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The Frontier of the Labor Movement: Latinas and the Longest Strike in Twentieth-Century Las Vegas

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THE FRONTIER OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT: LATINAS AND THE LONGEST STRIKE IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY LAS VEGAS

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Abstract

After the mid-twentieth century, the American labor movement began to decline. Across the U.S., Union memberships and the rate of work stoppages decreased. In the hospitality-industry-driven city of Las Vegas, Nevada, however, the Culinary Workers Union Local 226 more than doubled its membership. In 1989, the Elardi family purchased the Frontier Hotel and Casino and began to eliminate workers' benefits. Led by the Culinary Union, workers went on strike on September 21, 1991, beginning one of the longest strikes in twentieth-century Las Vegas. Latina workers played critical roles in organizing and maintaining this successful, six-year-long battle against the Elardis. Positioning Latina workers' oral histories at the center of this analysis, I trace the course of the dispute from 1989, when the Elardis purchased the Frontier, to 1998, when the strike ended after the Elardis sold the hotel. To reveal how and why Latinas participated in this strike, this project focuses on Latina workers' immigration experiences, the familial bonds workers forged with one another, and the women who led the strike.

Para mis padres
Oscar Estrada Salazar y Maribel Calderón Solano

Y todas las familias inmigrantes que
cruzaron fronteras para salir
adelante

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Introduction

Latina Labor Activism in Las Vegas

On October 1, 1993, Gloria Hernández, a hospitality worker at the Frontier Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, spoke before the Subcommittee on Labor-Management Relations, a subsection of the U.S. Congressional Committee on Education and Labor. She stated, "The Elardis [the owners of the Frontier] have always treated their employees at the Frontier horribly. They never demonstrated any respect for us, and they broke the law in an effort to destroy our Union."[1] Discontented with unfair wages and labor conditions, more than five hundred Frontier employees, including Hernández, had been on strike for two years, ever since September 21, 1991. The strike, which the Culinary Workers Union Local 226 organized and led, ended on February 1, 1998, making it one of the longest labor disputes in U.S. history.

Hospitality workers in Las Vegas have had the opportunity to become members of the Culinary Workers Union Local 226 since the union was organized on November 1, 1935.[2] The union has protected service workers, including bartenders, change people, bellmen and -women, restaurant employees, and guest room attendants.[3] Through negotiations with casino and restaurant owners, and despite the decline of American trade unionism after the 1950s, the Culinary Union has ensured that wages for these workers, regardless of union membership, have

[1] *Oversight Hearing on Labor Relations,* Day 1, 103th Cong., 1st sess., October 1, 1993, 25, 103-79. Hereafter cited as *Hearing*.

[2] Culinary Workers Union Local 226, "Our Union: History," Culinary Workers Union Local 226, accessed March 18, 2020, https://www.culinaryunion226.org/union/history. Local 226 is a UNITE HERE affiliate. UNITE HERE is a labor union with approximately 300,000 American and Canadian members. The majority of UNITE HERE's members are women and people of color. For more information on UNITE HERE, see UNITE HERE, "Who We Are," UNITE HERE, accessed April 26, 2020, https://unitehere.org/who-we-are/.

[3] Rothman, *Neon Metropolis,* 67.

remained high throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century.[4] After World War II, when labor unions across the U.S. began to lose members and, consequently, bargaining power as a result of changing modes of production and outsourcing in everything from agriculture to manufacturing, the labor movement in Las Vegas stayed strong.[5] The service-oriented labor force of the Las Vegas hospitality industry remained safe from these economic shifts in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. So, workers in the city continued to join the Culinary Union. They shaped economic and labor relations throughout the valley, including in hotels and casinos that did not have union contracts. Not all employers, however, supported unionized workers.[6] When corporations began to open large non-union resorts in the 1980s and 1990s, the Culinary Union succeeded in organizing the workers within them. As a result, between 1988 and 1998, the Culinary Union's membership increased to forty thousand, more than doubling its size, and in 2008 membership surpassed sixty thousand. By the 1990s, Las Vegas had become the "most unionized city in the United States."[7]

A great many of these unionized workers were women. Nationally, women have been some of the most active and determined members of labor unions. In the 1940s, more than two million women belonged to a union.[8] Many of these women unionists worked for the garment, canning, and tobacco processing industries. By the 1970s, however, with the expansion of the service sector, many women in the U.S. and throughout the world worked in personal service occupations.[9] This was nowhere more true than in the service-focused city of Las Vegas. Of

[4] Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 16. For a detailed history of the Culinary Union from 1960 to 1985, see James P. Kraft, *Vegas at Odds: Labor Conflict in a Leisure Economy, 1960-1985* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

[5] Lichtenstein, 16, 215.

[6] Rothman, *Neon Metropolis,* 27.

[7] Rothman, *Neon Metropolis,* 83.

[8] Lichtenstein, *State of the Union,* 88.

[9] Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing It out: Waitresses and Their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 3.

course, as in many U.S. industries, women and racialized minority people did not easily acquire union jobs. Gender and racial discrimination often kept women and members of minority groups, including Latinxs and African Americans, in low-paying jobs outside of the service industry. For example, in the 1950s and 1960s, the Dessert Inn Casino in Las Vegas did not hire Black waitstaff.[10] Even though the Culinary Union had a racially diverse membership before the federal government passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, most of the Black workers had "back-of-the-house" jobs and did not hold leadership positions within the union.[11]

In the 1970s, women and Latinxs in Las Vegas encountered similar unfair employment practices that kept them in low-wage occupations, so they demanded that the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission expand its plan to end discrimination against African Americans by including women and Latinxs.[12] These demands and other efforts eventually increased the number of African American and Latinx service workers, including women, who held blue-collar jobs and leadership positions in the Culinary Union. By 1997, of the forty thousand workers the Culinary Union represented, 47 percent were Latinx, 30 percent were white, 12 percent were Black, and 11 percent were of Asian descent.[13] Women's membership also began to increase, and by 2020, women made up more than half of the union's total members.[14] Seeking to improve workplace practices, these women joined the union, became familiar with the labor movement, learned the language and practices necessary to negotiate labor contracts with resort and casino owners, and often decided to become strike participants and leaders.

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[10] Kraft, *Vegas at Odds,* 127-137.
[11] Kraft, *Vegas at Odds,* 127.
[12] Kraft, *Vegas at Odds,* 137.
[13] Culinary Workers Union Local 226, "Our Union: History," Culinary Workers Union Local 226, accessed March 18, 2020, https://www.culinaryunion226.org/union/history.
[14] Culinary Workers Union Local 226, "Our Union: History," Culinary Workers Union Local 226, accessed March 18, 2020, https://www.culinaryunion226.org/union/history.

Throughout the six-and-a-half-year strike against the Frontier Hotel and Casino, media across the United States covered the story in Las Vegas. Readers across the country learned about the parties directly and indirectly involved in the dispute, from the Elardis to the Culinary Union to picketers to Las Vegas locals worried about the image of their home town. While people throughout the nation knew about the Frontier strike, scholars of labor, gaming, tourism, and Las Vegas appear to have forgotten it, even though it was the longest labor dispute since 1962.[15] The handful of scholars who have written about the strike provide only a brief summary of the events that began and ended the conflict, reducing the 6 years, 4 months, and 10 days of protest into a couple of paragraphs buried in extensive histories of casinos, neon lights, and the tourist industry of the ever-growing Las Vegas metropolis.[16] Furthermore, their accounts tend to focus on the Elardi family, rather than the Culinary Union's leaders and workers' experiences.

Female hospitality workers in Las Vegas played critical roles in organizing, leading, and maintaining the Frontier strike during the 1990s. Many of these women were Latinas who had recently immigrated to the U.S. in search of economic opportunities. Most of the written sources that document the strike do not reveal the perspectives of individual Latina strikers, preventing historians from analyzing how these women understood their identities, their communities, and

[15] Robert Macy, "Strikers in Las Vegas Return to their Jobs," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,.* February 2, 1998, sec. 3. The longest strike prior to the Frontier strike had been the United Auto Workers strike against Kohler Company, which made plumbing fixtures. The strike took place in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, and lasted from April 1954 to October 1962. For more on this strike, see International Union, United Automobile, Aircraft, and Agricultural Implement Workers of America, Local 833, "All My Life My Daddy's Been on Strike to Make My Future Better: the Kohler Worker's Story," (Indianapolis, UAW-CIO Local 833, 1955), http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/search.asp?id=1525.

[16] Works on Las Vegas that have omitted the history of the Frontier Strike include Eugene P. Moehring and Michael S. Green, *Las Vegas: A Centennial History* (Reno: University of Nevada, 2005); Geoff Schumacher, *Sun, Sin, and Suburbia: The History of Modern Las Vegas* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2012). One work that includes the oral history of a Culinary Union Local 226 leader, Hattie Canty, who participated in the strike is Joanne L. Goodwin, *Changing the Game: Women at Work in Las Vegas, 1940-1990* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2014). One work that briefly discusses the Las Vegas service economy and the Frontier strike is Hal Rothman, *Neon Metropolis: How Las Vegas Started the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2002). For an analysis of another instance of labor and socioeconomic activism led by Black women in Las Vegas, see Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005).

their own historical agency. Historian Devra Weber argues that oral sources are often critical to understanding Latin Americans' participation in U.S. labor strikes.[17] She contends that oral histories demonstrate that Latinxs brought organizational and ideological influences from their Latin American communities. They also help to clarify how and why individuals participated in labor organizations and explain why laborers went on strike.[18] Most important, Weber argues, oral sources "provide insight into the consciousness and culture, revealing people as active, reflective, and conscious participants at the center of historical process and transformation."[19] To explain Latinas' participation at the Frontier strike, then, I position Latina workers' oral histories at the center of my analysis. These are the richest sources to use in answering questions regarding labor, gender, immigration, identity, and agency.[20]

Since the 1920s, scholars of labor and Latinx history have increasingly shed light on the histories of working-class Latinxs who were committed to improving social, economic, and political conditions in both rural and urban communities throughout the U.S.[21] Historical monographs devoted to Chicano labor include discussions of labor activism, unionization, community formation, leisure, civil rights, immigration, assimilation, race relations, and eventually, gender.[22] Realizing that many had overlooked the experiences of working-class

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[17] Devra Weber, "Oral Sources and the History of Mexican Workers in the United States," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 23 (Spring 1983): 47-50, 48.

[18] Weber, 48.

[19] Weber, 50.

[20] Weber, 47-50.

[21] Camille Guérin-Gonzales, "Conversing Across Boundaries of Race, Ethnicity, Class, Gender, and Region: Latino and Latina Labor History," in *The African American Urban Experience: Perspectives from the Colonial Period to the Present,* ed. Joe William Trotter, Jr., Earl Lewis, and Tera Hunter (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2004), 267-286.

[22] For Chicano labor histories that document the complexity of issues that Latinxs have encountered in the workplace and how they have overcome and resisted them, see José M. Alamillo, *Making Lemonade out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in a California Town, 1880-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Hector L. Delgado, *New Immigrants, Old Unions: Organizing Undocumented Workers in Los Angeles* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); 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, 2001); Monica Perales, *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North

Latinas and other women across the country, scholars in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first century, such as Alice Kessler Harris, Vicki L. Ruiz, and Joan Scott, prompted historians to analyze how the socially constructed gender of historical actors shaped their experiences in the workplace.[23]

By focusing on the category of gender in the study of Latinx working-class history, some historians have successfully placed Latinas at the center of their scholarship. This methodology has allowed scholars to examine the distinct oppressions that Latinas have faced not only in the workplace, but also within their homes. While Latinas and Latinos have worked together to overcome workplace injustices, Latinas have often understood and justified their participation in labor movements in different ways than have their male counterparts. Some women have stood up against exploitative managers to fight for a better wage in order to better provide for their families. Others have understood their labor struggles to be a fight for civil rights. Ultimately, women-centered work reveals that Latinas actively and consciously shaped their own lives, while simultaneously making and remaking the communities and societies in which they lived.

Because few historians have discussed the contributions of underrepresented groups like Latinxs and women to the growth of Las Vegas and because scholarly works on Latina activism during the Frontier strike are noticeably absent in the historiography, this project seeks to demonstrate the significance of Latinas' contributions to their local community, specifically, and

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Carolina Press, 2010); Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Zaragoza Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[23] For guides on using gender to examine working-class history, see Joan Scott "On Language, Gender, and Working-Class History," *International Labor and Working Class History* 31 (Spring 1987): 1-13; Alice Kessler-Harris, *Gendering Labor History* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2007). For labor histories centering Latinas, see 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); Vicki L. Ruiz and Virginia Sánchez Korrol, eds., *Latina Legacies: Identity, Biography, and Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Sonia Hernández, *Working Women into the Borderlands* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014).

to collective bargaining rights, more broadly.[24] Their stories not only shed light on Las Vegas history, but also contribute to the fields of women's, labor, and Latinx history. In her work on Las Vegas women's labor from 1940 to 1990, historian Joanne L. Goodwin uses oral histories to preserve the lived experiences of women working in casinos as managers, housekeepers, uniform room supervisors, dancers, union organizers, and dealers.[25] Despite this diversity in perspectives, Goodwin regretfully acknowledges that she would have liked to include more histories of women from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. Particularly, she confesses, she would have liked to include the histories of Latinas, but was unable to do so because these individuals did not wish or were unable to participate in her project. My work addresses this concern and seeks to insert working-class Latinas' lived experiences within Las Vegas twentieth-century history. My ability to interview Latinas in Spanish as well as the trust that stemmed from my insider status as a Latina allowed me to conduct interviews that other scholars found difficult to secure.

This micro-history complicates and expands previous narratives of Las Vegas and Latinx history. In it, I present Frontier employees as complex historical actors who had to balance family and work life while seeking to adapt to and survive during the many phases of labor activism. Throughout my analysis, I view Latinas and Frontier strikers not only as workers in a capitalist society, but also as parents, spouses, siblings, and friends to others. In doing so, I reveal how participation in the strike affected workers' personal lives, how workers and their families made sense of the strike, how workers merged their personal and professional responsibilities,

[24] Exceptions include M.L. Miranda, *A History of Hispanics in Southern Nevada* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1997); Thomas Rodriguez, *A Profile of Hispanics in Nevada: 1997(An Agenda for Progress)* (Las Vegas: Latin Chamber of Commerce of Nevada, Inc., 1997); Orleck, *Storming Caesars Palace;* Goodwin, *Changing the Game.*

[25] Joanne L. Goodwin, *Changing the Game*, 17.

and why these workers persisted for six years. To accomplish this, I trace the development of the strike from 1989, when the Elardis purchased the Frontier, to 1998, when the strike ended after the Elardis sold the hotel.

Latinas made significant contributions to the development and success of the Frontier strike. In the first chapter, "Crossing Fronteras," I argue that Latinas' immigrant experiences shaped how they understood the labor movement and their identity as wage-earners. I also explain the circumstances that led workers to go on strike. The second chapter, "A Family on the Picket Line," describes some of the major events, such as a protest march from Las Vegas to Los Angeles and a hearing before the House of Representatives, that occurred during the strike. Latinas not only had the support of other labor unions across the nation, but also the support of their families, which included friends, co-workers, and sympathizers. For this reason, I argue that the strike was a dispute between families. Finally, the last chapter, "Women Lead the Strike," focuses on women's leadership experiences and describes how this labor dispute came to an end. In this portion of the narrative, I argue that the women of color leading the Frontier strike were crucial players in ensuring workers' success at the Frontier and future strikes. These women passed down their knowledge to new generations of labor leaders, ensuring that Las Vegas would remain a highly unionized city.

Chapter 1

Crossing Fronteras

> But I'm going to tell you I'm the first woman and in that I feel very proud because women, we're still struggling all over the world. But in the United States, we're moving in the right direction. We're still a little behind, but we're moving. I feel very proud to be the first woman because I represent all women and that's a great thing for a woman.
>
> —Geoconda Argüello-Kline on being the first woman elected Secretary-Treasurer of Culinary Local 226

In 2012, the Culinary Union elected Geoconda Argüello-Kline as the first woman and Latina to ever become the local's Secretary-Treasurer, its highest leadership position.[1] In the 1980s, Argüello-Kline began working as a housekeeper at the Fitzgerald Hotel-Casino downtown and, later, at the Frontier. By the time the Frontier strike began, Argüello-Kline was already familiar enough with how the union functioned to become one of the strike's lead organizers. Her job proved challenging. She had to convince workers who wanted nothing to do with the union to organize. She had to persuade women and men who could not afford to lose their jobs to go on strike. Once she accomplished this, she had to encourage them to show up to the picket line for more than six years. She and other Latinas, who immigrated to the U.S. in the 1980s and 1990s, then, played critical roles in both coordinating and maintaining this twentieth-century labor dispute. In doing so, they shaped labor-management relations in the city and defended the labor rights of thousands of Las Vegas hospitality workers and their families.

[1] Geoconda Argüello-Kline, interview by Claytee D. White, August 12, 2014, The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project, UNLV Special Collections, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.; Culinary Workers Union Local 226, "Former Housekeeper Appointed Secretary-Treasurer of Nevada's Largest Union," https://www.culinaryunion226.org/news/press/former-housekeeper-appointed-secretary-treasurer-of-nevadas-largest-union, accessed January 22, 2021.

In the 1990s, the majority of Las Vegas hotels and casinos were located in two areas, downtown near Fremont Street and on the Strip, an approximately four-mile long stretch of Las Vegas Boulevard South.[2] At that time, an economic boom on the Strip led to the construction of large resorts and hotel rooms.[3] Casino operators such as Steve Wynn began to construct megaresorts like The Mirage, which opened on November 22, 1989.[4] Some of these resorts had up to five thousand rooms and boasted luxurious decorations that attracted an increasing number of tourists to the Strip, turning Las Vegas into an even more popular vacation spot. Despite this transformation, some older establishments on the Strip continued to serve the public into the 2000s.

One historic and popular property among locals and tourists was the Frontier Hotel and Casino, which had served the public since 1942. In the early 1940s, a Texas businessman, R.E. Griffith and his nephew, William J. Moore, travelled to California along Highway 91, which later became the Strip.[5] During this trip, Griffith and Moore encountered the first hotel and casino in the area, El Rancho Vegas. This establishment opened in 1941. Upon seeing the location of El Rancho Vegas, Griffith and Moore decided to open their own hotel and casino a mile south of the property to serve travelers coming down the highway from California. They hoped that travelers would see the new hotel first and stay there, instead of continuing to El Rancho Vegas. A year later, Griffith and Moore opened the second hotel and casino on the Strip, an old west-themed establishment called the Last Frontier. If it were standing today, the property would be located at the intersection of the present-day Fashion Show Drive and Las Vegas

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[2] See "City and Strip" in Eugene P. Moehring and Michael S. Green, *Las Vegas: A Centennial History* (Reno: University of Nevada, 2005), 132-70.

