

“UNAMERICAN” AMERICANS:  
LATINA WORKING-CLASS ACTIVISM IN YBOR CITY, FLORIDA, 1937

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## **ABSTRACT**

SARAH J. MCNAMARA: “Unamerican” Americans: Latina Working-Class Activism in  
Ybor City, Florida, 1937  
(Under the direction of Zaragosa Vargas and Jacquelyn Dowd Hall)

During the 1930s, the Popular Front mobilized the American working class and reignited the flame of labor organization throughout the nation. This thesis investigates the Popular Front movement in the Latino community, Ybor City, located on the eastern edge of Tampa, Florida. It studies the Popular Front as a social movement rather than a communist movement, and questions the rise of a Popular Front culture despite the absence of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in Tampa and Ybor City. This work explores how Floridian Latinos and Latinas used the Popular Front to advance their own platform of workers’ rights and become active and participatory citizens in Southern Society. It reconsiders the centralization of white men as the leaders of the Popular Front and uncovers women’s activism that defied and challenged traditional gender stereotypes in Tampa, the South, and the United States.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

In May of 1937 Latina women marched in Ybor City, Florida.<sup>1</sup> Called to action by the labor leader Luisa Moreno, the Latinas linked arms in protest of fascism, American neutrality, and Southern racial and labor inequality. The demonstration lasted only three hours and was quickly forgotten. In Tampa nothing changed, but the event forced the exclusive Southern city to acknowledge the presence, power, and voice of the Latinos within its city limits. Ybor City's Latino working classes had not organized against white authority since 1931.

Ybor City was a community created by industry, sustained by immigration, and tested by labor unrest. Located on the eastern edge of Tampa, this immigrant borough was home to Florida's most successful cigar making enterprises. In Ybor, laborers were revered for their artisanship and renowned for their labor militancy.<sup>2</sup> The neighborhood brought together men and women of Cuban, Afro-Cuban, Spanish, and Italian descent. This multi-racial and multi-ethnic community had a distinct Cuban presence. In Ybor City, the sense of a shared identity

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis I will use the term Latino/Latina and Cubano/Cubana interchangeably to indicate people of ethnic origin both recent immigrants and Americans. Latino/Latina is a preferred term of self-reference of Spanish surname people of the United States. Likewise, Cubano/Cubana will function similarly, referring to both immigrant and American born individuals. The terms "Anglo" and "white" are used interchangeably and indicate persons who are not of Latino or Cuban descent.

<sup>2</sup> Robert P. Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes in the Jim Crow South* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1988); Nancy Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880s-1920s* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004); Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors, 1885-1985*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida 1998).

emerged through labor.<sup>3</sup> The cigar industry may have controlled the *tabaqueros* (cigar workers) economic livelihood, but it could not overcome the highly effective labor militancy, radical ideologies, and legacies of class struggle the Cubanos brought from their homeland. Latinos in Ybor City waged numerous walk-outs and strikes against the cigar industry, and in doing so they confronted Jim Crow head on. Latino workers were met with violent Jim Crow repression from vigilantes and police. They could not openly protest Southern society or challenge the color-line without serious consequences from whites. Notwithstanding, a tradition of labor organization, that extended beyond national boundaries, and an ardent belief in championing personal freedom generated the perfect environment for Popular Front organization during the 1930s.

Historians have argued that Ybor City's multi-national population represented a "Latin" not a "Latino" community. For example, historian Elna C. Green argues that, "in Tampa, 'Latin' had a locally specific meaning," and is not "...to be confused with 'Latino' a term that does not apply in this context."<sup>4</sup> However, Green overlooked the fact that for Cubanos the term Latin had a racialized meaning. While the distinct mix of Cubans, Spaniards, and Italians created a specific regional culture, these workers did not speak English, they spoke Spanish; they did not sip coffee, they shot *cortaditos*; and in bilingual newspapers they did not refer to themselves Latin, but as Latinos. Much like colored or

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<sup>3</sup>In his study Chad Alan Goldberg reconsiders a shared and created identity established by laborers during the Depression and New Deal. While the politics of identity is not the focus of this essay, understanding the connections between labor and community are necessary. See, Chad Alan Goldberg, "Contesting the Status of Relief Workers during the New Deal: The Workers Alliance of America and the Works Progress Administration, 1935-1941," *Social Science History*, 29, no.3 (Fall 2005): 337-342.

<sup>4</sup> Elna C. Green, "Relief from Relief: The Tampa Sewing-Room Strike of 1937 and Women's Right to Welfare," *Journal of American History*, (March 2009): 1012-1037; Nancy Hewitt also defends the exclusive use of Latin to describe Ybor City's population, see Nancy Hewitt, "Economic Crisis and Political Mobilization: Reshaping Culture of Resistance in Tampa's Communities of Color, 1929-1939," in *Women's Labor in the Global Economy: Speaking in Multiple Voices*, ed. Sharon Harley (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007): 64.

Negro, Ybor residents did not create the term Latin. On the contrary, it was imposed upon them by larger Anglo society. Using the term Latin limits the agency and cultural citizenship of Ybor residents. Scholar Louis A. Pérez Jr. noted that: “There is no reason to expect the Tampa past to depart significantly from the national experience. Whatever claim Tampa has to singularity lies in the success the residents of Ybor City and West Tampa enjoyed in preserving—not shedding—cultural traditions, social norms, and local institutions.”<sup>5</sup> By embracing the term Latino, Ybor City’s history becomes more than a locally specific Latin experience and connects it to other Latino movements in the United States.

