardo characterizes women as strong and purposeful. As he saw with his own mother, Ricardo wanted other women to fight for their beliefs and for the well-being of their families. A way women could accomplish this was by joining his revolutionary efforts.

On September 24, 1910, Ricardo Flores Magón published an article, "To Women," in which he speaks directly to the Mexican women. In this text, Flores Magón argues that the women should rise and fight against the oppressors, who exploit both men and women. To emphasize this idea, Flores Magón depicts women as fierce warriors whose, "fists are the formidable fists of the people in rebellion" and, "She does not bring roses or kisses; she carries an axe and torch" (Flores Magón, 1910, p. 234). In recognition of women's fighting power, Flores Magón encouraged women to take the initiative in persuading the men to join the fight, saying, "Your duty is to aid the man, be with him when he vacillates, inspire him..." (Flores Magón, 1910, p. 234). As wives and mothers, they had the power to "Make your husbands, your brothers, your fathers, your sons, and your male friends take up a rifle" (Flores Magón, 1910, p. 236). Published two months before the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution Ricardo clearly believed that Mexican women would be a significant help to the advancement of the revolutionary movements.

In the article "To Women" Ricardo Flores Magón also understood that the women had specific experiences as the result of the capitalist policies of President Porfirio Díaz. Addressing this subject, he wrote: "Just because you are a woman, you are paid less than a man, and you are made to work more" (Flores Magón, 1910, p. 234). In fact, in Mexico City the women who worked in textile mills were paid 66-75% less than what the men earned (Evans & Hernandez, 2014, p.89). In the textile mills, the women's wages were much less compared to those of the men who worked in the oil and steel industries. So, Ricardo was truly aware of the economic situation of

Mexican women at the time. Fundamentally, Ricardo not only acknowledges the hardships of women, but he also recognizes them as significant members of society. A line that clearly depicted this was, "[Women] constitute half of the human species, and whatever affects it affects you as an integral part of humanity" (Flores Magón, 1910, p. 234). Ricardo concludes: "You [women] cannot separate yourselves from the degradation of oppression" (Flores Magón, 1910, p. 234). To the *Magonistas* women's issues mattered.

In the same article Ricardo also acknowledged the vulnerabilities of Mexican women in society. He says: "If you are pretty as well, the bosses assault your virtue..." (Flores Magón, 1910, p. 234). Although Ricardo in this statement addresses the sexual harassment women workers faced, this was a common experience for all women. According to Historian Kelly Lytle Hernandez (2021), it was common for *jefe políticos* (politicians that oversaw all matters related to governance of a particular area like taxes, elections, police, jails, infrastructure, etc.) everywhere to "force girls and women into various degrees of sexual slavery" (p.32). Hernandez hints at the severity of such cases when she notes that several men and women joined the revolutionary efforts with the intention of ending sexual abuses of *jefe políticos* (Lytle Hernandez, 2022). In an issue of *Regeneración*, Ricardo addresses a specific incident of sexual abuse. In the March 23, 1901, issue of *Regeneración*, Ricardo reported on a particular incident involving a *jefe politico* entitled "The Erotism of a Mayor." Ricardo details the incident of an attempted rape in Sinaloa (Flores Magón, 1901). In this document, the reader learns that the assailant was Tranquilino Espinoza, who was the mayor of the mining town of Copala, Sinaloa.

According to Ricardo, an inebriated Espinoza strolled through the neighborhood, known as Amapola, when he came across a home with an unlocked door. Taking advantage of the situation, Espinoza entered the home unannounced. Inside he found the homeowner sound asleep in her bed. Espinoza then approached the woman with the intention of raping her. Luckily, the woman was able to fight him off. Eventually, the woman reported this incident to the local police, but the authorities ignored her accusations against the mayor. Ricardo concludes this story by insinuating that the local police disrespected women and was complacent

with the mayor. Fundamentally, *jefe políticos* were men whose appointment was due to their loyalty to President Díaz. As loyalists, these men were granted not only authority, but also the freedom to do as they wished. Unfortunately, sexual abuse over peasant and working-class women was only one way they exerted their power over the Mexican people. Therefore, the *jefatura* system, under Porfirio Díaz, was a despotic system that abused women in the most atrocious ways. Essentially, the article “To Women” demonstrates that Ricardo Flores Magón paid attention to women’s grievances and chose to publicly address them.