[3] Geoff Schumacher, *Sun, Sin, and Suburbia: The History of Modern Las Vegas* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2012), 85-91.

[4] Schumacher, *Sun, Sin, and Suburbia,* 85.

[5] Jeff Burbank, "Last Frontier Hotel," *Online Nevada Encyclopedia: A Publication of Nevada Humanities, https://www.onlinenevada.org/articles/last-frontier-hotel,* accessed February 24, 2021,

Boulevard South in front of the Fashion Show Mall, across from the Wynn Las Vegas Resort, and next to the Trump International Hotel Las Vegas.[6] As time passed, the hotel and casino changed ownership various times. After Howard Hughes purchased the property in the late 1960s, he changed the name to the Frontier and expanded the hotel from 500 to more than 980 rooms. Both its history and prime location made the hotel and casino a desirable property to business people.

In 1988, the Hughes Corporation sold the Frontier Hotel and Casino along with the neighboring property, the Silver Slipper Casino, to other well-known and successful business owners, Margaret Elardi and her two sons, Tom and John Elardi, who transformed the business into one of the few family-owned resorts in Las Vegas [7] The Elardis most likely recognized the value and potential of the Frontier when they made the decision to demolish the Silver Slipper to create a larger parking lot for the Frontier.[8] The Elardis were not new to the hotel and casino industry. Margaret Elardi, alongside Edward Nigro, had run a resort, the Pioneer Hotel and Gambling Hall, near the Colorado River in Laughlin, Nevada, before she purchased the Frontier in Las Vegas.[9] Upon their purchase of the Pioneer, she added more than one hundred hotel rooms, expanding the resort until it boasted more than four hundred rooms.[10] This made her a pivotal player in the development of the gaming industry in Laughlin.[11] Alongside a few other casinos, the Elardis' resort drew investors who wanted to build in the area. Margaret Elardi also owned the Elardi Construction company and co-owned a Holiday Inn in Lake Havasu City,

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[6] Hal Rothman, *Neon Metropolis: How Las Vegas Started the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 82.

[7] "Nevada: State OKs Sale of Hughes Casinos," *The Miami Herald,* June 24, 1988, page 146.

[8] Jeff Burbank, "Last Frontier Hotel," *Online Nevada Encyclopedia: A Publication of Nevada Humanities, https://www.onlinenevada.org/articles/last-frontier-hotel,* accessed February 24, 2021.

[9] "Negotiators Derail Year-long Effort to End Vegas Strike," *Elko Daily Press,* March 4, 1994, sec. 10.

[10] "Pioneer Hotel and Gambling Hall," *The Arizona Republic,* December 12, 1997, page 253.

[11] "Laughlin: Riverside City Has Boomed in Past 20 Years," *Los Angeles Times,* May 8, 1988, page 353.

Arizona, with Chic Hecht, a former state senator, and Bill Boyd, the president of Boyd Enterprises.[12] Margaret Elardi and her family had plenty of experience managing workers in a variety of businesses.

Newspapers across the U.S. frequently published stories on Margaret Elardi's business activities. People living within and outside of Nevada most likely found Elardi's more than twenty-year-long successful career in the gaming industry fascinating. In 1988, the Florida newspaper, *The Miami Herald,* for example, recognized Elardi as the "largest female gaming resort owner" in Nevada.[13] Interestingly, the year that she purchased the Frontier, Margaret Elardi also received national attention for her generosity and support of Nevada high school valedictorians.[14] Papers in California, Florida, Illonois, Minnesota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and many other states published the same story describing how the Margaret Elardi Nevada Scholarship Program for Valedictorians at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, benefitted university freshmen. In 1985, Margaret Elardi volunteered to give UNLV $1 million to fund $10,000 scholarships for Nevada high school valedictorians who attended the university. One of the scholarship recipients or Elardi scholars was Ignacio Avilas, who graduated from Rancho High School and was one of eight children. His father worked as a dishwasher and his mother as a maid. Elardi not only funded students' tuition, but also treated students like Avila in a way that one typically treats close friends and family. According to Robert C. Maxson, then the UNLV president, she sent recipients birthday and Christmas cards, met with them for dinner at least three times a year, and decorated her office with 11-by-14-inch photographs of every Elardi

[12] "British Royalty Invited to Visit Lake Havasu," *Los Angeles Times*, March 1, 1981, page 210.
[13] "Nevada: State OKs Sale of Hughes Casinos," *The Miami Herald,* June 24, 1988, page 146.
[14] Charles Hillinger, "High School Valedictorians Awarded College Scholarships," *Asbury Park Press,* December 8, 1988, page 123.

scholar. With these acts of service, Margaret Elardi showed her local community that she was a benevolent and successful businesswoman.

Margaret Elardi recognized that Nevada's gaming industry helped her to reach a point in her career where she could fund university scholarships. Maxson explained that when the university identified the students who would become Elardi scholars, Elardi wrote them personal letters encouraging them to accept the scholarship. In these letters she acknowledged that she earned her living in the gaming industry. She explained, "This state has been good to me and my family. I can think of no better way to put something back in to the community than by investing in the young people on whose shoulders the future rests."[15] Like many of the historical actors in this narrative, her family was one of the driving forces behind her actions. Elardi chose to help Nevada students because the state had allowed her and her family to run successful businesses. Although Elardi's businesses and scholarship program received national attention, Maxson described her as "an absolute private person" who was "low keyed and shun[ned] publicity."[16] The public attention that she and the scholarship program received did not compare with the publicity that was to come once labor-management relations deteriorated at the Frontier.

Upon purchasing the Frontier, Elardi made her son, Tom Elardi, the general manager of the property, and together they operated the resort. Since the 1960s when the Howard Hughes Corporation managed it, the Frontier Hotel and Casino workers had a union contract. Therefore, when the Elardis purchased the Frontier, the contract stipulated that they had to assume the collective bargaining agreement that governed the relationship among the Frontier, the Local

[15] Charles Hillinger, "High School Valedictorians Awarded College Scholarships," *Asbury Park Press,* December 8, 1988, page 123.

[16] Charles Hillinger, "High School Valedictorians Awarded College Scholarships," *Asbury Park Press,* December 8, 1988, page 123.

Joint Executive Board of Las Vegas, the Culinary Union, and the Bartender's Union.[17] By 1993, approximately 85 percent of the major Strip casinos were union operations and approximately 40,000 casino workers were members of a union.[18] The Elardis, however, did not support unionized labor.

The Elardis tried to undermine their workers' relationships with unions. The contract that the Elardis had upheld since the purchase of the Frontier expired on June 1, 1989. After this contract expired, the Elardis wanted to negotiate a new agreement with the Local Joint Executive Board of Las Vegas, the Culinary Workers Union Local 226, and the Bartenders Union 165 that would benefit their family-operated business.[19] However, the unions wanted the Elardis to sign a contract similar to those that megaresorts, such as Caesars Palace or The Mirage, had with the unions. The Elardis argued that their family-owned business could not compete with corporate-owned casinos, and that for this reason, the union should not hold their business to the same standard as the other casinos when it came to negotiating and adopting labor contracts.[20]

On the other hand, John Wilhelm, Western Regional Director of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union, countered that in the early 1990s, the Elardi family had a net worth of approximately $250 million. According to Wilhelm, financially, the Elardis had enough resources not only to provide the benefits that the union demanded, but also to pay lawyers to defend them after the union sued them for committing multiple labor law violations, such as blocking fire doors and not having up-to-date evacuation plans.[21] The Elardis also committed more serious transgressions that earned them the displeasure of gaming

[17] *Oversight Hearing on Labor Relations, Day 1, 103th Cong., 1st sess., October 1, 1993,* 2.
[18] "Statement of John Wilhelm," *Hearing,* 6-7.
[19] "Statement of Thomas E. Elardi, Frontier Hotel and Gambling Hall, Las Vegas, Nevada" in *Hearing,* 2.
[20] Chairman Pat Williams, *Hearing,* 3.
[21] "Statement of John Wilhelm," *Hearing,* 8.

regulators, such as violating Nevada's anti-money-laundering laws during the early 1990s.[22] According to Richard McCracken, who served as the Counsel to the Culinary Workers Local Union 226 and Bartenders Local Union 165 at the time, to keep workers from demanding a contract similar to that of the megaresorts, the Elardis tried to prevent them from meeting with union representatives who would routinely visit the casino to investigate working conditions. The Elardis often prohibited these representatives from entering.[23] Despite these efforts, the Elardis did not succeed in prohibiting union-led investigations. Until the contract expired, union representatives had the right to visit the premises and workers had the right to learn about their benefits.

Union representatives refused to let the Elardis get away with not signing a union contract similar to those of the surrounding casinos because union contracts across the city were also at stake. If the Elardis did not sign this type of contract, the unions and their members feared other casinos and hotels could follow their lead and "set off a dangerous chain reaction by emboldening other Las Vegas employers who might try to trample on their employees' rights, too."[24] When representatives visited the casino to meet with workers, the Elardis began to surveil the conversations; they disapproved of the union meetings and considered the type of labor contract that workers demanded to be a threat to the Frontier's business. The Elardis likely saw the elimination of the union contract as a way to increase the Frontier's profits.

The Elardis' actions in June 1990 proved that this was, indeed, the case. That year, the Elardis terminated workers' pension plans without informing the union. Furthermore, the Elardis cut wages and made workers switch their health insurance to inferior plans that made many of

[22] "Statement of John Wilhelm," *Hearing*, 8.
[23] "Statement of Richard McCracken," *Hearing,* 16.
[24] "Statement of John Wilhelm," *Hearing,* 6.

them ineligible to receive any medical assistance.[25] For many of the workers, the health insurance plans were among the most valuable benefits they received from the labor contract. They relied on their insurance to provide adequate health care for their families. These workers saw the Elardis' actions as threatening to not only their own economic stability, but also that of their families. Meanwhile, the Elardis saw the workers' demands as threatening to their family business. Both used their roles as family members and providers to defend their positions.

Consequently, Culinary Union representatives and Frontier workers began to discuss the possibility of going on strike. In June 1991, about fifteen Culinary and Bartenders Union workers held an hour-long demonstration outside of the Frontier.[26] They carried large picket signs that featured images of Margaret Elardi. When news reporters questioned him about the march, Culinary Local 226 Secretary and Treasurer Jim Arnold stated that Elardi was "next," meaning that the unions intended to go on strike. He added that the "working conditions inside that place [were] like slave labor."[27] The following month the conflict escalated as union leaders considered a strike authorization vote, in which the workers who wanted to go on strike had to vote "yes." In addition to discussing this process, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) also became involved when the board filed complaints against the Frontier for eliminating the workers' pension funds and prohibiting union representatives from entering the premises. Both actions were illegal under the National Labor Relations Act, which created the NLRB.[28]

Many Frontier workers were angry over the loss of their pensions and health care benefits. Working as a cocktail waitress at the Frontier since 1964, Lilo Distleo, 50 years old

[25] Rothman, *Neon Metropolis,* 83.
[26] "Union Workers Picket Outside Frontier Hotel," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* June 28, 1991, sec. 3b.
[27] "Union Workers Picket Outside Frontier Hotel," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* June 28, 1991, sec. 3b.
[28] Jeff Burbank, "Labor Strife at Frontier Intensifies," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* August 09, 1991, Page 1B.

when these conflicts began, stated that many of her coworkers were upset because they did not have a contract like workers at the other hotels did. She added, "We need a pension, we need the health and welfare [benefits]."[29] Other workers felt similarly because their wages were much lower than those they could be earning at other properties with union contracts. For example, Russ Cobleigh, who had worked at the Frontier as a bartender for one year, explained that he was earning $6.40 hourly there. Meanwhile, bartenders in other casinos earned close to $9.00 hourly. Frontier employees, then, earned from $2 to $4 less than other Strip casino workers.[30] In view of the Elardis' actions, about 500 Frontier workers voted on September 19, 1991, to go on strike.[31] Some workers had never participated in a strike or been members of a union.

Contrary to common beliefs, the decision to go on strike is not always an easy one for workers to make. The thought of standing up against employers and losing their jobs as a result seemed absurd to some who migrated to Las Vegas in search of workplace opportunities. Mirna Preciado, who arrived in 1980 from Mexico and began to work at the Frontier in 1988, initially did not understand why union members insisted that she walk out of the property.[32] The idea of the "American dream," which has motivated immigrants and nonimmigrants to seek economic opportunities, can help to explain why some hospitality workers, especially those like Preciado who had recently migrated to the United States, did not want to organize against their employers.[33]

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[29] Jeff Burbank, "Labor Strife at Frontier Intensifies," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* August 09, 1991, Page 1B.

[30] Jeff Burbank, "Frontier Hotel, Unions See Long Strike," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* September 21, 1991, Page 1A.

[31] Jeff Burbank, "Unions Focus on Frontier Strike, Organizing Main Street Station," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* Sep 14, 1991, sec. 3B.

[32] Mirna Preciado, interview by Claytee D. White, September 11, 2014, The Boyer Early Las Vegas Oral History Project, UNLV Special Collections, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

[33] For more on the meaning of the American Dream for Mexican immigrants in the American West, including the gendered and racialized nature of this idea, see Camille Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and*

In a 2014 oral history, Preciado revealed that when she arrived in the U.S., she did not understand the labor movement or what constituted a labor union.[34] She did, however, understand the "American dream." For her, the American dream meant that she had access to a job that would allow her, as a single mother, to provide for her children and purchase both a house and a car. Preciado confidently stated, "Some people don't understand what that means, the American dream. I do. I'm an immigrant. So, I started working at the Frontier [at] Margarita's Restaurant [as a food server]."[35] Her identity as an immigrant and a single mother shaped how she understood the American dream and why she could not afford to give up on it. She knew that at the Frontier, she had a union job that gave her access to desirable benefits, such as health insurance and a pension, while, in Mexico, she had been a stay-at-home mother who did not earn a paycheck. When she compared her situation in both countries, Preciado realized that she could "ruin" what she had acquired in the U.S. if she went on strike. For immigrant workers who had left behind what they deemed to be an unfavorable economic situation in their previous homes, as was the case for many African American workers who migrated to Las Vegas from the South, joining a labor union seemed risky. To go on strike and leave the jobs they needed simply did not fit with their goal of working toward their version of the American dream.

Despite their initial refusal to go on strike, Preciado and many others eventually shifted their views. But first, union organizers had to push back against workers' refusals to meet with them. At the Frontier, Preciado crossed paths with Argüello-Kline, who worked as a shop steward connecting Frontier workers with union leaders. The first few times that Argüello-Kline attempted to speak with Preciado about how Frontier managers were violating workers' rights,

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American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

[34] Preciado, interview.

[35] Preciado, interview.

Preciado did not want to join the union.[36] Preciado just wanted to keep her job as she finalized the divorce from her soon-to-be ex-husband. She did not want to lose her job, especially as she became economically independent of her ex-husband. Preciado's refusal to listen to shop stewards at work led Argüello-Kline to visit Preciado's home repeatedly. Refusing to allow Argüello-Kline to change her mind, Preciado hid whenever she heard her knocking. Finally, however, Preciado decided to listen to her. Preciado told Argüello-Kline that she could only meet to discuss the union for a few minutes, but that meeting ended three hours later. To convince Preciado to support the union's efforts, Argüello-Kline used arguments and claims that referenced Preciado's family's well-being. This persuaded Preciado to join the union. Workers took action when they realized that the workplace could also hurt or benefit intimate family matters.

Immigrant women and men, such as Geoconda Argüello-Kline and Mirna Preciado, moved to Las Vegas to find work that would allow them to provide for their families. For years, U.S. migrants and global immigrants had seen Las Vegas as a place where they could find jobs in casinos and hotels and, eventually, improve their economic situations. For example, according to historian Annelise Orleck, between 1940 and 1970, large groups of African Americans left the South and migrated to Las Vegas "seeking their fortunes in the hotels, defense plants, and nuclear test sites of the Nevada desert."[37] African American migrants often told the friends and family that they had left back home that jobs were plentiful, but also that one could stand at casino fronts in the mornings and pick up all the money that visitors had dropped on the floor.[38] However, African Americans and other people of color experienced workplace and residential

[36] Preciado, interview.

[37] Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesar's Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty,* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005). 9.

[38] Orleck, *Storming Caesar's Palace,* 34.

discrimination and segregation in Las Vegas, forcing them to remain at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. These migrants, particularly African American women, began to organize and protest against these systemic oppressions because they had not come to Las Vegas to live in poverty.[39] They moved to the city to provide for themselves and their children. Women of color have a long history of migrating to the city for better economic opportunities, and of standing up for their beliefs to defend and protect their families and communities. Since migration and immigration shaped how women and men in Las Vegas understood their participation in the American labor market, this chapter details the immigration stories of two women who participated in the Frontier strike.

Oral histories shed light on the experiences of marginalized peoples throughout the world. As an oral historian working for the Latinx Voices of Southern Nevada Oral History project, I collaborated with other undergraduate and graduate students from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, to create and preserve the oral histories of more than fifteen Culinary Union Local 226 members.[40] In December of 2018, we had the opportunity to listen to Gloria Hernández narrate her life story.[41] We sat inside a small office at the Culinary Union's headquarters. We had never met before, yet she willingly and confidently shared her story with us. Unlike many narrators who do not believe that their stories are worthy of preservation, Hernández enthusiastically expressed the importance and urgency of recording the histories of

[39] In 1971, approximately 1,500 protesters, primarily African American mothers on welfare, entered the Caesars Palace hotel and casino to protest the state of Nevada's decision to eliminate a large number of families from receiving the welfare benefits that they needed to survive in the racially prejudiced city of Las Vegas. For more on this story, see Orleck, *Storming Caesar's Palace.*

[40] I had the pleasure of working alongside UNLV students Marcela Rodriguez-Campo, Rodrigo Vazquez, Elsa Lopez, Nathalie Martinez, Laurents Bañuelos-Benitez, and Monserrath Hernández. We worked under the direction of Barbara Tabach and Claytee D. White. Rachel Spacek, "UNLV Amasses More than 100 Interviews of Latinx Residents," *Las Vegas Review-Journal,* July 8, 2019.

[41] Gloria Hernández, interview by Maribel Estrada Calderón, Nathalie Martinez, and Rodrigo Vasquez, December 7, 2018, Latinx Voices of Southern Nevada, UNLV Special Collections, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

people like her and her coworkers. She knew that her story would one day help people understand the experiences of working-class men and women who had immigrated to the United States from Latin America.