Depression-era Ybor City was a Southern community with a second generation Latino population, a workforce dominated by women, and an active Popular Front Committee. Exploring the Popular Front through Ybor City provides a case study rich with intersections of gender, race, and class. Ybor City was a small community, but it was an important community. As one of the only bastions of a Latino population in the Southeast, Ybor City connected Florida to national Latino networks and labor movements. Latino laborers and organizers moved through these cultural communities, exchanging ideas, supporting local strikes, all while trying to earn a living. By examining the Popular Front in Ybor City, Florida is removed from its ideological island and incorporated into a larger national and transnational narrative. As a Latino enclave with an active Popular Front, Ybor City was part of a Southern movement for social change, a national movement for economic

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<sup>5</sup> Louis A. Pérez, Jr., “Radicals, Workers, and Immigrants in Tampa: Research opportunities in Special Collections,” *Ex Libris*, 1, no.4 (1978): 14.



stability, and an international movement that opposed fascism. Through this study, Ybor City provides the necessary space to “ask big questions in small places.”<sup>6</sup>

Latinos in Ybor City embraced anarchism, Cuban nationalism, and now Popular Front goals. In response to the growing threat of fascism in Spain, France, Germany, and Italy, the international Popular Front functioned as an antifascist coalition that united communists, socialists, and anarchists in the fight against fascism.<sup>7</sup> Historians have uncovered a Popular Front movement that did not begin in 1935 and end in 1939. Instead the impact and legacy of the Popular Front reaches beyond the timeline of a Soviet dominated initiative and calls on historians to reconsider an independent American social, cultural, and political movement—an American Popular Front.

As a social and political movement, the Popular Front maintained its strength through the language of labor and the newly formed Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).<sup>8</sup> The open policy of the Popular Front toward ethnic and racial minorities provided an avenue for demanding civil rights. Re-examining the 1930s and the Popular Front as a civil rights movement broadens the potential to explore the Popular Front as a moment when labor rights were civil rights, and racism was not as simple as black and white.<sup>9</sup> As the Great Depression

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<sup>6</sup> During the 1930s sixty percent of the workforce was female, Mormino, *Immigrant World*, I borrow this phrase from historian Charles W. Joyer.

<sup>7</sup> The formal concept of a Popular Front was not born in Moscow, but in Paris. Also, this unity and protection by different political groups mainly refers to Spain and France where fascist and anti-labor movements threatened their republics. James R. Barrett, “Rethinking the Popular Front,” *Rethinking Marxism*, 21, no. 4 (2009) 533.

<sup>8</sup> Language of labor is a term borrowed from Michael C. Denning. According to Denning American language and culture became infused with a range of concerns that linked the CIO, the pan-ethnic cultures of its members, the international platforms of antifascism, and demands of New Deal programs. Michael C. Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York, NY: Verso 1997): 3-21.

<sup>9</sup> Zaragosa Vargas discusses the relationship between ethnicity and race during the Popular Front and beyond, by investigating the role of Mexican-Americans in labor struggles and as members of the Communist Party.

worsened, men lost their jobs while women remained employed. Employers saw a woman as equally capable, but deserving of half the male wage. Just as women's labor was not respected by employers, their positions as family supporters were not appreciated by men or equally valued by the New Deal.<sup>10</sup> This new female workforce was perceived as stealing men's jobs and robbing men of rights as the heads of households.<sup>11</sup> For historians these consequences have had lasting effects on the ability to analyze the importance of women in the Popular Front. Although women may not have held prominent positions on Popular Front committees, women's roles as leaders within the movement can be uncovered through their public actions rather than by traditional definitions of leadership. In Tampa, Florida, through a community oriented focus on the workplace and national and international politics, Latinas raised their voices in their calls for equality as workers and as American citizens. The connections between these three elements demonstrate the power of the Popular Front in breaking social and political barriers, and giving a once invisible minority a vibrant voice to assert their innate right to all benefits of American citizenship. This new sense of identity provoked greater political mobilization.

In May of 1937 Latina women challenged their place in Southern society and defied the region's tradition of exclusion by embracing a new sense of "ethnic Americanism." This

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See, Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> For information on women and the development of the welfare state see, Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890s-1935* (New York, NY: Maxwell MacMillian Press, 1994); Alice Kessler Harris, *In Pursuit of Equality: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Faue notes many women eventually lost their roles in labor union leadership, in working-class culture, and on labor's political agenda. See, Elizabeth Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of Chapel Hill Press, 1991).

essay explores and highlights how Latinas were central to this early fight for civil rights because in the Jim Crow South, their sex granted them protection and made it safer for women to publicly protest and push for social and political change. By examining newspapers, oral histories, WPA reports, and records from the U.S. Women's Bureau, I will show how Latinas in Ybor City used the Popular Front to abandon the political, social, and economic confines of their community and demand both local and national representation and recognition.

## CHAPTER 2

### Establishing Barriers and Creating Industry in Ybor City

Tampa was a Southern town with a Latino accent.<sup>12</sup> Often, the city hid beneath the veil of Florida exceptionalism and escaped the burden of Jim Crow's scorn.<sup>13</sup> Unlike other Southern states, Florida was not developed by King Cotton, rice, or lumber production. Rather, tobacco, cattle, and phosphate reigned supreme in Florida, which had emerged as a leader in tourism and cigar production.<sup>14</sup> Florida enforced racial segregation through legal and illegal means; anyone who was not "white" was "colored."<sup>15</sup> These labels delineated who owned the right to political, social, and economic power in this Southern society. During the 1890s, the first wave of Latino cigar workers arrived at the Port of Tampa, their ethno-racial background altered the city's racial and social hierarchy.<sup>16</sup> Rather than blur the color-line, these new arrivals lived and worked in Ybor City, a company town located in the

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<sup>12</sup>This phrase is based on the book by Tony Pizzo, a historian and past resident of Ybor City. The book details the beginning of Ybor City and the community's antecedents. Anthony Pizzo, *Tampa Town, 1824-86: The Cracker Village with a Latin Accent* (Tampa, FL: Trend House, 1968).

<sup>13</sup> Paul Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Emancipation to the Bloody Election of 1920* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2005): xxi-xxii. Also for information on Florida and the Southern lynching tradition, see, Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 1-30.

<sup>14</sup>Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed*, xii. For more information on early development and economy of the Florida economy also reference, Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort*, 17-19.