In 1914, Ricardo Flores Magón published the article, “Margarita Ortega.” In the article, he spotlights a known *Magonista*, Margarita Ortega. Based on Ricardo’s account of Margarita Ortega she was a combatant or a “Soldadera.” *Soldaderas* were Mexican women who participated in revolutionary movements as soldiers fighting alongside their male comrades. Although, in this work I focus on the intellectual aspect of the revolutionary efforts it is important to note that the Mexican people rebelled in various forms in hopes of accomplishing different goals. Moreover, in the article Ricardo describes Margarita as a woman who traded a life of comfort for one of hardship, in order to create better living conditions for all Mexicans. He writes: “Margarita had enough of a fortune that she could have lived an easy, lazy, life; but she couldn’t enjoy that life while she knew that there were millions of human beings who struggled painfully to subsist” (Flores Magón, 1914, p. 229). Fundamentally, Ricardo in this writing acknowledges a woman, Margarita, who understood the terrible conditions the Mexican people were forced to endure. Ricardo’s descriptions exemplify and praise her selflessness and her patriotism since she preferred her people instead of a life full of luxury. To emphasize this Flores Magón (1914) claims that Margarita told her partner: “I’m resolved to continue fighting for the cause of the [*Magonistas*], and if you are a man, come with me to the battle” (p. 229). Margarita continued, “If that is not the case, forget me; I don’t want to be the partner of a coward” (Flores Magón, 1914, p. 229). Overall, Ricardo depicts Margarita as a committed member of the movement since she took on the role of rallying soldiers to join the fight. The actions and the sentiments of Margarita, as described in this article, resemble what Ricardo wrote in “To Woman.” Ultimately, Ricardo

sought to convince the women not only to encourage the men to fight but also to make the decision of joining the fight themselves. Essentially, the text “Margarita Ortega,” was meant to persuade women to be bold and to make the sacrifices necessary to fight for their people.

Mexican Women during the Mexican Revolution

Ricardo Flores Magón’s rallying cry for women revolutionaries was heard by several Mexican women. Ricardo’s support for women resulted in their integration into the *Magonistas*. A major way Ricardo and his followers informed the Mexican people about their rights and persuaded them towards revolution was through the press. *La Regeneración* was the main newspaper of the *Magonistas*. *Regeneración* became an important mechanism for the circulation of revolutionary ideas in the early twentieth century. For women, the press became an important outlet for their opinions and views as Mexican women, who adhered to revolutionary ideals wrote for the newspapers. Many of these women established papers of their own, and in this way contributed intellectually to the revolutionary efforts.

During the revolutionary period several women emerged as they founded newspapers; for example, *El Obrero* was founded by Andrea Villareal. In this newspaper, Villareal attempted to persuade the women to join the revolutionary movements. In an issue published on December 20, 1910, Villarreal recollects the historic events of November 18, 1910. According to Villarreal, there was an armed confrontation at the Serdan home between the family, and the local police. In this issue, Villarreal claims that a women took the first shot at the police, instead of Aquiles Serdan. In truth, it was Aquiles Serdan who shot the police chief Miguel Cabrera. In the article “Transborder Discourse,” scholar Clara Lomas mentions that Villarreal revises the story with the intent of appealing to the women (Lomas, 2003). Fundamentally, Villarreal revised the details of the story to invigorate the women’s fighting spirit. This was a theme present in Ricardo’s writings and other prominent female intellectuals.

Another circulating newspaper was *La Voz de la Mujer*. All the articles published under this newspaper spoke specifically about women’s issues; therefore, the newspaper’s target audience was women.

For that reason, the language commonly used was “hermanas,” “madres,” and “las hijas.” Additionally, *La Voz de la Mujer* encouraged the women to organize mutualist societies that would aid the war effort, and to motivate their children to enlist as soldiers. This messaging resonates with Ricardo Flores Magón’s rallying cry in “To Women.” Another women-led newspaper was *La Pluma Roja*. Blanca Moncaleano directed this newspaper from 1913 until 1915. *La Pluma Roja* was closely associated with the *Magonistas*. In fact, Blanca and her husband Juan Moncaleano worked with the *Magonistas* before splitting from them. Moncaleano disagreed with Ricardo’s views on women as companions to men. For that reason, in her newspapers she demanded that women separate themselves from their prescribed gender roles.

The Mexican Revolution was a moment of opportunity and encouragement for women to take part in the public sphere. During the Porfiriato, the women were occupying spaces outside their homes as more and more women began working in the industrial sector, and others became educators. Although this was the case, women were still expected to fulfill traditional gender roles. To Mexican men, the women were meant to be the caretakers of their children and to manage their households. In the end, the Mexican revolution symbolized a period in which women sought to redefine their place in society, and Mexican women led these discussions ([Devereaux Ramirez, 2015](#)). During the revolution, women journalists also sought to persuade society to allow women to “occupy a space” outside the homes ([Devereaux Ramirez, 2015](#)). In addition, many women activists informed the public of their political views in their newspapers.