The eldest of seven, Gloria Hernández was born on March 20, 1957, in the town of Tonaya in the west-central state of Jalisco in Mexico. Her mother was a seamstress who made just enough money to send her children to a Catholic school.[42] Her father worked the family lands, growing maize, beans, and peppers. Hernández called herself a *campesina*, a field worker, because she grew up working outside with her father, who did not make enough money to pay another laborer. In the 1960s, after finishing her high school education, Hernández moved to the Mexican state of Colima, where she worked for the state government in the Departamento de Catastro, a property and land registry office, for ten years. During her time there, Hernández witnessed the first woman, not only in Colima, but in the entire country, attain the position of governor. Having been a state employee, Hernández vividly remembered working for Governor Griselda Álvarez Ponce de León. During this period, Hernández had the opportunity to grow "*como mujer*," as a woman, and "*como trabajadora*," as a worker in a political environment.[43] While she was still young, Hernández realized that women could, in fact, become powerful leaders and infiltrate male-dominated political and public spheres. While she told this portion of her story, Hernández made sure to emphasize that she had witnessed Álvarez Ponce de León attain the governorship because it was extremely rare for a woman to hold so much political power in Mexico, where heteropatriarchal norms significantly shaped and continue to shape individuals' social roles and responsibilities. Her exposure to women who held leadership positions taught her that she, too, had the potential to become a leader.

[42]Hernández, interview.
[43] Hernández, interview.

Although she loved her job in Colima, she moved to Las Vegas, Nevada, after marrying her husband in 1985. The population of Spanish-speaking Las Vegas residents, including undocumented individuals, had increased significantly since the 1980s.[44] By the 1990s, Latinxs made up the largest minority group in the city. Her husband had worked in the U.S. for more than five years and when they moved to Las Vegas, he got a job as a cook at Ricardo's, a restaurant off the Strip on Eastern and Tropicana. He never earned more than ten dollars per hour, making it difficult for him to sustain his family and pay the rent for their apartment near UNLV. Hernández became a stay-at-home mother to her two children. Seeing these difficulties and wanting to better provide for her children, Hernández made the decision to enter the labor force.

Hernández did not have to search long for employment.[45] One day, her Peruvian neighbors invited her to work with them at Margarita's, a Mexican restaurant that was opening inside the Frontier. Still adapting to her new community, Hernández began to prepare for her new job by acquiring a food handler safety training card. She knew that because she only spoke limited English, she would have to work hard to convince the employers to hire her. Filling out a job application in English was not an easy task, yet Hernández completed it, turned it in, got an interview, and soon began working as a bus person at Margarita's in October 1988. Even though, upon her arrival to the city, her husband had enrolled Hernández in English classes for adults at UNLV, she worried that her managers would fire her because of her inability to speak English fluently.[46] Non-English speakers struggled to acquire and maintain desirable jobs in the

[44] Smich and Wright note that from 1980 to 1990, the number of Latinxs in the city "rose from 35,000 to 83,000." For more on the growing population of immigrants of distinct ethnicities, see Jerry L. Simich and Thomas C. Wright, *The Peoples of Las Vegas: One City, Many Faces* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005), 8.

[45] Hernández, interview.

[46] Hernández, interview.

hospitality industry. To deal with English-speaking hotel and casino costumers, the restaurant's management required that its workers speak the language. Hernández' eagerness to have a job encouraged her to begin the challenging task of learning a foreign language.

Of course, Hernández encountered multiple difficulties as a student of the English language. However, she quickly developed a solution. Most of the restaurant's clients only spoke English, so when they ordered their drinks, Hernández would carefully remember the sound of the words without knowing what they meant. Repeating the sounds of the words in her mind, she would then walk over to the few Latina waitresses, who would repeat the names of all of the drinks the restaurant served. From this list, Hernández would listen for the words that she had heard from the customers, and then the waitresses would tell her the names of the drinks in Spanish.[47] This strategy demonstrated that Hernández trusted her coworkers to give her information she needed, and that her coworkers wanted her to properly execute her job. Although Hernández was a bus person, the team of Latina waitresses frequently helped her accomplish her tasks. From the beginning of her employment, Hernández and her coworkers demonstrated solidarity with one another. In fact, with her coworkers' help and her ambition to learn more about the place where she worked, Hernández later became a hostess. This was a common pattern throughout the Frontier. Latina guest room attendants at the hotel also fostered close workplace relationships. These workers had no idea that many of their friendships would eventually transform Frontier workers into a family on strike.

Latinas did not only work at Margarita's restaurant; the Frontier employed many of them as guest room attendants or housekeepers. One of these housekeepers was Elodia Muñiz, whose life story exemplifies how many people make the decision to become wage earners at an early

[47] Hernández, interview.

age in order to contribute to their families' incomes. Raised by parents who cultivated beans and maize, Muñiz grew up working on a family farm in Aguascalientes, in central Mexico. In February 2019, she and I sat in a Culinary Union headquarters office decorated with the photographs of laborers as well as her own children holding picket signs in front of the Frontier.[48] While narrating her story, Muñiz frequently paused and pointed to these photographs to identify her coworkers and to narrate pivotal moments of the strike. During one of these pauses, she proudly pointed to a photograph of herself standing behind her two young children, who frequently joined her during her daily marches. Her childhood had been different from that of her children. Every day before going to school, she and her cousins would go out to the fields to remove any weeds that could hinder the crops from growing. Eventually, because her family could no longer afford her education, Muñiz made the decision to drop out of middle school and become a seasonal packer at a tomato-processing plant in the Mexican state of Sinaloa on the Pacific Coast.[49] For six years, she worked there, earning a low wage, for a few months every year. At a very young age, Muñiz became aware of the economic and social difficulties that workers encountered due to the low wages they earned in labor-intensive occupations.

In 1984, knowing that her aunts and their daughters lived in Texas, Muñiz, like many other women and men before her, moved to the U.S. in search of better economic opportunities.[50] Planning to bring her two children to the U.S., Muñiz first worked as a babysitter in El Paso and then she moved to a similar job in Los Angeles. In 1989, friends and family members persuaded her to move to Las Vegas, where she soon began working as a housekeeper at the Landmark Hotel and Casino, a property just off the Strip and across from the Las Vegas

[48] Elodia Muñiz, interview by Maribel Estrada Calderón, February 15, 2019, Latinx Voices of Southern Nevada Oral History Project, UNLV Special Collections, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.
[49] Muñiz, interview.
[50] Muñiz, interview.

Convention Center. At the time, Muñiz did not mind that she earned just five dollars per hour because she was making more than she had as a babysitter. Most important, she was glad to earn more than enough money to send a portion back to her children in Mexico.[51] Like other immigrant laborers, Muñiz had to leave her children behind under her mother's supervision to be able to provide for them. The family endured two years of separation, a heartbreaking period that, sadly, the families of many migrant workers must undergo when socioeconomic situations in their home countries do not allow the family's breadwinners to provide for their loved ones from day to day.[52] The U.S.-Mexico border and American migration laws prevented Muñiz from being able to visit her children. During those difficult years, the Landmark went bankrupt. As a result, Muñiz began working at the Frontier in 1990, the year before she and her coworkers exited the property to go on strike.

Describing the Frontier, Muñiz stated that the main part of the hotel was just two stories tall and very old when she started working there.[53] She remembered that it only had one tower with about sixteen floors. She and her coworkers liked to work in the newer tower because they admired the luxury of the rooms there. As guest room attendants for the department of housekeeping, Muñiz and other women endured unfair working conditions. "Cooks, waitresses, bus persons, kitchen workers, and doormen," she stated, "all [went] down [to the breakroom] to eat" during their state-mandated breaks.[54] Housekeepers, on the other hand, were often afraid to take their mandatory breaks because they feared that they might not finish cleaning the required number of rooms, usually more than thirteen, during their eight-to-ten-hour shifts. Muñiz

[51] Muñiz, interview.

[52] For more on how loved ones cope with family separation due to migratory labor across national borders, see Miroslava Chávez-García, *Migrant Longing: Letter Writing Across the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018); and Ana Elizabeth Rosas, *Abrazando El Espíritu: Bracero Families Confront the US-Mexico Border* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

[53] Muñiz, interview.

[54] Muñiz, interview.

recalled that some women never took a break during their entire tenure working for the Frontier. These and a plethora of other grievances encouraged Frontier employees to unionize.

The Culinary Union and the Frontier had a contract that ensured Frontier employees would receive fair wages, a pension, and health insurance. Three years after Gloria Hernández began working at Margarita's and the same year that Elodia Muñiz started as a guest room attendant, that contract expired. Hernández, who was pregnant with her third child at the time, relied on the health insurance that she received through her employer.[55] When the Elardis made the decision to break the contract in as many as sixty-three different ways, Hernández made the decision to familiarize herself with how the Culinary Union functioned.[56] She made that decision because she wanted to live with dignity. While Hernández did not explicitly define dignity, her story indicates that for her, dignity meant that she would not allow others to disrespect her and deny her the benefits that she had worked hard to earn. In her oral history, she testified, "*Yo no vine a Estados Unidos para vivir de rodillas* [I did not come to the United States to live on my knees.] *Yo vine a Estados Unidos para vivir de pie con una dignidad* [I came to the United States to live standing with dignity]."[57] She did not immigrate to a country in search of better opportunities only to be denied her right to economic security and proper health care. When she fought for dignity, she fought for the Elardis to respect her right to benefits and compensation as a worker of the Frontier, so that she and her family could lead a healthy and comfortable life.

What she was fighting for is what historian Alice Kessler-Harris calls economic citizenship: the right to social and economic conditions that include the "right to work at the

[55] Hernández, interview.

[56] *One Day Longer: The Story of the Frontier Strike*, directed by Amie S. Williams, Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees International Union, and Bal-Maiden Films (Culver City, California: Bal-Maiden Films Production, 1999), DVD.

[57] Hernández, interview.

occupation of one's choice (where work includes child rearing and household maintenance); to earn wages adequate to the support of self and family; . . . and to the social environment required for effective choice, including adequate housing, safe streets, accessible public transportation, and universal health care."[58] This concept helps to explain Hernández's and Muñiz's actions. Hernández took a job at the Frontier because she wanted to work at a unionized business that would provide her and her family adequate health care. With the help of the Culinary Union, she began to organize workers at the Frontier to fight for the right to stay in the occupation that she had chosen years before, to earn fair wages, and to maintain access to the health insurance that she needed to pay for medical care throughout her pregnancy.[59] Unwilling to lose any aspect of her economic citizenship, Hernández and other employees who took the lead in organizing and informing other workers of their rights spent a year convincing almost six hundred employees to walk out from the Frontier.[60]

Convincing coworkers to give up their wages for an undetermined amount of time did not prove to be an easy task for union organizers. Many employees like Elodia Muñiz had never heard of the Culinary Union.[61] When she began working at the Frontier, the establishment no longer had a union contract. She remembered that other guest room attendants would tell her that the Frontier used to be unionized, but before the strike she did not understand what that meant. Her coworkers told her that with the union contract, employees had enjoyed paid holidays and received health insurance. By attending internal committee meetings, Muñiz began to learn more about the Culinary Union and the American labor movement. She became familiar with how strikes worked and the benefits that employees could receive if they convinced the Elardis to

[58] Alice Kessler-Harris, *Gendering Labor History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 256.
[59] Hernández, interview.
[60] *One Day Longer: The Story of the Frontier Strike*, DVD.
[61] Muñiz, interview.

sign a union contract. Upon learning this, Muñiz asked her friends, "This is all we have to do? If so, I want to join. Where do I sign?" She was willing to walk out to obtain health insurance, a pension, and paid holidays.[62] Like the other strikers, she did not know that fighting to acquire those benefits would be a long and difficult battle. She remembered that in the housekeeping department, only three guestroom attendants decided not to walk out. Perhaps these workers could not afford to lose their paychecks, simply did not want to belong to a labor union, or sided with the Elardis; we cannot know for sure. The majority of the employees, however, went on strike. "As a striker," Muñiz argued, "*sabes cuándo sales, pero no cuándo regresas* [you know when you walk out, but not when you will return]."[63]

During the 1990s, fewer American laborers walked out from their workplace than between the late 1940s and 1970s.[64] In the 1960s and 1970s, there were about 285 work stoppages across the nation and in the 1980s, there were only 83 of them.[65] The number continued to decrease during the 1990s. In 1999, only 35 strikes across the country involved more than one thousand workers, which was a dramatic decrease from the hundreds of strikes that occurred between 1940 and 1970.[66] This national trend did not discourage Frontier workers from initiating a work stoppage. Due to the strike's length and because such socioeconomic battles were so rare in the 1990s, these workers' demands transformed Las Vegas into a key battleground over twentieth-century labor relations. These workers proved that through strikes, workers across the nation could, in fact, still demand higher wages and better working

[62] Muñiz, interview.
[63] Muñiz, interview.
[64] Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 136.
[65] Lichtenstein, *State of the Union,* 136.
[66] Lichtenstein, *State of the Union,* 16, 136.

conditions. Frontier workers engaged in one of the most significant labor disputes in the twentieth century.

When Mirna Preciado, Gloria Hernández, and Elodia Muñiz began working at the Frontier, the property already held a special place in Las Vegas gambling history as the second casino and hotel to ever open on the Strip. Since its opening, the casino underwent multiple transformations from name modifications to hotel room expansion to changes in ownership. Under the management of Margaret Elardi and her family, the Frontier became even more distinctive because it belonged to one of the few businesswomen in the gambling industry. Her anti-union stance, however, also set her business apart from the neighboring corporate-owned casinos. Women working at the Frontier promptly stood up against the unfair working conditions that Elardi created at the resort without knowing that their confrontation would last more than six years. While centering Latinas' immigration narratives help explain why these workers chose to participate in the strike, focusing on workers' families, as opposed to workers alone, brings to light the central role that close social networks and the support they provide played in encouraging strikers to march one day longer.

Chapter 2

A Family on the Picket Line

The Frontier Strike began in an unfavorable period for labor unionism. By the late twentieth-century, federal legislation and American capitalists had contributed to the decline of the labor movement. The workplace rights federal legislation of the latter half of the 20th century, which included the Age Discrimination and Employment Act, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, and the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, mandated workplace protections that collective bargaining had typically established, making trade unions less relevant.[1] Of course, the existence of these acts did not mean that managers enforced them or that workers were completely safe from workplace discrimination and exploitation, so unionization continued. Some capitalists, however, wanting to increase their businesses' productivity and profit, aimed to dismantle the remaining, weakened unions. To discourage unionization during this period of globalization, managers often threatened workers with the claim that the company would begin to outsource labor. Meanwhile, corporations that could not make such threats because their services were local, such as General Electric and other construction and domestic businesses, openly embarked on anti-union campaigns.[2] By the 1990s, the national union movement had lost millions of members and, therefore, power.

Despite this national context, Frontier workers organized one of the most protracted labor strikes in the twentieth century. More than 500 union members voted in support of the strike against the Elardis. Close to 500 members of the Culinary and Bartenders unions, between 60

[1] Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 201-211.

[2] Lichtenstein, *State of the Union,* 213-228.

and 70 of the Teamsters, and about 20 of the Operating Engineers union chose to walk out of the Frontier on September 21, 1991.[3] The Culinary and Bartenders unions served cooks, housekeepers, and cocktail waitresses who worked in casinos and even hospitals. The Teamsters Local 995 represented desk workers, valet parkers, and warehouse workers. Maintenance workers belonged to the Operating Engineers union. Teamsters Local 14 represented beverage delivery workers. While they did not work within the hotel, except when they were delivering drinks such as beer, wine, and milk, Teamsters Local 14 members decided to support the rest of the workers by refusing to cross their picket line. Together, these individuals set out to march in front of the Frontier Hotel and Casino.

In this chapter, I describe some of the major events that occurred early in the strike to explain how this work stoppage affected workers' lives, their relationships with their families, and their roles within the labor movement. While the previous chapter centered Latinas' immigration narratives, this chapter focuses on their experiences as family members. In the twentieth century, Mexican women working in agriculture in the United States, Vicki Ruiz argues, cared for one another as family.[4] In the twenty-first century, laborers in cities working in more culturally diverse spaces like Las Vegas also formed familial ties. However, these ties transcended national origin, uniting workers from throughout Latin America and the rest of the world. By the end of the strike, workers came to think of themselves as family. The Frontier strike, rather than solely a dispute between workers and management, was also a labor conflict between and involving families. To view the conflict in this way, I expand the notion of "family" as it is used in heteronormative, heterosexual, and reproductive contexts to describe a group of

[3] Jeff Burbank, "Frontier Hotel, Unions See Long Strike," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* September 21, 1991, sec. 1A; Sara Mosle, "How the Maids Fought Back," *The New Yorker*, February 1996.

[4] Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in the Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 16.

people whose relationships are characterized by material and emotional support for one another, a sense of security and belonging, and mutual respect. The Latin American women who worked as servers, hostesses, and guest room attendants and whose experiences I center in this analysis used the support they forged in this family to overcome the daily challenges they encountered on the picket line.

When Frontier workers walked out, they hardly expected to be on strike for more than six years. Many strikers, like Gloria Hernández, believed that the job action would be easy, exciting, and quick.[5] This was not the case. Her daughter was born on September 4, 1991, seventeen days before the strike began. Two weeks after giving birth, Hernández decided to join the picket line. Maintaining this picket line required much planning. Employees had the option of marching during one of four shifts: from 12 A.M. to 6 A.M., from 6 A.M. to 12 P.M., from 12 P.M. to 6 P.M., or from 6 P.M. to 12 A.M.[6] Many Latinas with families had to take into consideration their spouses' and children's work and school schedules. Moreover, many strikers had to find employment in other casinos or elsewhere to supplement the 200 dollar stipend that the Culinary Union paid them every week for the duration of the strike.