<sup>15</sup> Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*.

<sup>16</sup>Historian Jim Barrett coined the term ethno-racial, in reference to his study of southern and eastern European immigrant. Historians who study Italian immigrants employ the term ethno-racial because this term was used by government officials in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, owing to the extant racial terminology of the time.

northeastern Tampa. Until the 1930s Ybor remained a city within a city-- separated by race and restricted by southern traditions.

Labor activism defined Ybor City's cigar industry. In the 1870s Key West served as the major cigar manufacturing hub in the United States. The mere ninety mile stretch between the Florida Keys and the northwestern coast of Cuba permitted convenient transport of Havana tobacco and transient tabaqueros with revolutionary ideologies.<sup>17</sup> As the movement for Cuban independence heightened and nationalistic fervor swelled, labor strikes in Havana and Key West became frequent, and increasingly violent. Cuban cigar manufacturers believed that by increasing the physical distance between their workforce and the island of Cuba, they could control the movement of ideas and suppress the interference of Cuban trade unions with their workforce. In 1886, Vicente Martínez Ybor, the owner of El Príncipe de Gales factory, purchased a thirty acre tract of land on the eastern edge of Tampa and relocated his cigar enterprise to Ybor City.<sup>18</sup> In Key West, violent cigar worker strikes in 1889 and 1894 pushed other companies to follow Ybor's lead and relocate to Tampa. By 1894 this sleepy southern town became the home to a new Cuban émigré workforce whose labor would lead its rise as the United States' "Cigar City."

Despite relocating the Cuban cigar industry, strikes followed the manufacturers from Key West to Ybor City. "People date their lives from various strikes in Tampa," José Yglesias remembered.<sup>19</sup> From 1897 to 1931 five major strikes took place in the Ybor City

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<sup>17</sup> Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press 2003): 217.

<sup>18</sup> Federal Writers Project, Tampa, Florida, "Ybor City, General Description, Latin Population," pp. 5, Unpublished Manuscript, Special Collections, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida.

<sup>19</sup> José Yglesias, Interview in, Studs Terkel, *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1970), 109.

cigar industry and spurred a community to support collective activism.<sup>20</sup> Local grocers, restaurants, and landlords frequently extended credit to clients and tenants to support unemployed or striking workers. The phrase *apúntamelo* (take note) was all a worker needed to utter for a grocer to charge a client's tab.<sup>21</sup> All six mutual aid societies-- *Centro Español* (Spanish Club), *Centro Asturiano* (Asturian Club), *Círculo Cubano* (Cuban Club), *L'Unione Italiano* (Italian Club), *Unión Martí-Maceo* (Afro-Cuban Club), and the German Club-- provided members with benefits in the event of a strike or termination.<sup>22</sup> This informal system of worker and community self help established a culture that undermined the power of the cigar companies and created constant tensions between community and industry. Strikes slowed production and because the cigar industry was dependent on its artisan workforce, concessions and compromises were necessary. Between 1880 to 1900 Tampa's cigar industry grew from a single shop to 120 factories and spurred a population increase from 720 to 15,839.<sup>23</sup> Although Tampans viewed the militant workforce as dangerous and foreign the city was inextricably dependent on the cigar industry.

Cigar factories employed racism and sexism as mechanisms for worker control. Although men and women of Cuban, Spanish, Italian, and Afro-Cuban backgrounds worked side-by-side, differences in race and sex established a regime of labor inequality in the cigar industry. At the most basic level, men were considered skilled workers, while women were

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<sup>20</sup> These six strikes occurred in 1899, 1901, 1910, 1911, 1919-1920, and 1931. See, Louis A. Pérez, Jr. "Ybor City Remembered," *South Eastern Latin Americanist*, 22, no. 1 (1978): 1.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Peter Parado, Interviewed by Sarah McNamara, June 2008, Interview in possession of the author.

<sup>22</sup> Louis A. Pérez, Jr., details the relationship between Cuban unions and mutual aid societies on the island and in the Ybor City, FL. See, Pérez, Jr., *Cuba and the United States*, 217, and Louis A. Pérez, Jr., "Radicals, Workers, and Immigrants in Tampa: Research opportunities in Special Collections," *Ex Libris*, 1, no.4 (1978) 14.

<sup>23</sup> Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 50, 69.

considered unskilled. Photographs of tabaqueros from the late nineteenth century through the 1920s show men of various skin tones occupying the prestigious *rollero* (roller) benches. Rarely did women have a seat at the artisan tables. The photographs reveal that some stood behind their male colleagues as *buncheras* (tobacco bunchers), while the majority labored in the basements as *selectoras* (leaf selectors) and *despaldilladoras* (stem strippers).<sup>24</sup> The U.S. Women's Bureau reported that "the foreign born in Florida [were] the largest groups in the cigar factories," adding that to their sex, they were paid less.<sup>25</sup> To move up in the labor hierarchy many women chose to work at *chinchales*. These small independent cigar enterprises were family owned and offered women the opportunity to learn the refined trade of cigar rolling. In these small shops more women were able to reach the level of *rollera*. The *chinchales* also allowed women to combine wages with family and child care responsibilities. Large cigar factories did not provide child care for working class women, but in the smaller family run shops a woman could keep a watchful eye on her children while providing income for her family. Despite the disparity between gender and labor potential, women never wavered as prominent members of labor unions and active bodies on the picket lines.<sup>26</sup>

Race divided and united Ybor City. Within the brick walls of cigar factories historic tensions between Spaniards, Cubans, and Afro-Cubans created an ethno-racial hierarchy of labor. This old world system travelled to Ybor City from Cuba. Spaniards were typically

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<sup>24</sup> Women bureau bulletin, nearly 75 percent of women employed in the Florida cigar industry worked as stemmers prior to 1929. See, *Women in Florida Industries*, Bulletin of the U.S. Women's Bureau (Washington, U.S. Govt. Printing Office 1930), no. 80, pp. 40-45. Also, to compare with other states reference, Harriet A. Byrne and Caroline Manning, *The Effects on Women of Changing Conditions in the Cigar and Cigarette Industries*, Bulletin of the U.S. Women's Bureau (Washington, U.S. Govt. Printing Office 1932), no. 100.