Juana Belen Gutiérrez de Mendoza was a woman of great intellect and of immense courage. She was among the first women to engage in pre-revolutionary debate against the Porfiriato. Through the newspaper *Vesper: Justicia y Libertad*, Juana challenged the Díaz regime and the Mexican people for allowing Porfirio’s tyrannical rule. Prior to becoming a notorious journalist, Juana had experienced the hardships prevalent among working class Mexicans. At the age of 17, Juana Belen Gutiérrez married Cirilo Mendoza and the couple settled in La Sierra Mojada, Coahuila where Cirilo became a miner in the “Esmeralda” mine ([Devereaux Ramirez, 2015](#)). Here,

Juana raised three children and was forced to live on the small wages Cirilo earned as a miner. Additionally, Juana and her family were forced to endure the terrible living conditions mining families had to experience. Unfortunately, Cirilo’s early death forced Juana to become the breadwinner of the family. In order to provide for her family, she became a journalist. Juana Belen Gutiérrez de Mendoza was a woman with little schooling, but with a great capacity to educate herself. Thus, with her intelligence and first-hand experiences Juana was able to accurately report on the conditions of the miners. In fact, Juana’s first publications centered on the horrible conditions the miners endured. In 1900, she settled in Guanajuato and set up the newspaper *Vesper: Justicia y Libertad*. In this newspaper, Juana alongside her comrade Elisa Rosetti y Acuña published one of her most noteworthy articles in 1903 titled “To All Mexicans.”

In this article, Juana boldly accuses the Mexican people as the perpetrators of their own exploitation since they choose not to fight against oppression. Juana initiates, “To All Mexicans” with: “we are going to ask Mexicans what they have done with their duties as citizens” ([Acuña y Rosetti & Gutiérrez de Mendoza, 1903, p.75](#)). In this text, Juana denounces the men’s cowardice for allowing the Díaz regime to persecute female journalists. For that reason, Juana concludes “Because you do not exercise your rights, we are here to make use of ours, to at least demonstrate that not everything in our time was abjection and servility” ([Acuña y Rosetti & Gutiérrez de Mendoza, 1903, p.77](#)). Juana’s declaration for women’s involvement resonates with the *Magonistas’* belief that women were “combatants” alongside the men. More importantly, this article shows that the Mexican women felt vulnerable and unprotected in society. Based on the article, Gutiérrez de Mendoza encourages women to take matters into their own hands since the men failed to protect the women. As a result, the men failed to protect their communities; thus women concluded that they must fight for their own interests and to alleviate their sufferings. These attitudes and sentiments are what encouraged several women to join revolutionary movements, like the *Magonistas*.

Sara Estela Ramírez had also disseminated revolutionary ideals through the press. Sara wrote poems, articles, and other writings that were published

in *La Crónica* and *La Democrata Fronterizo*. She also initiated newspapers of her own like *La Corregidora* and *Aurora*. Ultimately, Ramírez was a Coahuila native who at the age of 17 migrated into Texas. More importantly, she was known as a prominent member of the *Magonistas*. As such, Sara gained leadership skills that she employed in Mexico, and in Texas in order to promote revolutionary principles and socioeconomic development for all working-class Mexicans. One of her poems was Sara Estela “Rise up! To Womankind.” In this poem, Ramírez argues that women should rise to the occasion and contribute to the contemporary politics. This is deduced by her conclusion, “only action is life to feel that one lives is the most beautiful sensation” (Ramírez, 1910, p. 121). Ramírez’s statement emphasizes her perception of the value of action, which is what she hopes to encourage in Mexican women. Prior to this statement, Ramírez attempts to remind women of their innate value as women. This sentiment is seen in the line, “The Gods are thrown out of temples; Kings are driven from their thrones; woman is always woman” (Ramírez, 1910, p. 121). In other words, Ramírez attempted to convince women that they will always possess their role as such within society.

To Ramírez, the work of women cannot be easily replaced like the contributions of men in power. She emphasizes this point in the line, “One who is truly a woman is more than a goddess and one who reigns” (Ramírez, 1910, p. 121). Thus, being a woman sets them apart from a deity or ruler. Although women are invaluable beings, Ramírez believes that if women acted it would be an extension of their innate capabilities. Overall, Ramírez attempts to convince women that having a purpose makes them even more significant members of society. Like Juana, Ramírez attempts to persuade women to stand up and contribute their perspectives in a time of intense political turmoil.