Both Muñiz and Hernández worked down the street from the Frontier at the Stardust Hotel and Casino. Finding employment in other casinos during this period was not difficult. According to Eugene Moehring and Michael Green, between 1970 and 2000, the Strip was the "major force" advancing the growth of the city. By the 1990s, the Strip was a world tourist destination, attracting visitors from around the world to its megaresorts.[7] More than 25,000

[5] Gloria Hernández, interview by Maribel Estrada Calderón, Nathalie Martinez, and Rodrigo Vasquez, December 7, 2018, Latinx Voices of Southern Nevada, UNLV Special Collections, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

[6] Elodia Muñiz, interview by Maribel Estrada Calderón, February 15, 2019, Latinx Voices of Southern Nevada Oral History Project, UNLV Special Collections, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

[7] Eugene Moehring and Michael S. Green, *Las Vegas: A Centennial History* (Reno: University of Nevada, 2005, 205.

people worked at the new resorts that opened in the late 1980s and early 1990s.[8] This created a labor shortage, which meant that casinos in need of employees quickly hired any Frontier strikers in search of jobs. This made it easier for Muñiz, Hernández, and others to work in their desired casino departments. Muñiz continued as a guest room attendant and Hernández as a restaurant hostess. In the mornings, Muñiz left her children with her husband, who would take them to school.[9] She worked at the Stardust from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. and then crossed the street to join the picket line at the Frontier. By adapting to their new and changing schedules, strikers maintained a constant picket line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Often, employees were not the only people who had to rearrange their daily activities. The children of strikers frequently marched with their parents. By the beginning of the strike, Muñiz had already brought her two children, a 10-year old boy and a 7-year old girl, from Mexico.[10] Sometimes her children joined her on the picket line. At first, they did not understand why their mother refused to enter the Frontier. Having recently learned about how strikes could bring positive changes to workplaces, Muñiz explained to them that she did not cross the picket line so that they could have health insurance. She told them that if they became sick, she needed the resources that they were fighting for to purchase medicine for them. After she explained this, her children agreed to participate because they understood that they would also receive benefits if the Frontier signed the union contract. With this explanation, Muñiz taught her children that walking out of the workplace was acceptable as long as workers were fighting to acquire the resources that they needed to remain healthy. In taking her children to the strike, Muñiz combined her duty as a service worker with her responsibility as a mother. Like other Latinas

[8] James P. Kraft, *Vegas at Odds: Labor Conflict in a Leisure Economy, 1960-1985* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 204.

[9] Muñiz, interview.

[10] Muñiz, interview.

and women of other marginalized groups who participated in strikes throughout the U.S., Muñiz also took her family to the picket line in order to look after them while participating in the strike.[11]

On the picket line, strikers and their families encountered a wide range of obstacles. From the beginning of the strike, marchers faced acts of violence and physical resistance. Some of the first police arrests of workers arose from the Elardis' claim that strikers did not have the legal permission to march on the family's private property, the Frontier.[12] For this reason, the Culinary and Bartenders unions asked a federal judge to issue a temporary restraining order that would stop Las Vegas police officers from arresting strikers for picketing on private property. The judge, however, rejected the request, arguing that the National Labor Review Board was the only agency that could decide whether strikers could organize on private property. A district judge later ruled that strikers could not trespass onto private property.[13]

Despite the judge's decision, union leaders and strikers chose to march on the Elardis' private property and stage a large demonstration.[14] The public sidewalks, where they could legally picket, were too far away from the Frontier's doors for picketers to be able to engage with Frontier customers. So, on September 29, 1991, strikers engaged in civil disobedience, trespassed onto private property, and blocked the southbound lanes of Las Vegas Boulevard. About 100 workers linked their arms and sat down in the middle of the street for about an hour, and more than 1,200 others stood in front of the Frontier. That evening, police officers arrested 98 demonstrators and held them at the Clark County Detention Center. This reveals the trust that

[11] Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows,* 78.

[12] Al Tobin, "Restraining Order Denied for Strike," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* September 27, 1991, sec. 1B.

[13] Dave Palermo, "98 Union Members Arrested Near Frontier," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* September 29, 1991, sec. 1A.

[14] Dave Palermo, "More Arrests Anticipated at Frontier," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* September 28, 1991, sec. 1B.

workers had in both Culinary Union leaders and their co-workers. Individuals were willing to risk their freedom for other workers. Those who participated in this demonstration trusted that if they were arrested, those who were free would take the necessary steps to liberate them.

Strikers commonly met violence at the hands of the police. Sometimes strikers confronted the officers by engaging in civil disobedience, as they did on September 29; at other times, police failed to protect strikers and treated them in inhumane ways.[15] During the strike, police arrested strikers and locked them inside school buses on hot summer days. Then they turned on the heaters and let the strikers sit in the buses for hours. On other occasions, however, strikers planned to be arrested by engaging in civil disobedience. This usually drew police officers, who arrested the union members who refused to move. Because she engaged in civil disobedience, police officers arrested Hernández five times.[16] As she remembered these moments, Hernández stated that she never felt afraid of being detained. Even in the face of arrest, Hernández participated because she trusted that Culinary Union leaders and members would help her regain her freedom.

To Hernández, her fellow strikers and the organizers had become her family, her *hermanos*.[17] She trusted them not only to secure her release, but also to look out for her household if the police delayed releasing her. With the support networks that Latinas created within the Culinary Union, they felt that they could break county laws and confront the police. In addition to fighting the Elardis, Muñiz and Hernández's stories reveal that Latinas also had to fight law enforcement. Therefore, the Frontier and its surroundings became contested spaces, as

[15] *One Day Longer: The Story of the Frontier Strike*, DVD.
[16] Hernández, interview
[17] Hernández, interview.

distinct parties attempted to maintain control over sidewalks and streets. Workers also took their fight beyond the Strip sidewalks to gain the support of the local community.

While strikers had one another's support, many local residents neither understood nor approved of the strikers' actions. In October, local residents reported to the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* that they feared the strikers.[18] Prior to this report, the Culinary and Bartenders union had sent out fliers to 4,500 Las Vegas residences. Fliers contained a card that asked residents for their signatures pledging that they would not visit the Frontier. One woman reported that she feared that strikers would visit her home if she did not sign that card. After the unions mailed the cards, multiple residents also received phone calls from the strikers. Some residents claimed that union members had verbally abused them. The woman who feared the consequences of not signing the card said that the strikers were "threatening" and "menacing" people who were "liable to hurt her," but then stated that she felt "neutral about the strike."[19] The strikers' tactics did not always come across as friendly or reasonable to Las Vegas locals, yet workers continued to march. Another resident wrote to the editor of the same newspaper to explain that the union's actions made him feel "confused and angry."[20] This person added that the attention media gave to this "mess," referring to the demonstration of September 29, would negatively affect the "reputation of Las Vegas." These two opinions indicate that some local residents were concerned about their own safety, but also about the greater Las Vegas economy. Their concern indicates how significant and well-known the strike had become in its first year.

[18] Jane Ann Morrison, "Union Flier Urges Frontier Boycott," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* October 02, 1991, sec. 1b.

[19] Jane Ann Morrison, "Union Flier Urges Frontier Boycott," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* October 02, 1991, sec. 1b.

[20] "Letters from our Readers," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* October 04, 1991, sec. 10b.

From the beginning of the strike, strikers and their family members fought against the Elardis together. Besides being employees at a casino, some Frontier workers were also parents and spouses. They were members of families and had to fulfill those responsibilities while also fulfilling their roles as workers and strikers. Maintaining a 24-hour picket line, then, was not an easy task. Some parents, such as the waitress Marlene Nacar, took their children to the picket line. In October of 1991, Nacar's daughter, Jazmina, was only three years old.[21] Despite her young age, Jazmina endured the often harsh weather conditions on the picket line with her mother. Some children were old enough to hold signs and march alongside their parents. Other children who attended the strike found different ways to pass the time. Some, for instance, drew and colored on printed photographs of Margaret Elardi.[22] With or without knowing, these kids symbolically engaged in acts of resistance by drawing on images of their parents' employer.

Parents like Muñiz did not tell their children to grab picket signs. Children picked them up because they wanted to participate in the same way that their parents did. Many children, like Hernández's daughter and two older children, grew up on the picket lines, so they quickly learned union chants and how to maintain a picket.[23] Hernández used this strike to teach her children about human rights, labor rights, and the values that they should uphold. She told her children that sometimes they had to fight to make their dreams come true. They grew up watching and listening to their mother speak in front of large crowds at union rallies. Sometimes Hernández spoke at these rallies with her daughter in her arms and her other two children standing near her. Hernández not only gave her children advice on how to fight and defend their rights, but also showed them how to do it. She taught them that they had to respect and never

[21] Jeff Burbank, "Frontier Strikers Try to Cope," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* October 27, 1991, sec. 1B.
[22] Jeff Burbank, "Frontier Strikers Try to Cope," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* October 27, 1991, sec. 1B.
[23] Hernández, interview.

cross a picket line because the people striking were fighting to protect their dignity.[24] Crossing that line, to Hernández, meant overlooking and disrespecting others' humanity. For her children, Hernández framed the strike as a protest for human and civil rights so that they could understand the walkout in a broader context.

Other mothers, such as Mirna Preciado, who had worked as a waitress at the Frontier for nine years before going on strike, said that she taught her children that the strike was not only for Frontier employees but "for the whole Las Vegas."[25] Preciado was aware of the city-wide impact that the strike would have, and she viewed herself as an agent of social and political change. Preciado knew that if the Elardis managed to do away with the union contract, soon casino managers across the valley would follow their lead. She understood that union contracts in other properties were also at stake. By participating in the strike, she ensured that current and future Las Vegas service workers would be able to receive union workplace benefits. She knew that she and her coworkers had the power to transform labor relations within the city and she wanted her children to understand and internalize this message. While caring for their children, picketers had to create child-friendly explanations to persuade them to endure on the picket line.

For many parents, having to take care of their children while marching was difficult, so strikers created ways to look after their children collectively. Parents could not always afford babysitters during school vacations, so they took their children to the picket lines. Hernández recalled that during the summer, the children who joined the picket line would often cross the street to the Desert Inn Hotel and Casino.[26] There, they would go up and down in an elevator for hours. Meanwhile, Hernández and other parents marched and did their best to supervise the

[24] Hernández, interview.
[25] *One Day Longer: The Story of the Frontier Strike*, DVD.
[26] Hernández, interview.

children from across the street. When organizers met at the union headquarters, they used a small building, which they called the Little House, to take care of their children. The Little House had a kitchen where members prepared sandwiches for picketers. Sometimes, a parent volunteered to stay there and babysit the children while their parents picketed or attended meetings. This building held a special place in Hernández's memory because it was where many of the strikers' children grew up. Together Hernández and other parents ensured that the children had memorable childhoods, regardless of the ongoing strike. During the end-of-the-year holidays, Thanksgiving and Christmas, strikers took turns meeting at the union headquarters to ensure that their children received holiday meals and presents.[27] To celebrate the children's birthdays, strikers organized one large celebration for multiple birthdays. In this way, strikers attended to their duties as both union members and parents. Hernández, Muñiz, their coworkers, and all of their children did not know how long they were going to have to participate in *la huelga*, as they called the strike.

Beyond the boundaries of the picket line, workers and their families encountered other difficulties. The Zavala family, for example, experienced economic issues that forced them to change their lifestyle. Ismael Zavala worked as a fry cook at Margarita's, the Mexican-food restaurant inside the Frontier, before the strike. He earned $12 hourly. Once the strike started, the culinary union paid picketers $200 per week for them to march at least six hours per day. Strikers had to manage providing for their own and their families' needs with a significantly reduced wage. With this wage, Zavala and his wife could no longer afford their $550 monthly, two-bedroom apartment on East Tropicana Avenue.[28] They had to move in with his brother-in-law and pay him $280 in rent per month. The strike also affected workers socially, as they no longer

[27] Hernández, interview.
[28] Jeff Burbank, "Frontier Strikers Try to Cope," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* October 27, 1991, sec. 1B.

had much time to spend with their families. Zavala could no longer take hikes at Mount Charleston or go to dances with his wife. Many workers had to take part-time jobs doing yard work or auto repair. Another worker, Ruben Villa, a 26-year-old waiter at Margarita's, also faced economic hurdles a result of the strike.[29] He and his wife had trouble making their two car payments and paying their mortgage. His wife had to supplement their income by becoming a dishwasher at another hotel. Meanwhile, he began to work as an auto mechanic. The participation of one or more family members in the strike affected the rest of the family.

While the strike took an economic toll on the pockets of some, other families fared better with the strike pay than with their earnings at the Frontier. For food server Salvodore Reza, for example, the Culinary paycheck was slightly higher than his regular check at the Frontier.[30] He had earned $280 every other week plus approximately $80 in tips. A young dishwasher, Sylvestre Martinez, earned $320 every other week, with no tips. They both voted to go on strike because they would earn from $50 to $100 more if the Frontier signed a union contract. Therefore, while some families struggled to cope economically during the strike, others found that the Culinary Union paid them higher wages for marching and picketing outside the Frontier than the Elardis did for washing dishes, serving food, and providing other services to customers.

Strikers were not the only ones who had to make economic changes. With a work stoppage involving more than 500 workers, the Elardis also had to figure out how to continue running their business. To solve the labor shortage, the Elardis hired permanent replacement workers or "scabs."[31] The family not only refused to sign a union contract, but also refused to wait for strikers to return to work. According to the Culinary's secretary-treasurer, overall

[29] Jeff Burbank, "Frontier Strikers Try to Cope," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* October 27, 1991, sec. 1B.
[30] Jeff Burbank, "Frontier Strikers Try to Cope," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* October 27, 1991, sec. 1B.
[31] Jeff Burbank, "Frontier Strikers Try to Cope," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* October 27, 1991, sec. 1B.

business at the Frontier was down by approximately 50 percent and the hotel's occupancy was about 40 percent in October 1991.[32] Before the strike, union representatives calculated that the hotel's typical occupancy stood at between 70 and 80 percent. The casino did remain full of gamblers. Nonetheless, the efforts of workers and their families definitely pressured the Elardi family to take action.

In response to the strike, the Elardis also set up six video cameras directly aimed at the picketers.[33] Wanting to sue and file complaints against the Culinary Union in an effort to put an end to the strike, the Elardis used any footage of the picketers being violent as evidence against their former workers in legal proceedings. On one occasion, the Elardis' attorney claimed that they had a videorecording of union members yelling racial and religious slurs at Frontier customers. This attorney also described the union members as "obnoxious and stupid."[34] That the Elardis needed to compile evidence against the union suggests that they eagerly sought a compelling reason to take the Culinary Union to court in order to put an end to the strike. If they were successful, the Elardis would have been able to avoid adopting a Culinary Union labor contract. Despite these actions, Frontier workers did not give up the fight.

Although the Elardis attempted to terminate the strike, strikers managed to continue demanding workplace benefits and better working conditions into the following year. In January 1992, the Culinary Union planned a protest march to California in support of U.S. Senate bill 55, which aimed to make illegal the permanent replacement of striking workers.[35] The union wanted

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[32] Jeff Burbank, "Frontier Strikers Try to Cope," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* October 27, 1991, sec. 1B.

[33] Jeff Burbank, "Frontier Says Picket Lines Gross," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* November 06, 1991, sec. 1b.

[34] Jeff Burbank, "Frontier Says Picket Lines Gross," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* November 06, 1991, sec. 1b.

[35] Jeff Burbank, "Unions Plan Protest March to California," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* Jan 03, 1992; "Locals Greet Vegas Marchers," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, January 23, 1992: A3, col. 5.

workers to make a nearly 300-mile walk from Las Vegas to Los Angeles to raise awareness about the measure and defend the right to strike. If the bill passed, workers across the country would be able to walk out to protest their workplace without fearing that they could lose their jobs. California was an important destination for Frontier workers because nearly 7 million of the more than 20 million tourists who visited Las Vegas in 1990 came from there. After planning to march down Interstate 15 from Nevada to California, fourteen union members embarked on January 4, 1992.[36] Union member Glen Arnodo stated, "We undertook the march in the spirit of Martin Luther King and Cesar Chavez to outlaw the use of permanent replacements, or as we say, scabs."[37] His explanation indicates that union members understood their battle to be part of or closely related to the American civil rights and labor rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s. They knew that disputes over civil and labor rights could not be settled easily, so they willingly marched to achieve their goals.

During this demonstration, marchers had to leave their families behind in Las Vegas.[38] Protester Sonja Washington, for example, had a difficult time explaining to her four-year-old daughter why she had to leave for California. Washington told her daughter that she had to go on a march with the Culinary Union and that they were going to take their picket line far away. During the march, Washington told a reporter that she missed her daughter. Parents sacrificed their home lives because they knew that the issues they fought for would benefit their families in the long run. Workers did not want to give up on better wages, a pension, and health insurance.

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[36] Marcia Pledger and, Jeff Burbank. "Protesters to Stay Away from Interstate 15," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* Jan 07, 1992, sec. 3b.

[37] Associated Press, "Union Members Rally in Support of Strikers," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* Jan 18, 1992, sec. 3a.

[38] Bob Baker, "Union Workers' March is an Uphill Battle Labor: Las Vegas Hotel Strikers Encounter Bad Weather and Red Tape on Protest Trek to L.A.," *Los Angeles Times,* January 07, 1992, sec. 3.

When they arrived in Los Angeles, 2,000 California union members greeted the Las Vegas protesters at a rally.[39] Solidarity among workers existed across state borders.

Cross-state union collaboration and support helped the Las Vegas workers bring attention to their struggle. Frontier strikers increasingly gained the support of workers across the United States as the strike became nationally known. Furthermore, the collaboration reveals that these strikers had the power to transform local social movements into national movements. They turned their picket line into a cross-state-border labor movement. As the march began, the chief negotiator for hotel workers in the city told a reporter, "This is the labor movement at its best. A human rights struggle. This is more than a typical wage dispute."[40] Las Vegas hospitality workers managed to expose the economic circumstances of those whose labor powered one of the most famous centers of entertainment in the world. They made it clear that the tourist industry was more than just extravagant statues, attractive exhibits and shows, fancy dining venues, glittering lights, and crystal chandeliers.[41] The tourist industry also featured labor exploitation, low wages, financial difficulties, safety hazards, and arguments between workers and employers. Workers demanding a decent wage, a pension, and health care services kept the Las Vegas Strip running for tourists to enjoy.

In March 1992, the strike hit the six-month mark.[42] To celebrate this milestone, 3,000 union members attended rallies at the Frontier. For six months, workers had to manage with low incomes, but they continued marching because they wanted the wages and benefits that the Elardis took from them. Even though Emma Lawerance, a guest room attendant, had to cancel

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[39] Associated Press, "Union Members Rally in Support of Strikers," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* Jan 18, 1992, sec. 3a.

[40] Bob Baker, "Union Workers' March is an Uphill Battle Labor: Las Vegas Hotel Strikers Encounter Bad Weather and Red Tape on Protest Trek to L.A.," *Los Angeles Times,* January 07, 1992, sec. 3.

[41] Eugene P. Moehring and Michael S. Green, *Las Vegas: A Centennial History* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005), 205-210.

[42] Jeff Burbank, "3,000 Cheer Frontier Strikers," *Las Vegas Review-Journal,* March 22, 1992, sec. 1b.

her annual vacation to New Orleans, she persisted because "what the Frontier took from [her was] worth all the time [she] spent" on the picket line.[43] This explains why strikers endured with the wages that the union paid them, and coped with the violence from locals and tourists and the extreme weather conditions of the Las Vegas desert for so long. Some did not leave the Frontier strike and search for other jobs at casinos with union labor contracts because they had invested too much time, effort, and other resources into the stoppage. They did not want to have marched in vain, so they continued to maintain the picket line and organize demonstrations.