<sup>25</sup> *Women in Florida Industries*, Bulletin of the U.S. Women's Bureau, no.80.

<sup>26</sup> Nancy Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort*, 5.; Nancy Hewitt, "Women in Ybor City: An Interview with a Woman Cigar Worker," *Tampa Bay History*, 7, no.2 (Fall/Winter 1985): 164.

factory owners and managers in cigar factories, and in the ranks of the *tabaqueros* they were also the highest paid employees.<sup>27</sup> Conversely, Cuban, Italian, and Afro-Cuban workers occupied different levels on the employment spectrum, and rarely rose to the management levels dominated by Spaniards. This internal division sparked the first labor strike in Ybor City in 1897.<sup>28</sup> Militant Cuban *tabaqueros* incited a *huelga* (strike) that once again reminded Spanish factory owners they would demand equality and fight against the ideas and practice of colonial domination in Cuba and the United States. However, notwithstanding the clear ethnic and racial divisions within Ybor City, to Anglo Tampa the immigrant residents were a single Latino population. While these internal ethno-racial differences in were prominent, external American racial hierarchies conflated the workers into one category—nonwhite. In respect to this racialization, the nationalist ideologies of José Martí and the influences of anarchism, socialism, and Marxism blurred the lines of ethno-racial difference and caused cigar workers to bond through class solidarity.<sup>29</sup>

Inside the cigar factories, *lectores* (readers) fostered the *tabaquero* activist spirit. El lector was typically a fellow worker, selected by the cigar workers to read to them as they labored on the shop room floor.<sup>30</sup> The lector stood on a wooden platform and read to the

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<sup>27</sup> Mormino, *Immigrant World*, 262.

<sup>28</sup> This first strike is referred to the *huelga de pesa* or the “weight strike.” The strike began because Spanish manufacturers wanted to weigh the tobacco material given to cigar workers, while the *tabaqueros* saw this as a disregard for tradition and improper regard for their artisanship and positions. The strike began in 1897. For more see, Federal Writers Project, Tampa, Florida, “Life History of José Román Sanfelíz,” pp. 5, Unpublished Manuscript, Special Collections, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida.

<sup>29</sup> Nancy Hewitt explains the existence of radical political and social ideologies in Ybor City in relation to race, see introduction in Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort*, 1-15.

<sup>30</sup> The lector was typically a man’s position, few women reached this distinguished position. Nancy Hewitt outlines the role of the lector and presents an exception to the male rule as she introduces Luisa Capetillo, a *lectora puertorriqueña*. See Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort*, 1-4.; Also, Federal Writers Project, Tampa, Florida, “Ybor City, General Description, Latin Population,” pp. 15-16, Unpublished Manuscript, Special Collections, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida.



workers as they molded Havana tobacco into consumable works of art. The lectores were actors. Famous for their booming and theatrical voices, the *lector* would read excerpts of the morning and afternoon local and international newspapers, and literary and political works, such as *Das Kapital*.<sup>31</sup> Ybor City tabaqueros were the best educated illiterate population. While many of these men and women did not attend school past the eighth grade, they earned advanced degrees from the factory floor, gaining a consciousness of political, economic, and social rights that challenged the Spanish cigar shop owners and the status quo of the Jim Crow South.<sup>32</sup> Through the words of the lectores cigar workers were the allies of labor and shared a collective identity.

As cigar profits increased, neighboring Tampa took notice of the potential tax base and urged the Florida State Legislature to extend Tampa's city limits to incorporate Ybor City. The city of Tampa claimed that in doing so it would protect Ybor City with sufficient police support.<sup>33</sup> It is very likely that the potential protection was for the cigar factories, not the cigar workers. Each factory very soon became a tiny arsenal. Cigar factories were equipped with armed guards, trained dogs, grenades, and machine guns.<sup>34</sup> Ever vigilant against potential strikes, cigar factory owners took every precaution to protect their investments. Despite the protests of Ybor City's Latino residents their fledging town was incorporated into Tampa in 1887. This forever changed Ybor City.

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<sup>31</sup> Vicki L. Ruiz, interview with Berthe Small, Asa Zatz, and Alba Zatz, September 28, 1996, interview in possession of the interviewer.; José Yglesias in, Terkel, *Hard Times*, 109-110.

<sup>32</sup> Federal Writers Project, Tampa, Florida, "Ybor City, General Description, Latin Population," pp. 16, 27, Unpublished Manuscript, Special Collections, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida.

<sup>33</sup> Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 42.

<sup>34</sup> Ybor City 1911 Sanborn Map, Tony Pizzo Collection, box 104, folder Centro Asturiano, Special Collections, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida.

Ybor City's annexation cast the insular Latino enclave into the larger world of the Jim Crow South. Previously, segregation did not exist in Ybor City. Now Jim Crow applied to many of these immigrants in a new, dangerous way, especially with through rise of the Ku Klux Klan and its call for white supremacy.<sup>35</sup> Klan members were deputized and served in various citizen committees that patrolled Tampa's city streets punishing anyone who challenged the local status quo. This racially charged vigilantism became commonplace. Between 1934 and 1935, thirty-three people were lynched by the Tampa Klan.<sup>36</sup> Labor unrest in Ybor City fed the Klan's ugly penchant for hooded violence, as did progressive politics and the practice of *Latinidad* (Latino-ness).