Additionally, Juana and Sara used their voices to criticize the living conditions of the Mexican people under the Díaz regime. In this way, these Mexican Women contributed their perspectives to the discussions of the importance of initiating revolution. For that reason, these two women were significant in what historians refer to as the “precursor movement.” The Precursor movement preceded the outbreak of the Revolution in 1910, and it correlates with the timeline of *Magonista* action. One example of pre-revolution

material was Sara Estela Ramírez’s poem “A Kiss of an Angel.” In this poem, Sara describes the dire living conditions within Mexico, through the girl “María.” Ramírez writes, “María was an orphan and very poor, so poor, that her humility made a powerful contrast besides other educated girls, with rich clothes...” (Hernandez, 1989, p. 15). Through María, Ramírez is depicting the class differences within Mexican society. Ramírez also writes: “The little work her mother did was barely enough to prolong the agony of the life of four little ones” (Hernandez, 1989, p. 15). In this line, Sara is alluding to the economic hardships Mexican families were experiencing under the industrialist policies in Mexico. More importantly, Ramírez centers her poem on the hardships the women in providing for their families experienced. The most compelling and powerful aspect of Sara’s poem was how she universalizes María’s experiences by placing herself in the girl’s shoes; therefore, she understood her pain and difficulties. This was expressed in the line, “[María’s] misery was also mine, her sorrow my sorrow, ... How many times, being myself engulfed in pain, serious and most somber, did my eyes encounter the moist pupils of María” (Hernandez, 1989, p. 15). Moreover, Ramírez writes: “María was walking very close to me; as if possessed by my pain, she walked silently, and barely was her presence made known by the accelerated noise of her steps” (Hernandez, 1989, p. 15). These powerful lines demonstrate how Ramírez was aware of the Mexican people’s sufferings, and how they were being exploited by the Mexican government. Essentially, in Sara’s work the readers were informed about the conditions in Mexico and were forced to re-examine their living conditions. Through her writings, people became aware of the necessity for revolution.

Similarly, Juana Belen Gutiérrez de Mendoza in the article “Behold the man,” she delegitimizes Porfirio Díaz’s leadership. Gutiérrez de Mendoza boldly calls President Díaz a thug, schemer, and coward. Specifically, she states that Díaz was, “as a man, a monster; as a politician, a coward” (Gutiérrez de Mendoza, 1903, p. 80). Juana claims that Díaz was a coward because he sought her imprisonment and persecuted other women journalists. Referring to this, Juana writes, “[Díaz’s administration] has mandated the denunciation of *Vesper* and has issued arrest orders for Miss Elisa Acuña y Rossetti and for the director of this paper” (Gutiérrez de Mendoza, 1903, p. 81). In this

line, Juana mentions the persecution her newspaper, *Vesper*, experienced for its criticisms of Porfirio Díaz. Juana also emphasizes Díaz's unjust treatment of women journalists when she says, "Poor Mexico, poor fatherland of mine! You will be the first nation where women are jailed for the crime of writing in defense of the people" ([Gutiérrez de Mendoza, 1903, p. 81](#)). In this statement, Juana highlights the persecution and ill-treatment of journalists in Mexico. Although Juana mentions the way women journalists were targeted by the administration, this was a shared experience for all journalists. Ultimately, Juana describes a major way the Mexican people's civil liberties were limited, or non-existent. Thus, if the Mexican people lacked certain liberties and freedoms, then tolerating a despotic government was no longer acceptable. Like Sara's poem, Juana provides the Mexican people another reason, motivation, for revolution.

For instance, Juana Belen Gutiérrez de Mendoza published an article titled "Vesper will Always Occupy its Place," where she argues that the best step towards social transformation was to support the candidate that was chosen by the people at the Anti-re-election convention of 1910. Juana argues that replacing the administration is not an end all solution; instead, Juana believes that it's only the first step towards a radical transformation. Juana writes that the candidate, Francisco Madero, who was chosen at the convention must be supported. In support of Madero, she writes: "Mr. Madero inspires our most complete confidence with respect to the objectives that he pursues." ([Gutiérrez de Mendoza, 1910, p. 84](#)). Juana continues, "we hold the conviction that the fortunes of this miserable country will improve once Mr. Madero is leading our destiny" ([Gutiérrez de Mendoza, 1910, p. 84](#)). She concludes with, "*Vesper* will always occupy its post beside those who fight for the victorious candidate of the Great Convention" ([Gutiérrez de Mendoza, 1910, p. 84](#)).

In her article, Juana provides insight on her ideas on the most effective means towards social revolution in Mexico. Juana's views on the direction revolutionaries should take was one of several. Electing Madero as the presidential candidate meant support for democracy and all the guarantees that came from this political system. For Juana, democracy symbolized the end of Díaz's decades long control over Mexico and a shift towards a freer society. Therefore,

she used her voice to advocate for this vision of Mexico. Fundamentally, Juana's confidence in speaking her opinions on political matters and her deduction of the best route towards revolutionary change, demonstrates how Mexican women became accustomed to these public roles in society. Mexican women demonstrated their political aptitude and their leadership capabilities. Women like Juana were just as involved in the political transformation of Mexico like their male "compadres."