On Labor Day, September 6, 1992, Frontier strikers staged a peaceful demonstration to bring attention to their cause.[44] Once again, strikers wearing t-shirts that read, "Justice for Workers – Labor Day 92-Las Vegas," sat down in the middle of the street to block traffic on Las Vegas Boulevard South for about two hours. While some protesters blocked traffic, others waved American flags and shouted their labor demands through a megaphone.[45] This demonstration resulted in the arrest of between 170 and 200 strikers for "unlawful assembly and obstruction of a roadway."[46] Police officers first arrested the secretary-treasurer, Jim Arnold, who gave the strikers a thumbs up as police officers took him away.[47] With this sign, Arnold let the rest of the protestors know not only that he was going to be well, but also that workers had succeeded in bringing attention to their demands. Kathy Espin, an employee at the Stardust Hotel and Casino located near the Frontier, described the protest as "festive" after seeing the flags and hearing the

[43] Jeff Burbank, "3,000 Cheer Frontier Strikers," *Las Vegas Review-Journal,* March 22, 1992, sec. 1b.
[44] Robert Macy, "Police Arrest 220 in Peaceful Rally," *The Daily Spectrum* (Saint George, Utah). September 8, 1992, sec. 4.
[45] David Ferrell, "179 Arrested at Sit-in Outside Las Vegas Hotel," *The Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, California), September 8, 1992, sec. 113.
[46] Robert Macy, "Police Arrest 220 in Peaceful Rally," *The Daily Spectrum* (Saint George, Utah). September 8, 1992, sec. 4.
[47] "Union Supporters Block Las Vegas Strip: 179 Arrested At Labor Day Strike," *Las Vegas Sentinel Voice,* September 10, 1992.

cheers of strikers and supporters for every member the police detained.[48] Their protest was so large that the police department had to call more police officers to the scene. The Elardis were not happy with the demonstration.

Tom Elardi, the Frontier's general manager, called the protest a "circus."[49] Journalists for the *Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice,* the city's only African American community newspaper, reported that at one point during the day, Tom Elardi stepped outside onto the sidewalk near the Frontier's entrance to watch the demonstration.[50] While he stood there, he told a reporter that he believed everything the union made its members do was a crime. The *Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice* reporter, however, revealed that those protesters who heard Elardi's comments "threw the same charges back at him" and ordered him to go back to the bargaining table and adopt a fair union contract.[51] Despite the raucousness of strikers who participated in civil disobedience, marches, and picket lines, the Elardis continued to refuse to negotiate a contract with the Culinary and other unions. They constantly criticized and tried to defame the protesters and their tactics. The previous year, for instance, in a Frontier advertisement, Tom Elardi called the strikers "dumb bunnies."[52] The advertisement contained a rabbit "patterned after a character used in advertisements for batteries."[53] The Elardis sought to protect their image and their business by attempting to change

[48] David Ferrell, "179 Arrested at Sit-in Outside Las Vegas Hotel," *The Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, California*)*, September 8, 1992, sec. 113.

[49] Robert Macy, "Police Arrest 220 in Peaceful Rally," *The Daily Spectrum* (Saint George, Utah). September 8, 1992, sec. 4.

[50] "Union Supporters Block Las Vegas Strip: 179 Arrested At Labor Day Strike," *Las Vegas Sentinel Voice,* September 10, 1992.

[51] "Union Supporters Block Las Vegas Strip: 179 Arrested At Labor Day Strike," *Las Vegas Sentinel Voice,* September 10, 1992.

[52] Review-Journal, "Frontier Strikers Upset with `dumb Bunny' Ad," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* Nov 02, 1991, sec. 4b.

[53] Review-Journal, "Frontier Strikers Upset with `dumb Bunny' Ad," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* Nov 02, 1991, sec. 4b.

the public's perception of the Culinary and other unions involved. These efforts, however, did not deter the strikers.

Sixteen months after the strike started, Frontier workers and their families continued to fight the Elardis. Strikers needed as much emotional and economic support as possible to endure the harsh conditions that they encountered on the picket line, including bad weather. "Cold weather, heat, wind—we experienced all types of weather conditions during those six years, four months, and ten days," recalled Elodia Muñiz.[54] One windy day while she held a picket sign as she marched in front of the Frontier's doors, a strong gust of wind blew the sign out of her hand. The sign hit her ear, which turned the side of her face red with pain. Yet Muñiz continued to march. She knew that she had to endure to acquire that contract. Often having to balance two jobs and their responsibilities as family and community members, strikers did not always have the time or money even to prepare their daily meals.

As time passed, these families gained some new supporters. In 1993, William G. Bennett, the owner of the Circus Circus hotel and casino and its corporate entity, sympathized with the protesters and showed solidarity by providing them with hot meals from a pink and white food truck that he sent to the picket line.[55] Inside the truck, a chef prepared three meals a day for the strikers. Bennett spent $800 per day on this project. In this way, Frontier workers relied on others' support to endure through the strike. To this day, Muñiz and other coworkers are grateful for Bennett's generosity.[56] Many strikers needed financial assistance and having those meals on site helped to alleviate the costs of the work stoppage. They received support from workers and employers in neighboring casinos and the solidarity of members of other unions.

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[54] Muñiz, interview.

[55] Stephen Franklin, "Hotel Union Gambles it Will Win Out in Strike Against Las Vegas Casino," *Chicago Tribune,* Jan 29, 1993, sec. A1.

[56] Muñiz, interview.

Collaborations with both out-of-state and in-state union members continued for the duration of the strike. In 1991, as the strike began, members of the United Automobile, Aerospace, and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW) showed their solidarity by participating in the picket line. UAW members marched and yelled, "No contract, no peace," alongside Frontier strikers.[57] In April 1992, members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) who traveled to a convention at the Las Vegas Hilton joined Frontier workers at a rally. Together they demanded that managers and corporations across the U.S. protect workers' jobs.[58] In July 1992, approximately 3,000 members of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and five other unions joined Frontier strikers during a rally and a march from the Las Vegas Convention Center to the Frontier Hotel.[59] Additionally, AFSCME donated $25,000 to Frontier workers. The state's public employees demonstrated that they supported Frontier workers' battle against the Elardis by showing up and providing monetary assistance.

As the Frontier workers raised awareness of their cause and gained more supporters across the country, federal officials became increasingly concerned with this labor dispute. In October 1993, the House Subcommittee on Labor-Management Relations of the Committee on Education and Labor held an oversight hearing on labor relations in the entertainment and gaming industry that focused on the Frontier strike.[60] The committee met in the Thomas and Mack Center Board Room at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, to learn "how labor management relations [were] evolving throughout the country."[61] In July, Culinary Union

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[57] Alan L. Adler, "UAW Works for Solidarity in Upcoming Labor Talks." *Journal Record,* Mar 12, 1993.

[58] Abdullah, Muhammad. "Vice Presidential Hopeful Rev. Jesse Jackson Addresses Thousands at Frontier (SEIU) Convention as Convention Continues," *Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice,* April 23, 1992.

[59] "AFSCME Shows Support for Frontier Strikers," *Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice,* July 2, 1992.

[60] Chairman Pat Williams, *Oversight Hearing on Labor Relations, Day 1, 103th Cong., 1st sess., October 1, 1993, 25, 103-79.* Hereafter cited as *Hearing,* 1.

[61] Chairman Pat Williams, *Hearing,* 1.

representatives speculated that the House wanted to "put the Frontier in the spotlight in the drive to give states more rights to consider labor law violations when dealing with a heavily regulated industry, such as gaming."[62] The day of the hearing, October 1, 1993, the subcommittee indeed placed the Frontier in the spotlight, but the Elardis declined the government officials' "repeated invitations" to appear at the hearing.[63] Despite their absence, union representatives and Frontier workers presented highly persuasive testimony describing their experiences as hotel industry workers and as members of families who also depended on the benefits workers had earned at the Frontier. Pat Williams, a Montana congressman and chairman of the committee, argued that the "Frontier strike represents one of America's most outstanding failures in labor-management relations."[64]

Two panels, one comprised of workers and their representatives and another made up of public officials who spoke about how the strike could affect future labor laws, presented their opinions. The first panel was made up of John W. Wilhelm, the Western Regional Director of Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE); Richard G. McCracken, the Counsel to the Culinary Workers Local Union 226 and Bartenders Local Union 165; Ray Turner, a Frontier employee of 21 years; and Gloria Hernández, a Frontier employee of 5 years. Referring to Las Vegas as a "union town," Wilhelm argued that the Elardi family "threaten[ed] to set off a dangerous chain reaction by emboldening other Las Vegas employers who might try to trample on their employees' rights."[65] Wilhelm defended his argument with legal and economic evidence showing the importance of maintaining good labor-management relations in Nevada's gaming industry. He added that workers were not the only people who

[62] "House Subcommittee will Hear Strike Issues," *Elko Daily Free Press,* July 22, 1993, sec.1.
[63] Chairman Pat Williams, *Hearing*, 1.
[64] Chairman Pat Williams, *Hearing,* 1.
[65] "Statement of John W. Wilhelm," *Hearing,* 6..

could see the Elardis' wrongdoing; corporate leaders could, too. Wilhelm used Bennett's support of Frontier strikers to prove this. Finally, he stated that he wanted to hear the "representatives of the people who really matter[ed] the most" in this labor dispute, which were the Frontier strikers.[66] Wilhelm recognized that the stories of Frontier workers were of great importance at the hearing.

When their turn came to explain the dispute at the Frontier, workers told stories that centered their families. Ray Turner, a Las Vegas resident since 1964, had worked at the Frontier as a sauce cook for 21 years.[67] He explained that when Howard Hughes's Summa Corporation purchased the Frontier, workers "became a family" that worked together and "had very little problems."[68] They referred to their workplace as the "friendly Frontier." All this changed when the Elardis purchased the property and took everything from them. Besides worrying about his Frontier family, Turner also worried about the family he had at home. He had children who relied on his financial contributions. He defended his right to higher wages, stating, "We have to send our kids to school. We have to give them an education, we have to have a decent job, decent wages to do that because education is very expensive."[69] His statement demonstrates that his family was the driving force behind his fight for better wages and working conditions. To further support his claim, Turner added, "We would like to be able to, when we get sick or when our children get sick, to be able to take them to a doctor or to a hospital, whatever the case may be."[70] Wanting to protect himself and his family, Turner continued to fight for access to

[66] "Statement of John W. Wilhelm," *Hearing,* 9.
[67] "Statement of Ray Turner," *Hearing,* 24.
[68] "Statement of Ray Turner," *Hearing,* 23.
[69] "Statement of Ray Turner," *Hearing,* 23.
[70] "Statement of Ray Turner," *Hearing,* 23.

healthcare. For this same reason, many other strikers continued to fight, even if they only received $200 a week and lost their homes and cars in the process.

Gloria Hernández, the only woman who testified as a representative of the Culinary Union, on the other hand, articulated her concerns in a way that shed light on her identity as a Frontier worker, a mother, an immigrant, and a Latina. Before testifying, Hernández, the panel's final witness, thanked the committee for giving her the opportunity to speak and for their willingness to listen to her.[71] She testified with confidence that the committee would be able to address her concerns. She knew that her presence and testimony would lead to change, and she thanked the committee for all that they would do for her, her family, and the rest of the strikers. Her statement not only reveals why she participated in the strike, but also outlines her motives for immigrating to the U.S., her past experience as a union member, her family's health needs, and her thoughts on the Elardis' refusal to sign the union contract. Hernández stated:

> I am a Frontier worker for two years before this strike came, shortly after the Elardis took over. I come to the United States in 1985 for the opportunities for job and—my husband and I—and for a fight for freedom in the United States.

She went on:

> I have always believed to belong to a union. I work in Mexico for a union for government for 10 years. And I know what important it is to be in the union. The Elardi's have always treated their employees like horrible. *They don't understand we are human.* They never demonstrate any respect for us, and they try to broke the law in an effort to destroy our union.[72]

Her statement demonstrates that her immigration experience significantly influenced her decision to go on strike. She had not moved to the United States to be treated inhumanely or to be disrespected by her managers. The working conditions that she encountered at the Frontier did not match the opportunities that she thought she would find in the U.S. For Hernández, this

[71] "Statement of Gloria Hernández," *Hearing,* 25.
[72] "Statement of Gloria Hernández," *Hearing,* 25.

struggle against the Elardis was more than just a fight over fair wages. It was a battle for her economic freedom. Her statement shows that immigrants transferred the knowledge of collective bargaining that they had acquired in their home country to American workplaces. Hernández used her experience as a labor union member in Mexico to explain her support of the Culinary Union in the United States. According to Hernández, a union contract could ensure that employers treated every worker with respect, as all humans should be treated. Also describing the importance of providing for her family, Hernández argued that she stood up against the Elardis because she and other parents, especially single parents, needed higher wages to provide for their children.[73] She stated that the Elardis' offenses made her "job with [her] kids [much] harder."[74]

After identifying herself as an immigrant and human being worthy of respect, Hernández described how the Elardis violated the contract and explained why the benefits listed on that contract mattered to workers and their families. She testified:

> For example, one day they took our pension…They don't want to pay also the health and welfare. We need health and welfare for ourselves and for our family. It is hard for me to understand why the Elardis are allowed to break the law and without punishment. In my neighborhood, if you break the law, they expect to go to jail for a long time.

She went on:

> A large percentage of the strikers are Latinos, and many are single parent[s] trying to raise our children with decent values and good standard of living. We also want our children to have a sense of pride about themselves and their families.

She concluded, "We appreciate anything you can do for us. I know you have the power. I know you have the key. And thank you for being here."[75] Hernández wanted to provide for her family and ensure that future generations would be proud of their family's trajectory in the U.S. She

[73] "Statement of Gloria Hernández," *Hearing,* 25.
[74] "Statement of Gloria Hernández," *Hearing,* 25.
[75] "Statement of Gloria Hernández," *Hearing,* 25.

wanted the social and economic freedom to earn fair wages, have accessible health care and a pension, and raise a family. She wanted the same for her coworkers.

In 1990, more than 38 percent of the 39,964 laborers in Clark County identified as "Hispanic" were employed in service occupations.[76] This mirrored national trends. The majority of Latinxs in the U.S. labor force worked in food preparation and service industries. In fact, that year, the U.S. Labor Department estimated that nationally, "one in every four waiters or waitresses, or assistants [were]" Latinxs. [77] Hernández's statement reflects this trend, and demonstrates that she knew the strike was also a battle to defend the economic rights of her Latinx community. Her experience as a member of a Mexican labor union motivated and helped her to defend her right and that of her coworkers to economic citizenship. All of this made her one of the most vocal Latina leaders during the strike.

Others echoed Turner's and Hernández's statement. So, Wilhelm, the Western Regional Director of HERE, added:

> This group of 540 [strikers] is just like all of the many thousands of other people who serve the customers that come from all over the country and over the world that keep this town going…There are men, but there are lots of women. There is a significant number of Latino workers, as Ms. Hernández indicated. There is a significant number of African-American workers. There is a significant number of white workers. There [are] lots of single parents. Nobody else in town has a labor – has a strike like this.[78]

With this, Wilhelm argued that both the Elardis' actions and the strike affected families, including single-parent households, of multiple ethnic communities, and that the unfair practices disproportionately affected women. For example, Maria Watson, who worked as a waiter at the Frontier for thirteen years, was a single mother of two children.[79] She marched five days a week

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[76] Thomas Rodriguez, *A Profile of Hispanics in Nevada: 1997 (An Agenda for Progress),* (Las Vegas: Latin Chamber of Commerce of Nevada, Inc., 1997), 66-69.

[77] Rodriguez, *A Profile of Hispanics in Nevada: 1997,* 66.

[78] John Wilhelm, *Hearing*, 31.

[79] "Strike at Frontier Hotel about to Enter Third Year," *Elko Daily Press,* September 20, 1993, sec. 1.

for six hours a day because she wanted a "fair" contract for herself and for her coworkers.[80] She did not want to give up her fight because she sought to ensure that she received what she and others had the right to earn. Eventually, the hearing ended after committee members stated that they needed to take the arguments they heard back to Congress in order to analyze them and reach a solution.[81] Despite the many challenges that they encountered on the picket line and at home, women, men, and their children kept the strike running for years to come.

During the arduous years, between the beginning of the strike and 1993, Frontier workers gained support and solidarity from workers from across the nation. Frontier strikers also managed to bring local, national, and governmental attention to their dispute. While the federal government's involvement did not immediately settle the broken labor-management relations at the Frontier, the congressional hearing allowed Culinary Union members to present their side of the story effectively and succinctly after the Elardis had attempted to portray the strikers in a negative light. Although strikers encountered challenge after challenge, they also created the familial relationships that they needed to survive on the picket line.

[80] "Strike at Frontier Hotel about to Enter Third Year," *Elko Daily Press,* September 20, 1993, sec. 1.
[81] James Bilbray, *Hearing,* 50.

Chapter 3

Women Lead the Labor Movement

In 2000, historian Eugene Moehring described Las Vegas as a "job center for women."[1] Women working in Las Vegas typically found employment in the hotel-gaming and entertainment industries. In the late twentieth century, of the more than 160,000 jobs available in these sectors, women held nearly half of them. The histories of women who served as union leaders and participated in the Frontier strike shed light on the gendered nature of labor in this sector. Working-class women of color and their families were crucial players in this fight against the Elardis, the owners of the Frontier Hotel and Casino.[2] For this reason, in this chapter, I describe the latter part of the strike, focusing on the leadership activities of women of color, generally, and Latinas, more specifically. Besides forming and maintaining familial relationships to overcome struggles on the picket line, Latin American women from different walks of life taught each other how to achieve their socioeconomic goals. These leaders helped other Latinas become the future leaders of the labor movement.

From the beginning, working women of color were at the forefront of the Frontier labor dispute. Two of the women who held leadership positions in the Culinary Union Local 226 at the time of the strike were Hattie Canty and Geoconda Argüello-Kline.[3] Canty, an African American

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[1] Eugene P. Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas, 1930-2000* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000), 284.

[2] Lynn Bolles, "Forever Indebted To Women: As They Carry The Burden Of Globalization," *Caribbean Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (December 2009): 15-23.