Ybor City was now governed by the dictates Jim Crow. African Americans, Afro Cubans, Cubans, Spaniards, and Italians were forced into legally segregated social institutions and public spaces. By 1900, the racially inclusive *Círculo Cubano* was segregated forcing Afro Cubans to create *La Unión Martí-Maceo*. Quickly the popular Kress lunch counter was segregated, the *Colúmbia* and *Las Novedades* restaurants followed suit, and Afro-Cubans now rode in the back of the trolley cars.<sup>37</sup> To Tampa, Latinos were not Anglo, they were colored.<sup>38</sup> Not only did Latinos look different to Anglos, but they did not speak American- English, and when they did, it was broken and had a Spanish accent. A WPA employee observed: "Even many of the second and third generations of Cubans, although born in the United States, and by right of the constitution, Americans, are not considered as

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<sup>35</sup> Pérez, *Cuba and the United States*, 214-215.

<sup>36</sup> Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 182.

<sup>37</sup> Mormino and Pozzetta. *Immigrant World*, 57, 153.

<sup>38</sup> In the introduction to the edited volume, Jennifer Guglielmo explains the movement of immigrants from colored to white in American society. See, Jennifer Guglielmo, "White Lies, Dark Truths," in *Are Italians White?: How Race is Made in America*, eds. Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno (New York, NY: Rutledge Press 2003), 1-14.

Americans by many of the English speaking Americans.”<sup>39</sup> As one Ybor resident recalled, “...if we went outside the Ybor City area... they would look at us with a jaundiced eye... if you spoke with an accent.”<sup>40</sup> Moreover Cubanos had anarchist, socialist, and communist leaning and many refused to “stay in their place” because they continuously challenged the cigar industry. The combination of vigilante violence and segregation assured that Ybor Latinos understood they were not members of the white Anglo community.

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<sup>39</sup> Federal Writers Project, Tampa, Florida, “The Cuban Family in Ybor” pp. 283-284, Unpublished Manuscript, Special Collections, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Peter Parado, interview by Sarah McNamara, March 2011, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina- Chapel Hill.

## CHAPTER 3

### Depression and Decline of the Cigar Industry

Originally what distinguished the cigar industry's uniqueness was its tabaquero craftsmanship. Yet as the Depression worsened, it became clear that consumers of cigars no longer could afford the expensive hand-rolled products, and instead turned to the cheap, mass produced cigars and cigarettes as the cigar factories converted the specialty industry to mechanized production. This doomed the tabaqueros. Every cigar making machine displaced twelve cigar workers.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the manufactures installed machines to replace bunchera work. The machines had an output of about "four to five thousand bunches daily, which by hand would take at least twenty cigarmakers."<sup>42</sup> Now, under the new mechanized system only ten women were needed.<sup>43</sup> As a result, skilled men lost their jobs to unskilled Latinas.

Women were willing to work the cigar making machines, but they labored under an unfair piecework wage system that greatly reduced their income earning potential while allowing factory owners to maximize their profits, despite economic hard times.<sup>44</sup> Tabaquera, Dolores Patiño, recalled that during the Depression, "everyone was making less. We were on

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<sup>41</sup> Federal Writers Project, Tampa, Florida, "The Círculo Cubano: Its Contribution to Society" pp. 143, Unpublished Manuscript, Special Collections, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Nancy Hewitt, "Women in Ybor City: An Interview with a Woman Cigarworker," *Tampa Bay History*, 7, no.2 (Fall/Winter 1985): 164.; *Women in Florida Industries*, Bulletin of the U.S. Women's Bureau (Washington, U.S. Govt. Printing Office 1930), no. 80, pp.125.

a limit. We only work three days,” adding “...but it’s better to earn less than to be in the streets.”<sup>45</sup> 1930 U.S. Women’s Bureau report confirmed this fact: “It [was] obvious that many [women were] subsisting on less than what [was] recognized ...as a reasonable American standard of health and decency.”<sup>46</sup> Women were now the primary family providers but were earning draconian wages. In 1931, wages averaged sixteen dollar a week—the recognized minimum wage for an “adequate budget” in 1918.<sup>47</sup> To supplement their wives’ wages, Latino males searched desperately for work, but rarely found it. In an interview between Stetson Kennedy and a Cubano named Pedro, the tabaquero explained he worked like a “slave” producing cigar boxes in a local factory. In his new job he made only twelve dollars a week, however, the plant owner personally profited 18,000 dollars a year.<sup>48</sup> As the Depression deepened, a rise in male unemployment caused an exodus of Cuban men to the North, specifically to New York City and Philadelphia to seek factory work, while others returned to Cuba with their families.<sup>49</sup> Southern Dixiecrats had pauperized these men by excluding them from the dole and WPA relief work.<sup>50</sup> As a result, many Latinos had no choice but to leave Ybor City. *La Gaceta* summed up the dilemma that had befallen Ybor city’s proud Latino workers:

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<sup>45</sup> Hewitt, “Women In Ybor City,” 164.

<sup>46</sup> *Women in Florida Industries*, Bulletin of the U.S. Women’s Bureau, pp. 49.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

<sup>48</sup> Federal Writers Project, Tampa, Florida, “Pedro and Estrella” pp. 403, Unpublished Manuscript, Special Collections, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida.

<sup>49</sup> Federal Writers Project, Tampa, Florida, “The Círculo Cubano: Its Contribution to Society” pp. 143, Unpublished Manuscript, Special Collections, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida.

<sup>50</sup> According to the WPA board, there were approximately 24,000 Latinos living in Ybor City in 1938. Of those 24,000 only 9,300 were employed by cigar factories. Most of these employees were women. This forced men to leave Ybor City and Tampa in search of work. Also, the number of cigar factories had dwindled from 122 at the industry’s height to 31 in 1938. See, Federal Writers Project, Tampa, Florida, “Ybor City General Description” pp. 1, 60, 68, 76.