Another woman who was politically active was Hermila Galindo whose reputation as an articulate public speaker secured her positions as spokesperson for specific politicians. In 1917, Galindo ran for president in Mexico, and she won. She became the first Mexican woman to win a presidential election without fulfilling the role, since it was illegal for women to take public office. Prior to running for President, she wrote articles in which she advocated for women to be politically active. In her writings, Galindo demonstrated that Mexican women saw themselves as capable to participate in political affairs. On September 16, 1915, Galindo published her article, "Let Us Labor." Galindo advocates for women to be engaged in politics, while also demanding that both men and women should politically participate.

In her writing, she defines politics as "the science that has its objective to mark for the people the course which corresponds to them in the community of cultured nations, by means of laws and precepts appropriate to their means and capacity" ([Galindo, 1915a, p. 90](#)). Galindo believes that politics determine the management of society and the well-being of the citizenry. Based on the larger implications of politics, Galindo states that women's active participation becomes even more significant when she says, "If the woman is the companion of the man, and his equal, there is no plausible motive for us to abandon him when it is time to decide the definitive or temporary destiny of the fatherland" ([Galindo, 1915a, p. 90](#)). Noteworthy is Galindo's adherence to maternalism. She writes, "The hand that rocks the cradle directs the destinies of the world" ([Galindo, 1915a, p. 90](#)). Galindo continues, "it is the home where the best citizens can be forged, when the woman, free from worries and prejudices, identifies herself with the Fatherland and feels its needs" ([Galindo, 1915a, p. 90](#)). According to Galindo ([1915](#)), women's political power

comes from their control within their households, emphasizes this when she says, “we desire that the Mexican woman collaborate with her repeated efforts, her intuition and perseverance in support of noble and worthy causes...” (p. 90). She concludes that women “do not need citizenry, and we have a propitious medium and fertile terrain: the home” (Galindo, 1915a, p. 90). In this article, Galindo connects women’s traditional roles within their homes to their capabilities for political action. To Galindo, if women can manage their homes, then they understand the affairs that impact their communities.

Moreover, Galindo combines “womanly qualities” with their innate political knowledge in the article, “Woman as Collaborators.” In this writing Galindo criticizes those that believe in women’s inferiority. In response to these criticisms, Galindo points out that women are not allowed to fully participate in politics; therefore, she asks whether women’s capabilities can be fully known, or not. Additionally, Galindo (1915b) makes the case that women possess an innate “intuitive spirit” that is beneficial to politics. With this “sixth sense” women can see through the politicians’ façade and infer their true intentions. A major example Galindo provides is that the Mexican women were the ones who were able to distinguish Victoriano Huerta’s collaborators. According to her, these collaborators were the ones that claimed to support the revolution but were ready to betray the cause. Essentially, Galindo feels confident in her intellectual abilities and aptitude for political affairs. Like Galindo, women like Juana and Sara perceived themselves in the same way. Consequently, these women’s perceptions of themselves motivated other women to see themselves in the same way.

As a result of women’s active participation in the revolutionary movement women became fully aware of their capabilities. Access to the printing press and women’s inclusion in the contemplation of revolutionary ideas resulted in an awareness of their political rights. More importantly, it taught women that social change was attainable, and they could lead revolutions of their own. These views persisted after the Mexican Revolution when women began questioning the shortcomings of the Mexican government in terms of women’s rights. A defining event in the evolution of feminist movements in Mexico was the Great Depression of the 1930s

(Macias, 1982). Economic hardships showed women their precarious situation in society, which was increased by their inability to voice their concerns to the Mexican government. Recent memory of their involvement in the revolution, pushed women to fight for the rights the government had denied them. After contributing to the revolutionary movements, women felt that they were deserving of suffrage. Therefore, in the 1930s women demanded suffrage in recompense for their hard work during the revolution. These women held demonstrations, marches, and they threatened the government with hunger strikes (Macias, 1982). Mexican women’s initiative became the legacy of the Mexican Revolution. More importantly, it symbolized what the *Magonistas* sought for women.

Women, Anarchism, and Feminism

In 1916, the *Magonistas* included a note in their newspaper, *Regeneración*, in which they praise the Mexican women’s desire to be directly involved in politics. In the article “Revolutionary progress,” Ricardo Flores Magón includes a note that was originally published in the newspaper *Científico*, which reported that women from Yucatán who planned to create a campaign for women in the upcoming elections. Ricardo argues that this news demonstrates the progress the Mexican Revolution had brought society. According to Ricardo, the women were finally being recognized as capable politicians. He specifically states, “The resolution that the woman is exactly equal to the man in intelligence, is magnificent and honors the ideals of the revolution, which sees in the woman not an inferior, contemptible being, but rather the comrade...” (Flores Magón, 1916, p. 232).