[3] Sara Mosle, "How the Maids Fought Back," *The New Yorker*, February 1996. Some works that shed light on the history of gender, unionization, and women of color are Ileen DeVault, *United Apart: Gender and the Rise of Craft Unionism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Monica Perales, *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing It Out: Waitresses and Their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992) and *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

woman and mother who moved to Las Vegas in the late 1960s, worked as a maid at the Thunderbird and then the Maxim Hotel in the early 1970s.[4] Canty later became an active member of Local 226 and participated in strikes at various hotels because as a single mother, she understood that many workers relied on workplace benefits to provide for their kids and families. In 1990, the secretary-treasurer of the Culinary Union asked Canty to run for the position of president of Local 226, and in May, union members officially elected her.[5] According to Las Vegas's Black newspaper, she became "one of the few African American women in the nation who served as president of a major labor union local."[6] Her experience working as a maid shaped who she became as a leader.

In an oral history, Canty revealed that when she started working as a maid in the 1970s, most of the maids were Black.[7] By the 1980s, most of the workers in the hospitality industry were Latinx.[8] The workers in this sector, then, were predominantly women of color. Canty wanted to ensure that more Black women had access to decent paying jobs. She stated, "I'd much rather see a Black woman in a union job than to see her in a nonunion job, if she got six or seven children, because in that union job she's making a decent salary."[9] Throughout the Frontier strike, Canty joined workers at their rallies and marched alongside them. News reporters at the strike noted that when Canty joined the picket line, they "displayed feelings of endearment

[4] Joanne Goodwin, *Changing the Game: Women at Work in Las Vegas, 1940-1990* (Reno: University of Nevada Press: 2014), 129-136.

[5] Goodwin, *Changing the Game,* 136.

[6] "Union Election Key to Culinary Future," *Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice,* May 13, 1993.

[7] Goodwin, *Changing the Game,* 1.

[8] Goodwin, *Changing the Game,* 129. Most of the historical works on Latinx labor in the U.S. have focused on the agricultural sector. Some of the most notable works are Jose L. Alamillo, *Making Lemonade out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in a California Town, 1880-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); 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, 2001); Devra Anne Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton, and the New Deal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

[9] Goodwin, *Changing the Game,* 140.

towards her."[10] Workers respected and cared for Canty not only because she was the Culinary Union's president, but also because she stood alongside them during the dispute.

Just as Canty wanted to help uplift the Black community in the city, Geoconda Argüello-Kline encouraged Latinx workers to keep fighting for their rights. Serving as the lead organizer on the Frontier picket line, Argüello-Kline had also worked as a housekeeper. Having a Latina as a leader during the strike was not uncommon. In fact, during the twentieth-century, Latinas increasingly played leading roles in labor organizing efforts throughout the nation.[11] Like many other Latinxs in the picket line, Argüello-Kline was an immigrant. Fleeing from the violence of the Nicaraguan revolution, Argüello-Kline and her family immigrated to Florida, where she lived for four years before moving to Nevada in 1983. By the time she moved to Las Vegas, her mother worked at the Hilton as a guest room attendant and her father as a kitchen worker at Harrah's Hotel and Casino. While a guestroom attendant at Fitzgeralds Hotel and Casino, Argüello-Kline met Kevin Kline, a coworker who organized Fitzgeralds employees to go on strike. The two married. Argüello-Kline later became a union organizer in multiple casinos, including the Tropicana, the Horseshoe, Binion's, and the Frontier. Frontier strikers became like her family. Contrary to the widely held view of women as passive historical actors, Latinas, like other American women in the twentieth century, actively strove to overcome economic oppression.[12]

As a mother and worker, Argüello-Kline tried to find jobs at hotels with union contracts because she wanted health benefits to be able to properly look after her three children.[13] In the

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[10] Victor S. Ingram, "Union Outlook Remains Optimistic," *Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice,* September 23, 1993.

[11] 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), xiv.

[12] Vicki L. Ruiz, "Luisa Moreno and Latina Labor Activism," in *Latina Legacies: Identity, Biography, and Community,* ed. Vicki L. Ruiz and Virginia Sanchez Korrol (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)

[13] Sara Mosle, "How the Maids Fought Back," *The New Yorker*, February 1996.

1990s, one of her children suffered from tumors throughout her body. Without the health benefits that union labor contracts provided, Argüello-Kline would not have been able to provide her daughter with the medical care she needed. Argüello-Kline wanted other workers to have access to the same benefits that she and her family had. In an interview with *The New Yorker,* Argüello-Kline stated, "Not until the fight at this hotel [the Frontier] did I understand that we were fighting for the whole community."[14] She understood the snow-ball effect that one broken contract could have on the rest of the city.

As an organizer, Argüello-Kline motivated strikers to practice solidarity. She inspired unity among union members by encouraging them to view and treat one another as family. Argüello-Kline once told them, "When we talk about solidarity, we talk about family…We have to be together."[15] She wanted workers to support one another unconditionally, which is one of the many reasons why Elodia Muñiz and Gloria Hernández held Argüello-Kline in high regard and referred to her as a great person and leader. [16] Argüello-Kline also worked closely with out-of-state labor leaders. On August 14, 1992, Cesar Chavez, who worked with Dolores Huerta to create the National Farm Workers Association and organize agricultural labor strikes across the state of California, visited Las Vegas and led a rally at the Frontier.[17] He picketed alongside Argüello-Kline and other protesters. His solidarity with Latinx and non-Latinx protesters

[14] Sara Mosle, "How the Maids Fought Back," *The New Yorker*, February 1996.

[15] *One Day Longer: The Story of the Frontier Strike*, directed by Amie S. Williams, Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees International Union, and Bal-Maiden Films (Culver City, California: Bal-Maiden Films Production, 1999), DVD.

[16] Gloria Hernández, interview by Maribel Estrada Calderón, Nathalie Martinez, and Rodrigo Vazquez, December 7, 2018, Latinx Voices of Southern Nevada, UNLV Special Collections, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

[17] Culinary Workers Union Local 226, "Photographs of Frontier Rally with Cesar Chavez, Culinary Union, Las Vegas (Nev.), 1992 August 14," PH-00382, UNLV Special Collections, Las Vegas, Nevada; Matthew Garcia, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); *Dolores,* directed by Peter Bratt (5 Stick Films, 2017), https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/films/dolores-huerta/.

demonstrated that he considered the Frontier labor dispute an important moment in American labor and civil rights history. His presence in Las Vegas symbolically united the efforts of California field workers and Las Vegas hospitality employees to combat oppressive workplace conditions. By joining forces with Chavez, Argüello-Kline showed Local 226 members the importance of maintaining solidarity with workers throughout the U.S. She taught strikers that if they showed up for and supported one another as family members do, they could overcome the obstacles they encountered on the picket line.

Nevertheless, strikers faced problems that they could not always easily solve. Protesters often met violence at the hands of tourists and city residents who did not approve of the strike. Sometimes people who opposed the strike walked or drove past the picketers with the intent to harm them. Non-supporters tossed urine, tomatoes, and eggs at the strikers.[18] Culinary Union members chose to be non-violent at all times, however. They had to resist the urge to confront anyone who harmed or attempted to harm them. People threw things at the picket line, yelling at the strikers as they did so. Muñiz remembered other Latinxs yelling, "*Huevones* [lazy people] go back to work!"[19] Not all Latinxs understood or approved of the walkout. Perhaps these Latinxs believed that Latinx strikers damaged the reputation of other Latinxs, making or perpetuating an image of Latinxs as lazy people who did not work. Muñiz and the others marching with her heard a wide range of insults from Latinxs and non-Latinxs, yet they maintained their composure and continued to walk. Sometimes, however, fights did break out.

Hernández recalled that on occasion groups of tourists or a single passerby would physically assault strikers.[20] After these aggressors struck, the rest of the strikers defended the

[18] Hernández, interview; Elodia Muñiz, interview by Maribel Estrada Calderón, February 15, 2019. Latinx Voices of Southern Nevada Oral History Project, UNLV Special Collections, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.
[19] Muñiz, interview.
[20] Hernández, interview.

person who had been hurt. If anyone touched a striker, the rest would verbally confront the aggressor. Police officers often showed up to break up these quarrels. According to Hernández, when reporters covered these events, they often portrayed the strikers as the villains. The worst incident of disrespect that Hernández experienced on the picket line was when a person repeatedly spit at her. Hernández cared more about protecting her family's future and fighting for better working conditions than about a person spitting in her face. The incident did not deter her. She resolved this problem by locating the harasser and then covering her face with her picket sign every time she marched by him. In this way, Hernández protected herself from violence without leaving her coworkers' sides. These Latinas devised strategies to combat those who opposed their efforts.

Maintaining the strike during the winter holidays was especially challenging for strikers and their families. Many parents struggled to follow their Christmas traditions. In 1993, other Las Vegas workers were also on strike during the holiday season. While they were not workers at the Frontier, their experiences shed light on what it might have been like for Frontier workers' families coping with members being out on a picket line. That winter, strikers at Titanium Metals Corporation (TIMET) near Henderson, adjacent to Las Vegas, set up a Christmas tree on the picket line and decorated it with soda cans.[21] Having this tree on display for bystanders to see functioned as a form of protest. The recycled tree decorations symbolized workers' precarious financial situations and likely alerted bystanders that they could not afford to purchase fancy Christmas tree ornaments. Indeed, some marchers could not afford to purchase Christmas presents for their family. A worker at TIMET and member of the local Steelworkers Union, Rob

[21] Jeff Burbank, "Local Workers on Strike not in the Holiday Mood," *Las Vegas Review-Journal,* December 24, 1993.

Mirachi, was unable to place gifts under the Christmas tree for his nine-year-old son.[22] Workers, however, still tried to make the holidays special for their loved ones.

Based on the stories Frontier workers told about the financial difficulties they faced, strikers likely had trouble purchasing gifts for their children. But unions across the city attempted to provide gifts for their members. To ensure that workers did not miss out on the holiday, the Culinary Union Local 226 organized a Christmas party and buffet on the picket line and provided food baskets to their members and cookies for the kids. In an interview, Geoconda Argüello-Kline recalled that sometimes a picketer dressed up as Santa Claus to entertain the kids on the picket line.[23] Workers did not want their children to miss out on this tradition. Some families had to interrupt their home celebrations, as there were workers who had to march on Christmas Day. In 1993, Jack Gringer, a member of the Bartenders Union who had tended a bar at the Frontier for fourteen years, stated that he had spent each Christmas Day since 1991 on the picket line. By working together, strikers improvised winter holiday traditions without ignoring their responsibilities on the picket line. Frontier workers had to spend four more holiday seasons on the picket line because the Elardis refused to negotiate with their unions.

After more than one year on strike, many Frontier workers began to feel discouraged. By September 1994, when the strike reached the three-year mark, many workers had already left their jobs at the Frontier.[24] To encourage the remaining strikers, Culinary Union leaders organized a street party in front of the Frontier. However, paying their bills with only the $200 weekly that the union provided had already become too difficult. Striker Gary Jones noted, “It’s

[22] Jeff Burbank, “Local Workers on Strike not in the Holiday Mood,” *Las Vegas Review-Journal,* December 24, 1993.

[23] Geoconda Argüello-Kline, interview by author, Las Vegas, Nevada, February 2, 2021.

[24] “Union Members Start Fourth Year on Strike,” *Elko Daily Press,* September 22, 1994, sec. 18.

like a boom town in there. We're not affecting business. It's booming."[25] Despite strikers' efforts to keep customers from entering the establishment, the Frontier stayed in business. News reporters who saw the picketers during the street party reported that the workers "loung[ed] under umbrellas or inside makeshift shelters, seemingly resigned to the idea that the hotel [was] prospering despite the walkout."[26] While these three years had been difficult for Frontier workers, many did not regret having walked out.

Indeed, the strike had become a battleground where they and their families learned important lessons about economics, politics, human bonds, and persistence. By September 1994, 85 children had been born to striking workers. The striking mother of a 17-month-old baby girl, Beth Mattson, did not regret going out on strike. Her child had been the 30th out of the 85 born during the strike. Mattson explained in an interview that when her daughter, Meghan, was old enough to understand, she would tell her the story of the Frontier strike in an effort to teach her to "stand up" for her beliefs.[27] Other parents also used the picket line as a way to teach their kids always to fight for their rights and dignity. While the number of picketers decreased as the strike went on, many of the workers' families grew. As these families grew, so did the persistence and endurance of the women.

Although some strikers had left the picket line, union leaders kept encouraging workers to fight. The director of Local 226, D. Taylor, likened the strike to "trench warfare during World War I" because both were "slow and agonizing."[28] As the protest continued, government officials weighed in, hoping to resolve the labor dispute. Although strikers knew why they were

[25] "Union Members Start Fourth Year on Strike," *Elko Daily Press,* September 22, 1994, sec. 18.
[26] "Union Members Start Fourth Year on Strike," *Elko Daily Press,* September 22, 1994, sec. 18.
[27] "Strike Anniversary, " *Las Vegas Review – Journal.* September 22, 1994, sec. 1B.
[28] A.D. Cohen, "Frontier Strike Becoming 'Trench Warfare,'" *Las Vegas Business Press,* June 5, 1995, vol. 12 (22).

on strike, it was not until June 1995 that a federal judge for the National Labor Relations Board officially stated that the strike began because the Elardis engaged in unfair labor practices.[29] This decision was important to the union members because according to the NLRB, workplace managers who engage in unfair labor practices cannot permanently replace workers on strike.[30] This was one of the many legal battles that the culinary union had to resolve.

Government intervention continued. One of the most important interventions came from the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. After the NLRB decision in 1995, the Elardis filed an appeal. The court, however, deemed their argument "meritless and frivolous."[31] Because the circuit court sided with the Culinary Union, the Elardis had to pay back pension funds as well as cuts that they made to their workers' wages.[32] Another government official who weighed in on the issue was Nevada Governor Bob Miller.[33] At a union convention in June 1996, he stated, "The unwillingness of [Frontier] management to negotiate in good faith has been an embarrassment to the gaming industry and to the state of Nevada and to its people."[34] Government officials like Miller wanted the strike to end because they believed it affected the economy and image of the entire gaming industry, which was and continues to be a crucial sector of the Las Vegas economy. The Elardis faced enormous legal and political pressure during this period. Meanwhile, workers endured because they believed that even after five years on strike, there was hope for them to receive fair wages and benefits.

By 1996, an increasing number of labor leaders and unions across the country had their eyes on the Frontier strike. Although they faced court orders and pressure from local and federal

[29] "Federal Labor Judge Sides with Union Against Frontier," *Elko Daily Free Press,* June 10, 1995, sec. 3.
[30] "Federal Labor Judge Sides with Union Against Frontier," *Elko Daily Free Press,* June 10, 1995, sec. 3.
[31] "Striking a Deal at Frontier?," *Las Vegas Sun*, July 11, 1996.
[32] "Frontier Hotel Strike Marks 4th Anniversary," *Reno Gazette-Journal,* September 21, 1995, sec. 33.
[33] "Striking a deal at Frontier?," *Las Vegas Sun*, July 11, 1996.
[34] "Striking a deal at Frontier?," *Las Vegas Sun*, July 11, 1996.

government officials, the Elardis did not give up without a fight. It was not a fair fight, either. In December 1996, Wayne Legare, a nondenominational minister, confessed that he had worked for the Elardis as the leader of a spy squad.[35] Legare said that he revealed this information because he wanted to clear his conscience. He stated that the Elardis had hired spies to monitor the actions of union members. He added that this group had attempted to interfere with the strike numerous times. They fired water guns at the strikers, intercepted hand-held radio frequencies, stole picket signs, placed manure near where strikers had their meal breaks, and even retrieved union documents from trash cans in attempts to figure out the strikers' next moves. While the Elardis denied all of the allegations, the National Labor Relations Board already knew about many of these "dirty tricks."[36] Legare's confession revealed the multiple ways the Elardis fought back against the strikers.

In February 1997, the Culinary Union Local 226 held a rally at its headquarters. The president of the AFL-CIO, John Sweeney, attended and argued that "just as surely as New York set the (labor standards) for the past 100 years, Las Vegas will be setting them for the next 100 years."[37] Labor movement leaders viewed Frontier strikers as participants in a crucial battle against "corporate criminals" who did not respect laborers' rights.[38] Due to the strikers' endurance and their success in taking the Elardis to court more than once, union organizers in other cities, including Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth, Minnesota, began to implement some of the strategies that Frontier strikers had developed to organize against the Elardis.[39] Frontier workers could not have known when they walked out that they would become participants in one

[35] "Frontier Spying, Dirty Tricks Charged," *Las Vegas Sun*, December 11, 1996.
[36] "Frontier Spying, Dirty Tricks Charged," *Las Vegas Sun*, December 11, 1996.
[37] "Says Las Vegas Setting New Standards for Labor Movement," *Las Vegas Sun*, February 12, 1997.
[38] "Says Las Vegas Setting New Standards for Labor Movement." *Las Vegas Sun*, February 12, 1997.
[39] Jon Tevlin, "Labor's Last Stand?/Las Vegas/America's Playground is AFL-CIO's `Ground Zero," *Star Tribune,* July 13, 1997, sec. 1D.

of the longest strikes in U.S. history or that other American workers would see them as examples of how to stand up for their rights against employers.

Finally, in October 1997, strikers saw a glimmer of hope. That month, the Elardis gave up their fight and sold the Frontier to Phil Ruffin, an owner of various Marriott hotels, for $167 million.[40] Soon after this purchase, Ruffin began to talk to union organizers about adopting a five-year labor contract.[41] Despite this news, Frontier workers continued to picket until the Elardis and Ruffin finalized the sale. In December 1998, Bessie Brown, who had worked at the Frontier for 23 years, jokingly told a *Las Vegas Sun* reporter, "We've been out here so long, we [already] forgot why."[42] Another worker, Leonard Beckner, a former cook, admitted that he could not sustain the picket much longer. Many workers felt that the strike had lasted too long; they wanted to resume their daily lives and old routines.

Fortunately, they did not have to cope for much longer because the strike officially ended on February 1, 1998, when Ruffin entered the hotel alongside union workers.[43] After his purchase, Ruffin calculated that about 280 workers wanted to return to their jobs at the Frontier. He pledged that he would pay the Culinary $3.5 million to cover back wages and lost benefits. Furthermore, Ruffin said he planned to invest $20 million in remodeling the Frontier, renaming it the New Frontier, which it had been called in the 1950s and 1960s. The strikers' efforts paid off. The contract that Ruffin wanted to sign stipulated that starting hourly wages would be "$7.50 for food servers, $9.50 for hotel maids, and $12 for cooks."[44]

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[40] "Vegas' Frontier Hotel Sold; Nation's Longest-Running Strike Over," *Logansport Pharos-Tribune*. October 29. 1997.

[41] Dave Berns, "Frontier Strike Sign of Times for Labor: [Final Edition]," *Las Vegas Review - Journal,* Nov 03, 1997.

[42] David Renzi, "Life on the Line," *Las Vegas Sun*, January 29, 1998.