“Thank you to our municipal authorities that allowed mechanization to ruin industry; thank you to the egotistical industrialists who have discredited our hands and our skill, and thank you to the Chamber of Commerce who failed to see that the machine and industry would consume our market and lead to our complete demise, thus causing us to leave Tampa looking for work so we can eat.”<sup>51</sup>

The stress of male unemployment was not a private matter in Ybor City, but a community concern. In an article titled, “The Problem with Women in Tampa,” *La Gaceta* detailed the effects of Latino unemployment in Tampa.<sup>52</sup> “We see the problem with women in Tampa, and now we must think about how it can be remedied,” the article began. “In Tampa we have cigar factories that largely deny employment to men. From our point of view, we are mothers with children... this should not continue, we don’t want our families to be broken.” Latina women fully recognized that mechanization had changed the cigar industry, their Latino community, and their families. This predicament fed the flames of frustration amongst financially strapped Latinos, and united their community through class struggle.

The year 1931 marked the last major labor strike to take place in Ybor City. As a result of the Great Depression, the cigar industry experienced a seventeen percent decrease in production and a thirty percent drop in pay rolls between 1929 and 1931.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore in January 1931, the Cigar Manufacturers Association of Tampa declared an additional ten percent cut in wages.<sup>54</sup> At the time, cigar workers comprised twenty-five percent of the Tampa labor force. Most were women, working as unskilled machine operators.<sup>55</sup> Since the

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<sup>51</sup> Carmen Prida, “El Problema con las Mujeres en Tampa,” *La Gaceta*, October 29, 1937, pp. 3

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 149.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 150.

1910s, the Cigar Makers International Union (CMIU), a conservative American Federation of Labor (AFL) affiliate, represented the Ybor Cigar industry.<sup>56</sup> The CMIU opined that cigar workers did not strike because they were “disorganized.”<sup>57</sup> This claim allegation could have been a result of the change of the cigar labor force, more women than men were now employed by the cigar factories. For their part, historians have argued that women were disorganized because they were not familiar with unionization. In the case of Cuban cigar makers, this seems unlikely.<sup>58</sup> Since the inception of the Florida cigar industry, Cuban women stood alongside men in support of *las huelgas* (the strikes).<sup>59</sup> They did this through women’s auxiliaries that lent men support during the planning in addition to the execution of a strike. Leading the 1931 strike was the Tobacco Workers Industrial Union (TWIU) that by April had a membership of five thousand workers.<sup>60</sup> It appears the January silence signaled a change in union alliance rather than internal disorganization. The radical spirit of the TWIU countered the pure and simple unionism of the CMIU as it ignited the radical tendencies of the tabaqueros to give workers a new voice against cigar manufacturers. The reality of no severance pay and no employment prospects spurred Latinos to action.

The fear of a communist revolution in Florida once more fueled anti-labor fervor. As they had ten years previously, the Ybor cigar manufacturers voted to remove the lector stands

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 149-150.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 150.

<sup>58</sup> Elna C. Green argues that women were not as successful striking in Tampa because there was not a strong culture of cross-gender organization. See, Green, “Relief from Relief,” 1033.

<sup>59</sup> Nancy Hewitt counters the above claim and affirms that women both organized and marched as public members of strikes and demonstrations in Ybor City and Tampa. See, Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort*, 68-69.

<sup>60</sup> Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 154.

from all their factories inside the Cigar City.<sup>61</sup> Manufacturers believed lectores poisoned the minds of cigar workers with subversive theory and literature. On the morning after Thanksgiving, the tabaqueros arrived to work and saw the dismantled lector stands and immediately walked out. That day, over seven thousand cigar workers called a strike to protest the elimination of the lector.<sup>62</sup> The tabaqueros had brought the lector tradition with them to Tampa. The removal of the lector was a slap in the face; it showed a lack of respect and a complete disregard for cigar rolling traditions. The industry-wide strike quickly spread from Ybor City to neighboring West Tampa and nearly reached the level of a general strike.<sup>63</sup> As in previous strikes, Latina women were asked to join the strike and they responded in kind despite the burden of household and childcare responsibilities.<sup>64</sup> Tabaqueras attended rallies sponsored by unemployed councils calling for unemployment relief and stood united on the picket lines set up by TWIU organizers. Workers from other industries also joined the protest in a show of solidarity for the striking Cubans. Despite the onslaught of violent repression, strike highlighted the power of Latino labor.

During strikes, Cuban workers relied on their mutual aid societies and fraternal organizations for monetary assistance and credit extension. This support was not imminent and evaporated because of the hard lines of the Great Depression. The cigar workers tried to return to work, but the factory owners locked them out of the shops. Because the strike began on November 27 and the lock-out on November 30, the workers had completed the holiday

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>62</sup> For more on the power of the lector see, Louis A. Perez, Jr. "Reminisces of a Lector: Cuban Cigar Workers in Tampa," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* (April 1975): 443-448. Also Robert P. Ingalls explains how cigar workers' concept of tradition fueled strikes in Ybor City, see Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 34-35.

<sup>63</sup> Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 153.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.



so the owners had no reason to rehire a workers immediately. One goal of the lock-out was to purge the work rolls of all radicals and to establish peace in Tampa.<sup>65</sup> In order to achieve this peace, a twenty-five man Citizen's Committee was created to "weed" communists out of [the cigar] factories.<sup>66</sup> This red scare drive ended in Florida's state capitol, Tallahassee, when the State Supreme Court ruled unanimously against the TWIU and the publishers of multilingual newspapers barring both from interfering in the cigar industry. Furthermore, seditious and other incendiary literature and speech making, much of which was deemed foreign in nature and hence un-American, were banned from the cigar factories. The Florida State Supreme Court decision validated and sustained the vigilante actions of the Citizen's Committee.<sup>67</sup> As a southern city, Tampa embraced vigilantism to maintain order. On December 14, factory owners agreed to reopen the doors to their shops "provided the factories can be operated upon a basis of true Americanism and loyalty to [the] city, state, and federal government."<sup>68</sup> Yet after washing the workers rosters clean of the red menace, owners cut their workforces once more, this time by seventy percent. The loss of employment placed further stress on the already struggling families within Ybor City's Latino enclave. The endemic joblessness, prejudice, and racially motivated violence, had prompted many Cubano cigar workers to heed the radical calls of the TWIU for solidarity.