Although Ricardo believes that women should be fully integrated members of the state, he is skeptical whether a government will fully allow this. Flores Magón (1916) states, “How much better it would be if the beautiful and intelligent Yucatán women, upon realizing that the woman is equal to the man in intelligence would fight for an anarchist society” (p. 232). He continues, “inside which woman would be entirely equal and would obtain the maximum amount of liberty and well-being to which, every human being is entitled” (Flores Magón, 1916, p. 232). He continues these thoughts with the explanation of the shortcomings of democracy in women’s political

recognition. According to Ricardo, in a democracy women will be told that they are equal, but this is not entirely true. He justifies this thought with the notion that capitalist societies limit freedoms and cause inequalities. Essentially, Ricardo Flores Magón's words show that he was committed to the creation of a society in which women were fully recognized as members. To him, the best route towards this vision was anarchism.

Through the organization of the *Magonistas* several Mexican women were taught anarchist ideals, since they were captivated by the promises of *Magonismo*. Ultimately, *Magonismo* was a revolutionary conception of a world, in which no social institution would limit the Mexican people. For Mexican women this vision was especially appealing, because they no longer tolerated the social expectations that limited their agency. Specifically, the Mexican women, who adhered to anarchism, despised institutions like the Catholic church which represented a legacy of sexist oppression ([Hernandez, 2021, p.51](#)). An example of such sentiments was expressed by Blanca Moncaleano in her writings. Moncaleano was a Colombian woman who for some time was associated with the *Magonistas*.

In 1915, Moncaleano published el "Manifiesto A La Mujer," in which she discusses the negative impact of the Catholic Church on society. In the text, Blanca traces the origins of militarism and classism to the Catholic church ([Kanellos, 2013](#)). Arguing that the church and state were complacent in the creation of oppressive social conditions for the working class, Moncaleano's manifesto addresses women directly, and appeals to women's understanding of working-class conditions. Blanca foreshadows the future of several working-class families if the contemporary political system remained. With this in mind, Blanca tells the women that their children will fall into poverty, and they will be forced to beg for charity from the well-off. According to her, the well-off will refuse to alleviate their children's hunger. In order to protect their children, Blanca believes that women must take matters into their own hands. Thus, Blanca concludes the manifesto by rallying women to fight for their own children, by freeing society from harmful influences and establishing a community of their own. Ultimately, Moncaleano traces the origins of labor exploitation, and women's submissive roles to the church. This last

point can be inferred by Moncaleano's attempt to persuade women to stand up for themselves. Overall, several of the ideas that Blanca Moncaleano expressed in her manifesto explain the motivations of other women anarchists in their activism.

According to the scholar Nicolas Kanellos, Blanca's rhetoric in the manifesto appealed to motherhood, and she placed women's exploitation across time and space ([Kanellos, 2013](#)). Blanca Moncaleano's philosophy was that women had to separate themselves from their prescribed gender roles. Blanca's convictions motivated her to split from the *Magonistas* only to turn around and criticize their views on women. Blanca strongly opposed the Mexican revolutionaries' rhetoric of women as companions to the men, which were the ideas the male leadership of the *Magonistas* shared. In truth, Moncaleano attempted to persuade women to fight for an anarchist society by appealing to their connection to family. This resembles Ricardo Flores Magón's idea of how women, as members of the family, should guide the men to fight to liberate Mexico from President Díaz's tyrannical rule. Therefore, as Kanellos observes Blanca adhered to maternalistic views, and in a way the *Magonistas* practiced this ideology. According to Guidotti-Hernandez ([2019](#)), an academic in feminist studies, Enrique Flores Magón practiced domesticity despite identifying as an anarchist. Enrique, the brother of Ricardo Flores Magón, would claim that he was married to his partner Paula Carmona. Believing in marriage was a contradictory to the practice of anarchism. Mexicans conceptualized anarchism in this unique way. Anarchism was connected to traditional views of family. Despite, Moncaleano's criticisms of the *Magonistas*, she also understood anarchism in terms of family values. For women, anarchism meant liberating themselves from sexist oppression, but also working towards establishing a place where their communities were not exploited. These points were present in Moncaleano's manifesto and in the works of other women.

Like Blanca Moncaleano, other women were committed to anarchism and saw this ideology as a viable way towards improving their communities. For instance, in 1913 the *Prismas Anarquistas* was founded by Alida Martinez in Burkett, Texas. At this time, several women led groups in Texas were concerned with worker autonomy, mutual aid, and political

equality. Specifically, women like Alida Martinez understood the experiences of the working class since her family had been farm workers in Coleman County, Texas. (Hernandez, 2021, p. 55). Additionally, Alida Martinez's organization was supported by workers stationed in the city of Tampico in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas (Hernandez, 2021, p.55). The recognition of workers in Mexico for an organization in Texas demonstrates the far-reaching appeal of Martinez's group.