[43] Robert Macy, "Strikers in Las Vegas Return to their Jobs," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,.* February 2, 1998, sec. 3.

[44]Robert Macy, "Strikers in Las Vegas Return to their Jobs," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,.* February 2, 1998, sec. 3.

While the union and many workers considered the strike a success, the end of the picket line caused mixed emotions among the strikers. The picket line had been a place where they gave and received encouragement, fostered friendships and familial bonds, and shared and overcame obstacles as a team. Because of those relationships, some found the end of the strike bittersweet. Mirna Preciado, who chose to return to the Frontier to work as a waitress, said in an interview, "I'm glad we won, but I'm sad, too. I'm going to miss my friends. We are like family."[45] As her statement suggests, over the more than six years that strikers spent on the picket line, they fostered close relationships with one another. Preciado and Gloria Hernández expressed similar sentiments regarding the close bonds that they created with other strikers. By the time the strike ended, the participating families had given birth to over one hundred children.[46] Those children had grown up on the picket line and alongside one another while their parents marched in front of the Frontier. The strikers created an extended family on the picket line.

While many workers felt sad about the strike ending, they were also overjoyed to return to their normal routines and embark on new projects. Gloria Hernández, the waitress who testified before the House of Representatives, also returned to the Frontier.[47] For Hernández, the strike had been a time of personal development and learning. In 1996, Hernández began to study for her United States citizenship test. As she fought for her labor rights, Hernández also became a naturalized citizen. In 1998, the Culinary Union celebrated Hernández's achievements. Her efforts, along with those of all of her coworkers and union leaders, to acquire a union contract at

[45]"Las Vegas Journal; at Hotel-Casino, Triumphant Shouts of 'Union!'," *New York Times Company*, February 5, 1998.

[46]"Las Vegas Journal; at Hotel-Casino, Triumphant Shouts of 'Union!'," *New York Times Company*, February 5, 1998.

[47]"Columnist Jeff German: Frontier Strikers Back in Limelight during Gore's Visit," *Las Vegas Sun (NV)*, March 19, 1998.

the Frontier did not go unnoticed. Many American workers now considered Las Vegas a "model for the labor movement."[48]

Likewise, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, a prominent American civil rights leader and former presidential candidate, viewed the strike as the revival of the labor movement and as a "victory for America."[49] He opined that the end of the strike would "be a new day and a new Frontier for all of Las Vegas."[50] In participating in this strike, Frontier workers demonstrated that business owners could not easily dismantle labor unions and do away with the employee protections that these unions offered. The strikers' victory proved that blue-collar workers still had the power to transform American labor-management relations. Furthermore, the strikers' presence and the uproar they created in the streets of a city geared to tourists revealed that the gaming and hospitality industry could not effectively function when employees in the service sector were not content with the corporations that employed them. These blue-collar workers showed people across the nation that American laborers could still attain workplace justice.

At the end of the strike, all of the strikers had the opportunity to return to their jobs with full seniority. However, many, like Elodia Muñiz, chose to leave the Frontier.[51] She had been working at the Stardust since 1992, and she did not want to leave a job again. At the Stardust, Muñiz received all of the benefits that she was fighting for at the Frontier. Furthermore, she felt that she did not have enough time to work two jobs. Upon the sale of the Frontier, Muñiz returned to the property as a guest room attendant for one day. Many of the rooms had been locked and unused for months, so guest room attendants had great difficulty cleaning them. That

[48] "Labor Rolls on in Las Vegas, Where Hotel Union is a National Model," New York Times Company, April 27, 1998.
[49] "Nation's Longest Strike Comes to an End," *Las Vegas Sun,* 1 February 1998.
[50] "Nation's Longest Strike Comes to an End," *Las Vegas Sun,* 1 February 1998.
[51] Muñiz, interview.

day, Muñiz's managers gave her a notepad where she had to record all the rooms that she cleaned. She only cleaned a few because the rooms were so dirty. Muñiz recalled that the rugs and shower mats in some of the rooms were stuck to the floor.[52] She had to scrape them free. Muñiz completed her shift and decided never to return. Unlike Muñiz, Hernández quit her job at the Stardust and went back to the Frontier.[53] She said that she wanted to return to the place where her *pelea,* her fight, had begun. She continued to work at restaurants inside the Frontier. Although workers had devoted more than six years of their lives to convince the owners of the Frontier to sign the union contract and succeeded in doing so, some returned only temporarily because they were already thriving in other jobs.

Several months after the strike ended, the Culinary Union asked Gloria Hernández to join their staff. She agreed and left the Frontier.[54] In October 1998, she began working as an orientation leader, informing job applicants about the steps that they had to take to become employees at properties with union contracts. She worked in the orientation department for ten years until the union offered her the opportunity to become an external organizer. As an organizer, Hernández worked with Station Casino employees to unionize properties like Green Valley Ranch and Red Rock.[55] Many Station Casinos, located off the Strip in multiple Las Vegas suburban areas, functioned without a union contract and had firmly opposed their employees' unionization efforts for more than a decade.[56] Whereas casinos on the Strip focused on serving tourists, Station Casinos aimed to serve Las Vegas locals. Between 2017 and 2018, Hernández, her coworkers, and Station Casino employees across the city won the right to union

[52] Muñiz, interview.
[53] Hernández, interview.
[54] Hernández, interview.
[55] Hernández, interview.
[56] Eugene P. Moehring and Michael Green, *Las Vegas: A Centennial History* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005), 213.

representation at the Boulder Station, Green Valley Ranch, Palms, and Palace Station.[57] After her first battle ended, Hernández was determined to continue the fight for workers throughout the Las Vegas Valley. She modified the knowledge that she had acquired while striking at the Frontier to address the distinct issues and circumstances that she encountered at these suburban casinos. Ruffin's approval of a union contract at the Frontier, then, did not mark the end of Hernández's *pelea.* The end of that fight marked the beginning of many more.

Workers also used the lessons that they learned at the strike to advise their loved ones. Choosing to participate in a strike without knowing when the strike would end was a hard decision to make. Reflecting on her experience with the strike, Muñiz stated, "If we had to go on strike again, I would walk out again. You do not know what you are getting yourself into. You walk out with your eyes closed."[58] Despite the many challenges that she faced, Muñiz claimed that she would do it again because the experience allowed her to create strong relationships with her coworkers and learn how to defend her workplace rights. She expressed pride in possessing the knowledge necessary to help her children, who went on to work in the hospitality industry, learn about their rights as employees of large corporations. She told her daughter, who also encountered poor working conditions at a hotel, that she had to speak up and make her voice heard. Muñiz observed that many people working in casinos were afraid to defend themselves. She, like many other strike participants, wanted future generations to continue to fight to maintain the working conditions that she and others had fought to defend.

Besides improving working conditions for hospitality service workers, Gloria Hernández observed that her job as a Mexican immigrant and U.S. citizen was to help other immigrants.[59]

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[57] Culinary Workers Union Local 226, "Our Union: History," Culinary Workers Union Local 226, https://www.culinaryunion226.org/union/history, accessed March 18, 2020.

[58] Muñiz, interview.

[59] Hernández, interview.

Aware of her privilege as a citizen, Hernández expressed her strong belief that it was her responsibility to stand up for those immigrants who did not have legal citizenship status in the country. She especially thought that it was her duty to fight for those who could not vote. She said that she wanted her vote to serve all those immigrants who had a TPS or were DACA recipients.[60] People who live in a country where there are life-threatening conditions, such as armed conflict or natural disaster, upon their arrival to the U.S. can apply to receive Temporary Protected Status (TPS) from the federal government. This status makes them eligible to reside and work in the U.S. legally. Meanwhile, immigrants who arrived in the U.S. as children can apply to receive protection from deportation proceedings and permission to work in the country through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. Hernández knew that while these individuals had the federal government's permission to work within the U.S., they did not have the right to vote because they were not citizens.

Hernández used her voice to persuade others to vote in the best interests of those families whose futures in the U.S. were uncertain. She believed that everyone had to do something for someone else and that everyone had to lead by example. Hernández used her knowledge and life experiences to show other Latinxs that they had the power to "enrich this country with their experiences and labor."[61] With their labor, Hernández stated, individuals have been able to accomplish their goals. They have been able to send their children to college. Hernández was certain that her labor ensured that her grandchildren would have the opportunities to realize those goals that she was not able to accomplish in her lifetime. In Hernández's eyes, Latinx labor today

[60] For more on U.S. immigration policies, see Sherrie Baver, "Latinos in U.S. Immigration Policy Since IRCA," in *Latinos in New York: Communities in Transition,* ed. Sherrie Baver, Angelo Falcon, and Gabriel Haslip-Viera (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 307-332.

[61] Hernández, interview.

will secure a better social, political, and economic standing for future generations of Latinxs in the United States.

Aware that few scholars have written the histories of Latinxs in Las Vegas, Hernández and Muñiz both expressed their desire for the public and future generations to learn of their experiences at the Frontier. Muñiz stated that many people did not know the day-to-day story of the strike.[62] Her oral history reveals what happened during those years. She thought that more people needed to learn how Frontier strikers fought to acquire the rights and benefits that many hotel and casino workers now receive. Muñiz was well aware that in participating in the strike, she was not only seeking to improve working conditions for herself, but for laborers across the city. She believed that the public should learn about stories like hers to understand how the Culinary Union helped Las Vegas laborers. Similarly, Hernández wanted those who listened to her oral history to learn that one has to strive constantly to protect one's self-respect and dignity.[63] She believed that every individual was responsible for improving their local communities, their workplace, and the nation. Hernández was aware not only of her own power to transform society, but also of the power of others. Most important, she believed that people who had immigrated to the U.S. from countries across the globe had the power to change the oppressive social and economic conditions that they encountered in their new American communities. Strikers firmly held on to these beliefs as time progressed, even after the Frontier ceased to exist.

Historians have described Las Vegas as a city that is "constantly reinvent[ing] itself" because businessowners have torn down and rebuilt their properties to create bigger, better, and

[62] Muñiz, interview.
[63] Hernández, interview.

more attractive buildings.[64] This was the case with the Frontier. The Frontier's future remained uncertain for years. In 1998, news outlets reported that Ruffin was planning to raze the New Frontier and build a new project at the site. Yet, the New Frontier remained open into the twenty-first century.[65] In March 2007, the year that Ruffin ranked 717th on the global billionaire list with a net worth of about $1.4 billion, Ruffin announced that he would not sell the property to the New York-based company, Elad Properties.[66] Two months later, however, Elad Properties bought the New Frontier for $1.2 billion.[67] In two more months, the new owner closed the New Frontier, and then imploded the property in November 2007. The owners destroyed the Wild West-themed property where Elvis Presley had performed in Las Vegas for the first time to make room for high-end hotels and residences that were never built.[68] Even though the Frontier no longer physically exists, its history remains engraved in the memory of many Las Vegas residents and Culinary Union members.

Although many remember the Frontier only when thinking about gambling and tourism history, the Frontier played a crucial role in U.S., Las Vegas, and Latinx labor history. Tracing Latinas' personal, labor histories during this period demonstrates that the transnationality of their experiences shaped how they engaged with the labor movement. Mirna Preciado, for example, became a wage-earner for the first time in the U.S. while also working as a single-mother. She viewed herself as an immigrant who wanted to achieve the "American dream." Initially, the poor workplace conditions at the Frontier did not matter as long as she could pursue her economic

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[64] Geoff Schumacher, *Sun, Sin, and Suburbia: The History of Modern Las Vegas* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2012), 100.

[65] "Plan to Turn New Frontier into Radisson Dropped," *Reno Gazette-Journal*, September 12, 1999, page 64.

[66] "Ruffin: 'No Deal' on Frontier Sale, *Reno Gazzete-Journal,* March 27, 2007, page 23.

[67] "The New Frontier Closes in Las Vegas," *Reno Gazette-Journal*, July 17, 2007, page 6.

[68] Ryan Nakashima, "New Frontier: Latest Casino Set for Las Vegas Scrap Heap," *Reno Gazette-Journal*, November 13, 2007, page 5.

goals. Elodia Muñiz's story differs in that she had already worked in a wide range of low-paying jobs without any benefits. She wanted to join union efforts to acquire these. While she also had children to look after and bills to pay, as a longtime wage earner in both Latin America and the United States, she knew that workers did not always have the opportunity for a union job. Meanwhile, Gloria Hernández's prior experience as an employee and union member in Mexico gave her some understanding of how unions function. This allowed her to comprehend the dispute at the Frontier earlier than workers who had never heard of a labor union. These women developed their awareness and understanding of themselves as working-class people within American society based on their transnational experiences.

Those who had experienced labor movements in Latin America brought that knowledge with them and used it to transform U.S. labor-management relations. When working-class women move from one region to the next, they help to shape and increase the working-class consciousness of women and other workers in the new region where they live. The participation of Latina workers with prior organizing experience at the Frontier strike demonstrates that Latin American ideas regarding labor, welfare, and management relations shaped Las Vegas collective bargaining tactics, strategies, and demands. One prominent example of this transnational process can be found in the oral history of América Recinos.[69]

Recinos was born in El Salvador to a family that supported the country's labor movement. When she was a college student at the University of El Salvador, her father served as the general secretary of the Federación Nacional Sindical de Trabajadores Salvadoreños (FENASTRAS), the National Trade Union of Salvadoran Workers. This union represented a wide range of workers in factories, including foreign-owned manufacturing plants known as

[69] América Recinos, interview by Marcela Rodriguez-Campo, December 7, 2018, Latinx Voices of Southern Nevada, UNLV Special Collections, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

maquiladoras. Because her father served as one of the union's leaders, during Labor Day festivities, which occurred on May 1 every year, she always had the privilege of marching alongside her father. Together with the other leaders and their children, Recinos and her father led the masses of Salvadoran workers through the streets. From a very young age, Recinos's family exposed her to the problems that working-class people experienced in El Salvador, while teaching her that through unionization, they could acquire workplace rights. Recinos claimed that her experience with the labor movement in El Salvador shaped how she viewed labor rights as a grown-up.[70] In the early 1990s, she immigrated to Las Vegas as an exile from El Salvador's civil war. After she arrived, the U.S. federal government granted her political asylum. She also received her first work permit and became a guest room attendant at Vegas World hotel and casino, a few blocks north of the Strip on Las Vegas Boulevard. There she began her journey as a labor union organizer. She and her coworkers earned $6.25 hourly when they began to wear Culinary Union buttons that showed the public and their managers that they supported unionization efforts.

Unlike other workers, Recinos had prior knowledge of how unions functioned. When she moved to the city, the Frontier strike had already begun.[71] Recinos saw Frontier workers protesting for higher wages and better workplace benefits. She knew what it meant to fight for these rights, she knew what it meant to have a union represent workers, and she knew that she wanted a union job. As an immigrant, Recinos wanted to become a Culinary Union member because she equated union jobs with economic stability. She wanted a well-paying job that provided her with the resources she needed to bring her children to the country. Because Recinos and her husband wanted to make sure that they could provide for their children in the U.S. and

[70] Recinos, interview.
[71] Recinos, interview.

because immigration costs were very high, they had made the difficult decision to leave their children behind in El Salvador. Like Muñiz, Recinos wanted a union job so that she could afford her children's transportation. Working alongside Geoconda Argüello-Kline, Recinos and her coworkers turned her dreams into a reality when they convinced Vegas World, which later became the Stratosphere, to adopt a union contract. Argüello-Kline spoke with workers, including Recinos, at this property to teach them about the Culinary Union. In this way, Latina leaders encouraged other workers to fight for their workplace rights.[72]

Latina Culinary Union leaders also trained Latina workers to become the next generation of leaders. As more Latinas migrated to Las Vegas and became hospitality workers, union leaders and workers identified and selected those women who had leadership qualities, such as the ability to speak out against wrongdoing. Recinos provides an example of this. After working at the Stratosphere when it replaced Vegas World, Recinos decided that she wanted to move to Monte Carlo Resort and Casino. Meanwhile, in 2002, the Monte Carlo's management team and the Culinary Union were going to negotiate a new contract. At this point in her life, Recinos wanted a break from labor organizing. In her interview, she recalled that when union organizers entered the Monte Carlo in search of people to participate in the negotiations committee, she tried not to draw attention to herself. Her friends, however, encouraged her to take one of the available positions. They knew that she would make a good leader and would stand up for the rest of the workers. Recinos did not take a break from union organizing; instead, her coworkers gave her "an empujuncito," a little push, just the encouragement she needed to step into the role of shop steward. Recinos went on to represent the union and her coworkers at the Monte Carlo.[73]

[72] Recinos, interview.
[73] Recinos, interview.

One of Recinos's most memorable moments in this position was when she and other leaders convinced management to change the language in the contract that pertained to housekeepers. The managers reduced the number of hotel rooms that housekeepers had to clean in a single shift from sixteen to fourteen. When Recinos told this portion of her story, she acknowledged that throughout the negotiation process, she worked under Argüello-Kline's guidance and leadership. Latinas learned and taught one another negotiating skills. Years later, in 2007, after receiving training to become an organizer like Argüello-Kline, Recinos won her first victory. She secured a union contract at the Riviera Hotel and Casino. She also helped workers at Circus Circus, MGM Grand, Caesars Palace, Bellagio, and Station Casinos. Her history demonstrates that some of the Latinas who marched during the Frontier strike continued to mentor and teach other Latinas how to organize, stand up against exploitative workplace conditions, and argue for the contract language that they wanted property managers to adopt. [74]

In the late twentieth century, Latinas and other women of color led one of the few, but also most successful strikes in U.S. history, joining other Latinxs across the country who used their labor union membership to protect their families' and communities' well-being. Between the late 1980s and the late 1990s, union membership across the nation drastically declined and with it fell the rate of strikes. However, in Las Vegas, the Culinary Union's membership increased to forty thousand.[75] While, nationally, the union movement was less strong than it was in the mid-twentieth century, Latinxs increasingly used the movement to advance their economic and political agendas.[76] During this period, in Los Angeles, for example, the majority of the

[74] Recinos, interview.

[75] James P. Kraft, *Vegas at Odds: Labor Conflict in a Leisure Economy, 1960-1985* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 205.

[76] Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 267.

service industry, hotel, and restaurant workers were Latinxs. They began to have a major influence in electing union leadership. In 1996, the Los Angeles Federation of Labor (LA FED) elected Miguel Contreras its first Latino president. Throughout the 1990s, Latinxs in Southern California used their unions to acquire workplace rights and benefits for janitors, factory, hotel, and health-care workers.[77] As in the Frontier strike, Latinxs have continued to fight for their rights as workers and members of American society.