The 1931 strike represented a shift in the language of labor in the Latino dominated cigar industry. Rather than demanding change on their own, cigar workers who once called strikes to maintain traditions and gain higher wages and better working conditions now

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 155.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 156.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 157.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 156.

worked through left wing unionism. The hard line of cigar factory owners who equated “true Americanism” with “anti-communism,” overlooked the Communist Party’s appeal to cigar workers.<sup>69</sup> In a Southern city with an active Ku Klux Klan and Citizen’s Committee, the Party’s milieu of inclusivism and anti-racism was like a beacon of hope for the cigar workers. In many ways, however, Ybor City’s cigar workers did not need more lessons on the question of class struggle, given their militant working class consciousness and belief in the strike as a weapon. Against this backdrop of resistance, union-minded Latina women in 1937 took up the call for social and economic equality through the Workers Alliance of America and the Popular Front.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 156.

## CHAPTER 4

### Latina Working-Class Activism and the New Deal

In 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt launched his New Deal, thereby putting in place throughout the nation assistance programs and projects and swelling the presence of the federal government in the everyday lives of Americans. The deepening Depression forced Latinas to turn to the federal government for help.<sup>70</sup> In Florida, the beacon of federal assistance was the Works Progress Administration (WPA). However, as in New York, Philadelphia, San Antonio, and other cities with sizable Latino populations, Ybor City's Latinos experienced discrimination because the WPA relief program was administered locally by Anglos. While the WPA provided relief to many of Tampa's Anglo men and women, Cubanos were discriminated against on the basis of race and citizenship.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, Latinos employed by the WPA received less pay than whites for equal work. In essence, the combination of Jim Crow and Southern political bossism dominated all federal relief programs rendering them discriminatory.

As Latino males continued to lose their jobs and joined the ranks of the unemployed, Ybor City's Latinas took on the role of family breadwinners. Many of these Latinas were

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<sup>70</sup> Lizabeth Cohen illustrates the turn to of immigrant workers to the federal government for economic protection and relief during the Great Depression. See, Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago 1919-1939* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 252-253.

<sup>71</sup> Julia Blackwelder's study of San Antonio argues that black, Mexican, and Anglo women in depression-era Texas competed for limited resources. Tampa has many parallels to San Antonio, both cities were divided by ethnic enclaves, entrenched by political machines, and both cities' relief programs were overwhelmed. For more see, Julia Blackwelder, *Women of the Depression: Caste and Culture in San Antonio, 1929-1939* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1984).

raised in radical households by parents with anarchist, socialist, and Cuban revolutionary tendencies. As workers WPA relief employees, and members of the Worker's Alliance of America, Ybor City's Latina women protested and marched for labor equality and civil rights for themselves and their family members.

Historically, Ybor City Latino workers found strength and power in the union. However, *trabajadores* (workers) employed by New Deal work relief programs were prohibited from striking.<sup>72</sup> Also, the Wagner Act stipulated that only a single labor organization could represent an industry, and manufacturers ultimately decided which union would negotiate in *their* best interest. Lastly, the American Federation of Labor was the sole union for cigar workers. While Tampa never gained a formal CIO presence, the influence and power of the Popular Front spread throughout Ybor City's Latino community gaining followers and pushing Southern society to reconsider the meaning of American.<sup>73</sup>

Ybor City's Latino community began to mobilize in new and creative ways. Although the power of the union had shifted from community control to AFL representation and federal regulation, Latinos communicated their frustrations with the hard times through political and cultural actions. As the international threat of fascism intensified, Ybor Latinos

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<sup>72</sup> Donald S. Howard, *The WPA and Federal Relief Policy* (New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation, 1943): 218-227.; David Ziskind, *One Thousand Strikes of Government Employees* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1940): 141-152.

<sup>73</sup> In Florida, the CIO was concentrated in Miami. See, Alex Lichtenstein, "We at Last Are Industrializing the Whole Ding-busted Party: The Communist Party and Florida Workers in the Depression," in *Florida's Working-Class Past: Current Perspectives on Labor, Race, and Gender from Spanish Florida to New Immigration*, eds. Robert Cassanello and Melanie Shell Weiss (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2009).

came to the support of the Spanish Republic by sending volunteers abroad to fight with the Abraham Lincoln Brigades.<sup>74</sup> The cry of “*No Pasarán!*” (They shall not pass!) rose in the streets of Ybor City and echoed across the ocean as it became an international slogan in the fight to preserve democracy. In October of 1936, the Ybor City Latino troupe of the Federal Theater Project (FTP), premiered the Spanish language version of Sinclair Lewis’ “It Can’t Happen Here.”<sup>75</sup> This production was coordinated by national FTP, under the direction of Hallie Flanagan. Hallie stated that the FTP wanted to perform Lewis’ play:

“...because it’s about American life today, based on a passionate belief in American democracy. The play says that when a dictatorship comes to threaten such a democracy, it comes in an apparently harmless guise, with parades and promises; but that when such a dictatorship arrives, the promises are not kept and the parade ground become encampments.”<sup>76</sup>

The Spanish language production of this play—the only one in the United States-- left standing room only in the aisles of the *Centro Asturiano* Theater.<sup>77</sup> Unlike other national productions of the FTP, the Spanish-language version focused on the effects of a white dictatorship on ethno-racial minorities. All of Ybor City’s Latinos recognized the dual meaning of “It Can’t Happen Here,” how it applied to their desire to combat the threat of fascism abroad, and how the play spoke to their oppression as Latinos in the South.