Similar to Martinez's group there were other organizations established by women. Another woman centered anarchist organization was *Grupo Racionalista*. It was founded in 1915 by Isaura Galvan and its initial membership was 38 people. This group established a center for national studies that was open to both men and women. Through rational philosophy they sought to teach anticlericalism, equality, and the ability of anarcho-syndicalism to grant autonomy to the workers (Hernandez, 2021, p. 56). Additionally, the members of el *Grupo Racionalista* swore in their resolution to, "fight racial hatred that promoted secular and religious schools" (Hernandez, 2021, p. 56). Fundamentally, Galvan's organization sought to educate their community on anarchist ideals, to fight for workers' dignity, to oppose racial practices and inequality. Like *Prismas Anarquistas*, el *Grupo Racionalista* had connections in Tampico, Tamaulipas. Several of the women in *Grupo Racionalista* also joined *la Casa del Obrero Mundial* (COM) in Tampico between 1916 to 1917.

Between 1915 and 1916, the *Magonistas* began losing momentum as its leaders were consistently imprisoned for their political ideals. For that reason, organizations like *La Casa del Obrero Mundial* became significant. Members of *La Casa del Obrero Mundial* infused anarchist ideals with their labor organizing. This movement also maintained *Magonista* ideals alive since it circulated issues of *Regeneración* and informed the public of any news related to the movement. Essentially, the scope of the *COM* was extensive and influential. By 1917, it had about twenty-six labor unions associated with it (Hernandez, 2021, p. 57). Additionally, it had connections with other organization in Mexico. For instance, the Tampico *COM* published material in the newspaper affiliated to the *Casa del Obrero Mundial* located in Mexico City. Essentially, in Tampico labor organizations and

activism was deeply ingrained into society. As a result, there were women that were taught anarchist ideals and were motivated to engage in labor activism. One of these women was Caritina Piña.

In the 1920s and 30s, Caritina Piña assumed a position of leadership within her community. Inspired by the ideas of worker rights, she engaged in transnational labor activism. She spread ideas about a more "equitable and pro-worker society" on American soil as well as in Mexico (Hernandez, 2015, p. 115). Caritina became what historian Sonia Hernandez refers to as a "transnational cultural broker" (Hernandez, 2015, p. 115). One major medium for the spread of ideas was the press which Caritina used continuously. She would maintain the anarcho-syndicalist movement alive while the leaders served prison sentences. She was able to accomplish this by maintaining the circulation of anarchist newspapers, and by sending pro-prisoner literature to other activist groups. Several of the anarchist groups she contacted were outside of Mexico and the United States. The literature that was sent consisted of pages from the *Avante* newspaper that advocated for the release of labor activists. As a result of her efforts, she was able to obtain the release of Librado Rivera, a prominent *Magonista* leader, after speaking to the Spanish speaking proletariat group in New York (Hernandez, 2015, p. 117). This was one way Caritina embodied the role of a "transnational ambassador." She maintained her efforts of fighting for the release of many more social prisoners by ensuring that the story of their imprisonment was known globally. Following this sentiment, she wrote in the community newspaper, "...to make it known to all the workers of the entire world the atrocities that are committed on a daily basis against our *compañeros* and most sincere fighters" (Hernandez, 2015, p. 118). Overall, Piña's actions serve as an example of *feminismo transfronterista*.

Historian Sonia Hernandez has conceptualized *Feminismo Transfronterista*. In her work "Revisiting Mexicana Labor History through feminismo transfronterista," Hernandez defines this feminism as being rooted in *Compañerismo* (companionship) among women. In other words, *feminismo transfronterista* stood for solidarity among women in their fight for gender equality (Hernandez, 2015). More importantly, Hernandez clarifies that the women who practiced *feminismo transfronterista* not only fought

for women's rights, but they also focused on other issues. In fact, the early forms of transnational feminism began with labor movements. For some women their labor activism was inspired by the ideas of the *Magonistas*. For instance, Caritina Piña was a woman actively involved in the *Magonista* movement and was a renowned labor activist. Caritina originated from the small-town Villa Cecilia in Tamaulipas, where most of the people worked in oil fields owned by the British. Within the working-class population there were several women. Essentially, a large working-class population led to Villa Cecilia becoming a major hotspot for anarchist ideas. Specifically, the spectators of several anarchist plays, performed in Villa Cecilia, were the working class people. These theatrical plays were written by prominent anarchists, one of these writers being Ricardo Flores Magón. Ultimately, Caritina was raised in an environment where Mexicans, both men and women, worked for foreigners and where these workers were taught that they deserved better. Caritina along with the women that joined the Tampico *Casa del Obrero* Mundial and fought for all workers. All these women stood in solidarity with both men and women fighting for better treatment from their employers.