Historically, working women of color have led and maintained many of these socioeconomic battles. At the Frontier, women like Hattie Canty and Geoconda Argüello-Kline played major roles in organizing and motivating workers to keep up their work on the picket line. For more than six years, they encouraged workers to overcome the many problems that protesters frequently encountered. With their support and leadership, workers like Gloria Hernández and Elodia Muñiz created strategies to navigate through this contested space until they achieved victory in 1998 when Phil Ruffin purchased the Frontier from the Elardis and supported a union contract. After the strike ended, workers, including strike leaders, used the knowledge that they acquired throughout the labor dispute to educate community members and future labor leaders about workplace and civil rights.

[77] Lichtenstein, *State of the Union,* 267-268.

Conclusion

The Fight in the 21st Century

This rise of new Latina leaders within the Culinary Union has continued into the twenty-first century. A significant portion of the physical, intellectual, and emotional labor that goes into keeping Las Vegas a "union town" continues to be done by Latinas. In February 2021, I had the pleasure of discussing the ongoing work of union leaders with Cecilia Arroyo Arias, who works as a shop steward at a well-known hotel and casino on the Strip.[1] Arroyo Arias's family immigrated to Las Vegas in 1996. She was only twelve years old and did not speak English upon her arrival, yet she soon gained a strong command of the language. Later, as a nineteen-year-old, she began to work at a major Strip property in the uniforms department. Her job involved handing out uniforms to the hotel and casino employees at the beginning of their shifts. At that point, workers in this department were not union members. While her mother was a housekeeper and a Culinary Union member, Arroyo Arias explained that she herself did not yet understand what "being unionized" meant.[2] As time passed, she started to overhear unionized workers in other departments speak of the benefits that they received as a result of the union contract.

A few years later, workers in her department began to attend undercover meetings at the union hall to learn about unionization. Their battle lasted approximately six years, and in October 2011, Arroyo Arias and her coworkers got the opportunity to become union members. She frequently encountered shop stewards, hotel and casino workers who represented the union and resolved issues between workers and management. Arroyo Arias described these stewards as

[1] Cecilia Arroyo Arias, interview by author, Las Vegas, Nevada, February 1, 2021. To protect her privacy, Arroyo Arias asked me to leave the property where she works unnamed.

[2] Arroyo Arias, interview.

strong, brave, confident, and knowledgeable of their rights as laborers.[3] She knew that shop stewards were there to protect her from unfair management practices. In 2015, Arroyo Arias began to train to become a shop steward herself. As part of her training, she attended contract classes, where union leaders broke down and analyzed the complicated legal language in union contracts. She learned how to interpret each article in a contract and how to apply them to specific situations. As shop stewards, workers like Arroyo Arias gained knowledge of American law and legal language in order to defend and protect their rights.

In addition to interpreting legal contracts, Arroyo Arias also works as a translator in negotiations. As a shop steward, Arroyo Arias recognizes that her bilingualism allows her to help Spanish-speaking workers who cannot communicate fully in English. She understands and speaks with Spanish-speaking workers and then expresses their concerns to the English-speaking managers. She knows that she has more opportunities to help her coworkers than shop stewards who do not speak Spanish. The language barrier has often kept workers from communicating the injustices that they have encountered to shop stewards. Being bilingual, then, allows Arroyo Arias to seek justice for her coworkers, many of whom are afraid of speaking up because they believe that their inability to communicate fully in English will cause managers to make fun of them or not take them seriously.[4] Without Spanish-speaking shop stewards in unionized casinos and hotels, many workers could not receive the help that they need.

Her identity as a Spanish-speaking Latina has allowed Arroyo Arias to help workers in ways that other shop stewards cannot. In this and in many other ways, Arroyo Arias ensures that workers who experience difficulties ranging from work overload to workplace sexual harassment have the representation they need when they present themselves to property managers. Currently,

[3] Arroyo Arias, interview.
[4] Arroyo Arias, interview.

the Culinary Union represents workers who come from "178 countries, and speak over 40 different languages."[5] Arroyo Arias insightfully notes that communicating with and organizing workers in a variety of languages has been and will be one of the biggest challenges that the union encounters as the labor force becomes more diversified. Current and future generations of union leaders and organizers will have to develop ways to explain the labor movement to this ethnically diverse group of peoples.

On February 2, 2021, as I neared the completion of this project, the Culinary Union Local 226 granted me the permission to speak with Secretary-Treasurer Geoconda Argüello-Kline about the Frontier strike. Our virtual conversation lasted about an hour, but we had the opportunity to discuss moments during the strike that most stood out in Argüello-Kline's memory. She described the 1992 march to Los Angeles, the food truck that William Bennett sent to the picket line, and the many festivities, including weddings and Christmas holidays, that parents and their kids celebrated throughout the course of the strike. She fondly remembers how workers from around the country showed their support for Frontier strikers. Of course, she also remembers the thorny and unpleasant moments that picketers endured, from police officers arresting hundreds of workers during acts of civil disobedience to strikers having to march in extreme weather conditions. By the end of the strike all of these moments had transformed workers and their loved ones into one united family. Thinking about the legacy and results of the strike, Argüello-Kline mentioned this family numerous times.[6] In fighting for the contract that they demanded, she thought, workers also created a family. Today, the union uses a video documentary of the strike to teach members about the power that workers have when they

[5] Culinary Workers Union Local 226, "Our Union: History," Culinary Workers Union Local 226, https://www.culinaryunion226.org/union/history, accessed March 18, 2020.
[6] Geoconda Argüello-Kline, interview by author, Las Vegas, Nevada, February 2, 2021.

unionize. The Frontier strike helps the Culinary Union present itself as a successful organization, and it inspires and encourages workers to organize. As Argüello-Kline stated during our conversation, the strike teaches workers that they have to take risks. Without making sacrifices, Frontier workers would not have won a union contract, helping to keep Las Vegas one of the most unionized cities in the United States.

Examining the growth of Las Vegas, Rex J. Rowley, in *Everyday Las Vegas: Local Life in a Tourist Town*, explains that since the 1990s, the population of Latinx migrants has increased significantly.[7] The 1990 census reported that 85,000 people in Las Vegas identified as "Hispanic," while in the 2000 census, 300,000 people marked this ethnic classification, a 250 percent increase. By 2010, 568,000 Latinx people lived in the city, over a quarter of the total population. Rowley argues that the "city gives immigrants more of an opportunity to 'make it,' earning wages and benefits comparable to middle-class Americans."[8] As this thesis has demonstrated, the Culinary Union Local 226 has played a key role in maintaining good wages and benefits for the large proportion of workers employed in the Las Vegas hospitality industry. As the experiences of Cecilia Arroyo Arias, Hattie Canty, Geoconda Argüello-Kline, Gloria Hernández, Elodia Muñiz, and Mirna Preciado show, migrants and immigrants fought to secure these wages for themselves, other locals, and future hospitality workers.

In the twentieth century, according to Eugene Moehring and Michael Green, Las Vegas was "a festival city built on dreams, chance, and self-indulgence where America and the rest of the world came to play."[9] Las Vegas, however, was also a city where many went to work and

[7] Rex J. Rowley, *Everyday Las Vegas: Local Life in a Tourist Town* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2013), 53.

[8] Rowley, *Everyday Las Vegas,* 53.

[9] Eugene Moehring and Michael Green, *Las Vegas: A Centennial History* (Reno: University of Nevada, 2005) 249.

had to fight for a living wage and access to health care. During the six-year strike at the Frontier, Latina employees and their coworkers resisted and persisted to ensure that their communities would have a better future. Muñiz's and Hernández's oral histories shed light on labor experiences that are often missing in Las Vegas histories and in U.S. labor histories as well.[10] Moreover, their participation in the strike illuminates some of the contributions that Latinxs have made to the development of the Las Vegas gaming and hospitality industry. In adopting American ways of life, Latina immigrants also transformed American institutions. After arriving to the U.S., these Latinas adapted to their new communities, learned a new language, and became laborers in American workplaces. In doing so, they also demanded that their American employers adapt to the Frontier employees' needs.

The socioeconomic battle that took place at this family-owned casino proved to be troublesome, painful, and prolonged for the workers involved. However, they endured because in fighting for a union contract at this resort, they also fought to maintain those contracts in businesses across the city. Maids, cooks, bartenders, janitors, receptionists, and other workers alongside their families marched and protested for more than six years against the Elardis, who lowered wages; took away pensions; denied employees insurance benefits; stopped paying overtime, holiday, and vacation wages; and fired workers without proper cause. Protesters and their families found ways to cope with the obstacles that they encountered on the picket line. When the rate of unionization and labor stoppages across the nation were in a decline, Frontier employees successfully brought attention to the injustices that many Las Vegas hotel and casino

[10] Gloria Hernández, interview by Maribel Estrada Calderón, Nathalie Martinez, and Rodrigo Vasquez, December 7, 2018, Latinx Voices of Southern Nevada, UNLV Special Collections, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.; Elodia Muñiz, interview by Maribel Estrada Calderón, February 15, 2019, Latinx Voices of Southern Nevada, UNLV Special Collections, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

workers have faced across the years. With their labor and activism, working-class people seeking fair wages and dignity have run and maintained the luxurious resorts that light up the city.

In the U.S., Latinas have a long and successful history of labor organizing. Throughout the twentieth century, Latina activists have brought local, national, and transnational attention to the oppressions and social inequalities working-class people have faced throughout the country: Dolores Huerta helped to create the United Farm Workers (UFW) for agricultural workers in California; Luisa Capetillo organized agricultural and industrial workers through the Free Federation of Workers (FLT) in Puerto Rico; Luisa Moreno organized Florida cigar workers through the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA); and Emma Tenayuca led thousands of pecan shellers during a strike in Texas.[11] From rural to urban spaces, Latinas have provided their physical, emotional, and intellectual labor to protect workers' dignity in an often exploitative American labor market. The stories of the Latinas who led, organized, and participated in the Frontier strike at the end of the twentieth century are among the many histories of working-class Latinas in the U.S. that historians can uncover and preserve.

[11] Alicia Chavez, "Dolores Huerta and the United Farm Workers," 240-254; Vicki L. Ruiz, "Luisa Moreno and Latina Labor Activism," 175-192; Nancy A. Hewitt, "Luisa Capetillo: Feminist of the Working Class," 120-134, in *Latina Legacies: Identity, Biography, and Community,* ed. Vicki L. Ruiz and Virginia Sanchez Korrol (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Vicki Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 79.

Appendix

Figure 1: *Photographs of Frontier Strike: Night Rally, Culinary Union, Las Vegas (Nev.), 1991 September 21 (Folder 1 of 1).* Culinary Workers Union Local 226 Las Vegas, Nevada Photographs, 1950s-2006. PH-00382. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Figure 2: *Photographs of Frontier Strike: Civil Disobedience, Traffic Blocking, Arrests, Culinary Union, Las Vegas (Nev.), 1991 September 28 (Folder 1 of 2).* Culinary Workers Union Local 226 Las Vegas, Nevada Photographs, 1950s-2006. PH-00382. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Figure 3: *Photographs of March to Los Angeles: L.A. Park, Culinary Union, 1992 (Folder 1 of 1)*. Culinary Workers Union Local 226 Las Vegas, Nevada Photographs, 1950s-2006. PH-00382. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Figure 4: *Photographs of Circus Circus Food Truck, Frontier Strike, Culinary Union, Las Vegas (Nev.), 1992 July 13 (Folder 1 of 2).*Culinary Workers Union Local 226 Las Vegas, Nevada Photographs, 1950s-2006. PH-00382. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Figure 5: *Photographs of Frontier Strike, M, Culinary Union, Las Vegas (Nev.), 1990s (Folder 1 of 1).* Culinary Workers Union Local 226 Las Vegas, Nevada Photographs, 1950s-2006. PH-00382. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada. Cesar Chavez (right) marching alongside Geoconda Argüello-Kline (left).

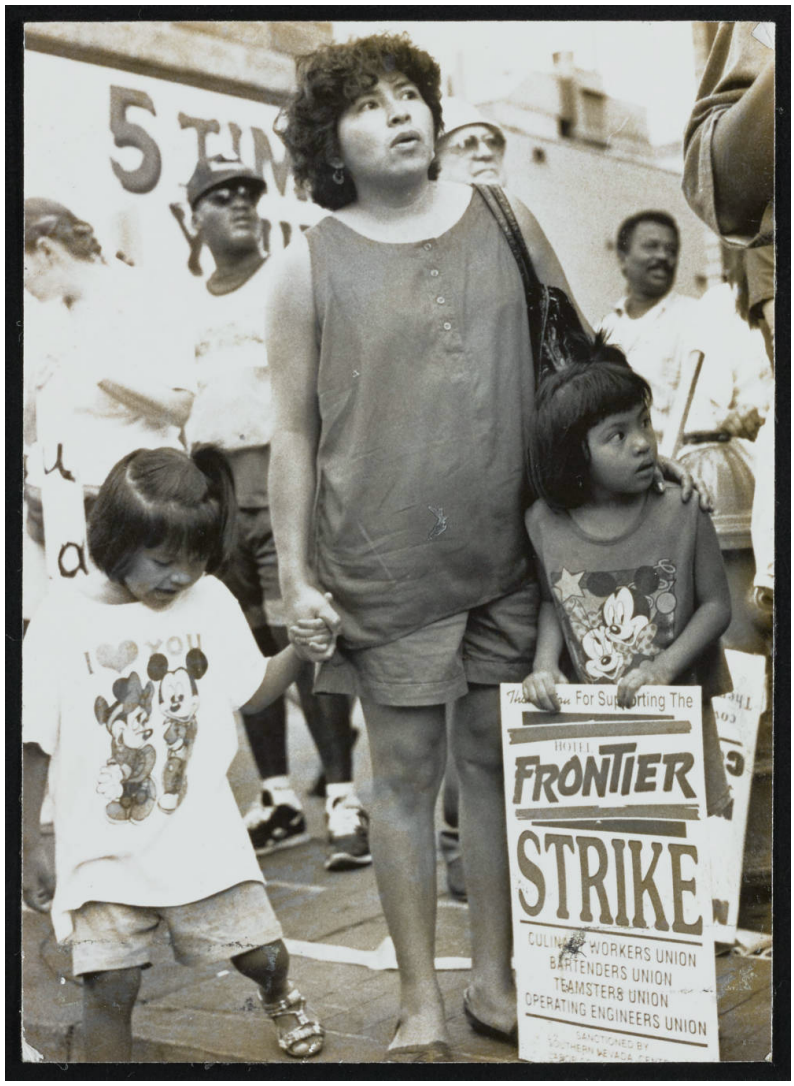

Figure 6: *Photographs of Frontier Strike, D, Culinary Union, Las Vegas (Nev.), 1990s (Folder 5 of 6).* Culinary Workers Union Local 226 Las Vegas, Nevada Photographs, 1950s-2006. PH-00382. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

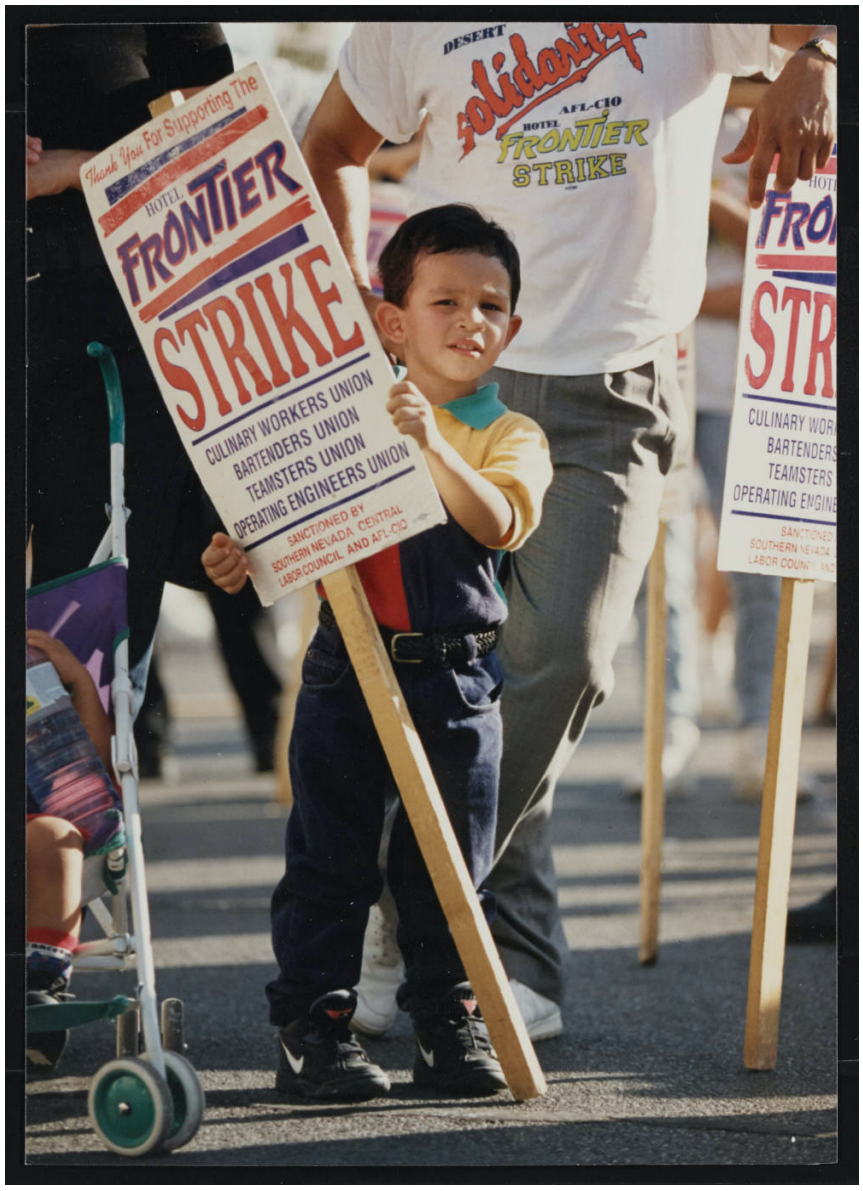

Figure 7: *Photographs of Frontier Strike, E, Culinary Union, Las Vegas (Nev.), 1990s (Folder 1of 1).* Culinary Workers Union Local 226 Las Vegas, Nevada Photographs, 1950s-2006. PH-00382. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Figure 8: *Photographs of Frontier Strike, O, Culinary Union, Las Vegas (Nev.), 1990s (Folder 1 of 1).* Culinary Workers Union Local 226 Las Vegas, Nevada Photographs, 1950s-2006. PH-00382. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Figure 9: *Photographs of Frontier Strike, Q, Culinary Union, Las Vegas (Nev.), 1990s (Folder 10 of 17).* Workers Union Local 226 Las Vegas, Nevada Photographs, 1950s-2006. PH-00382. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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