Conclusion

The *Magonistas'* response to Juana Belen Gutiérrez de Mendoza's criticisms, in 1906, exemplifies the attention these male leaders granted to women's opinions. I strongly believe this since they made the deliberate effort to disprove Gutiérrez de Mendoza's views. Ultimately, the space the *Magonistas* made in their newspaper to address Juana's statements demonstrate that they believed Juana's words could be impactful, since they recognized the potential, her words had to sway an audience against them. To save their reputation they felt obligated to respond. Therefore, the *Magonistas* perceived Juana's opinions as a threat so they took her allegations seriously. In this manner, these men acknowledged Juana's political agency and understood that Juana and other women like her, were no longer going to remain silent. Several historians argue that the article, "Ms. Juana Belen Gutiérrez de Mendoza," serves as an example of the limitation of the *Magonistas'* feminism. In other words, these historians conclude that the *Magonistas* did not truly respect women. Contrary to

popular opinion, I believe that this article offers more insight into the perceptions of women by the male revolutionaries, and it should not be dismissed for the harsh critiques they make of Juana. In my opinion, this article proves that the men engaged in political discourse with women since they acknowledged their capabilities as public figures, or spokespeople, within the revolutionary efforts.

Ultimately, the newspaper issue of June 15th, 1906, encouraged a deeper study into how a woman was able to engage with the men in the first place. Specifically, Juana's confidence in expressing her critiques demonstrates how women not only understood their power, but also were unafraid to participate in political discourse. Fundamentally, Juana serves as an example of a Mexican woman who became familiarized not only with the public sphere but also with her position as a leader. To be accustomed to such places, Juana had to have had experience. Thus, to gain such an experience Juana must have had the opportunity to challenge prescribed gender roles. These were some of thoughts that crossed my mind as I initiated my study into relationship of the Mexican women with *Magonismo*.

Fundamentally, the *Magonistas'* inclusion of women allowed their vision for a more egalitarian society to become more universalistic. This was possible because the male leadership not only recognized the women's leadership potential, but they also understood their individual struggles. In 1910, Ricardo Flores Magón published the article "To Women." In this article, Ricardo recognizes the ways Mexico's industrial policies resulted in the exploitation of women workers. In this article, he also argues that the oppression women faced was similar to what the men have experienced. For that reason, women should rise up and motivate the Mexican men to join the revolutionary efforts. Additionally, Ricardo published the article "The Eroticism of a Mayor" in 1915, where he addresses the attempted rape of a Mexican woman by a *jefe político*. Essentially in both articles, Ricardo recognizes the grievances of women, which influenced his public works. As a result, Ricardo's publications taught his audiences that women's issues also mattered. In this way, he opened the door to women's perspectives in his movement, the *Magonistas*. Ultimately, Ricardo's invitation led to several women joining his movement and their revolutionary efforts.

Prior to the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, Juana Gutiérrez de Mendoza and Sara Estela Ramírez published articles of their own. In their writings, they advocate for women to take matters into their own hands and to fight against the oppressive measures of the Díaz dictatorship. For instance, in the article “To All Mexicans,” Juana encourages Mexican women to fight for their autonomy since the men failed to protect them. While, in the work “Rise up! To Womankind,” Sara reminds women of their innate ability and strength; therefore, they should fight for themselves. Additionally, these two writers wrote articles in which they report on the terrible living conditions of Mexicans in the U.S and Mexico. For example, Ramírez wrote a poem “A Kiss of an Angel,” where she explains the poverty Mexicans experienced through a child named “María.” In Juana’s article “Behold the man,” she addresses the censorship and political imprisonment of Mexican journalists, both men and women. Furthermore, the Mexican Revolution was a period when women sought to redefine their prescribed gender roles. An example of this was Hermila Galindo’s writings, alongside Sara and Juana’s, in which she describes women’s political advantages that will benefit the country. For instance, in “Woman as Collaborators,” Galindo argues that women have an exclusive intuition that allows them to see whether a politician is being sincere or not in their promises to the public. Essentially, Galindo like Juana and Sara believed women should participate in public affairs.

Ultimately, the *Magonistas* adhered to anarchism. In Ricardo Flores Magón’s writing “Revolutionary Progress,” he argues that women will be fully recognized as members of society in a world without social institutions. Several Mexican women agreed with Ricardo since they sought liberation from social oppression. As a result, Mexican women begin practicing anarchist ideals in the movements they created between 1915 and the 1920s. Within these women led organizations women fought against labor exploitation and racism. According to the historian Sonia Hernandez, these women practiced *Feminismo Transfronterizo* because they fused women’s rights with other issues that concerned their communities. In the end, with the inclusion of women *Magonismo* became a vision without physical and social boundaries. *Magonismo* became a philosophy that

breathed life into a movement that sought a better world for all Mexicans no matter their location or gender identity.

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