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<sup>74</sup> From the Abraham Lincoln Brigades, eight names of Cuban Ybor volunteers are available: Joaquín Martí, Basilio Cueria y Soto, Rodolfo de Armas y Soto, Eladio Paula Bolanas, Oscar Soler y Tarafa, Carlos Guijano, Víctor Domínguez Bienvenido, and Aurelio Paula Bolanos. More information is available through the Abraham Lincoln Brigades Archive, see, *Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archive*, <http://www.alba-valb.org/volunteers/> (accessed September 2010).; For more on Ybor Latinos in Spain during the Spanish Civil War see, Ana Varela-Lago, “‘No Pasarán!’: The Spanish Civil War’s Impact of the Latin Community of Ybor City, 1936-1939,” *Tampa Bay History*, 19, no.2 (Fall/Winter 1997).

<sup>75</sup> Kenya C. Dworkin y Menendez, “Cuban Theater, American Stage: Before Exile” in *The State of Latino Theater in the United States: Hybridity, Transculturation and Identity*, (New York, NY: Rutledge, 2002): 115-116.

<sup>76</sup> Hallie Flanagan quoted in, Susan Quinn, *Furious Improvisation: How the WPA and a Cast of Thousands Made High Art Out of Desperate Times* (New York, NY: Walker Publishing, 2008), 120.

<sup>77</sup> Hewitt, *Economic Crisis*, 73.

One month after the staging of Sinclair Lewis' "It Can't Happen Here," the American Federation of Labor held its annual convention in Tampa. The atmosphere on the convention floor was particularly contentious because in September the AFL executive council suspended the CIO unions and now, the AFL prepared to publicly affirm this decision.<sup>78</sup> This action caused the American Federation of Labor to lose a third of its membership, cutting away at the power of the national federation.<sup>79</sup> The *Tampa Morning Tribune* reported that when William Green, AFL president, denounced the CIO as "industrial rebels," his "pink face turn[ed] a little pinker" as he "shout[ed] his indignant assaults on the A.F. of L's solidarity."<sup>80</sup> Inclined to red-baiting, the *Tribune* painted CIO leader John L. Lewis as a "rebel" guilty of treason for defying AFL. Controlled by cigar manufacturers and other business owners, this newspaper would likewise fan the flames of communism to smear the CIO and the Popular Front as un-American. *La Gaceta*, on the other hand, gave a different version in its coverage of the AFL annual convention, particularly honing in on the AFL's position on the matter of the Spanish Civil War.

Along with a strong sense of Cuban revolutionary nationalism, Ybor Latinos had long embraced internationalism and staunchly supported the anti-fascist resistance in Spain. Michael C. Denning refers to this sentiment as "ethnic Americanism." This dual devotion to ethnic identity with an allegiance to American democracy proliferated throughout immigrant communities like during the Popular Front.<sup>81</sup> In Ybor City, the Spanish Civil War became the primary political concern for Latino laborers. *La Gaceta* complained harshly about AFL's

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<sup>78</sup> "Green Pleas for Peace then Defies Lewis," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, November 17, 1936, pp. 1,7.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> "Green's Pink Face Turns Pinker When He Raps 'Rebels,'" *Tampa Morning Tribune*, November 17, 1936, pp.7.

<sup>81</sup> Denning, *Cultural Front*, 9.

position of neutrality with regard to the war in Spain. When the Latino community did not get support from William Green on this important issue, *La Gaceta* attacked the AFL president charging he was a “dictator who wished to maintain a neutral position.”<sup>82</sup>

Denouncing neutrality, Ybor City mobilized its Popular Front Committee to raise funds for the American Red Cross in Spain and praised and stood behind the young Cubanos who volunteered to fight in Spain with the Abraham Lincoln Brigades.<sup>83</sup> Ybor City joined other Latino communities across the United States and made the anti-fascist cause the axis of a *Frente Popular* (Popular Front). A militant anti-fascist Latina who defended the cause of Loyalist Spain was Luisa Moreno. Moreno was already making a name for herself as an effective labor organizer and she would champion the fight for Latino labor and civil rights in Ybor City.

At the American Federation of Labor convention, Luisa Moreno, recently arrived from New York City’s Spanish Harlem, was the Florida delegate to the CMIU. Like the Latino workers she represented, Moreno was dedicated to the antifascist cause, and she recognized the potential for further mobilization of the Latino community of Ybor City to the cause of the Popular Front. At the AFL convention, the CMIU delegate, Moreno, delivered an address to the all male delegates, personally disagreeing with changes to cigar workers’ contracts that she argued benefitted the cigar manufactures. No doubt taken aback by Moreno’s brashness and stern position, the AFL leadership concluded that she might prove detrimental to the CMIU in the Florida and arranged to transfer Moreno to Pennsylvania.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> “Chungas y no Chungas,” *La Gaceta*, November 18, 1936, pp 1.

<sup>83</sup> The Latino community raised over 22,000 dollars in support of the Spanish Republic and sent 24 representatives to fight the war against fascism. “...Humanidad,” *La Gaceta*, May 6, 1937, pp.3.

<sup>84</sup> Vicki L. Ruiz, Field Notes from Interview with Luisa Moreno, Interview Not Recorded, July 1978, Notes in possession of Vicki L. Ruiz.

However, before Luisa Moreno left Florida, Moreno she assisted Ybor City's Latino community their struggle to gain rights as workers, as American citizens, and as participants in the larger Popular Front cause.<sup>85</sup> Luisa Moreno was the mistress of self re-invention. Born Blanca Rosa Rodríguez López, she was the daughter of a Guatemalan socialite and a coffee plantation owner.<sup>86</sup> Her upbringing represented the epitome of privilege and her place at the top of Latin America's class-caste social hierarchy. Her wealth and class background afforded her every advantage appropriate for a woman of her social station, but Blanca felt emotionally crippled by the expectations of elite society. In 1928, Blanca traded her parent's Guatemala plantation for the streets of New York City's working class Spanish Harlem, and transformed herself from a daughter of privilege to a selfless union organizer.<sup>87</sup> In New York, Blanca found herself toiling over a sewing machine as a garment factory worker struggling to support her family. She was already a member of the *Centro Obrero de Habla Espanola* (Spanish Speaking Workers' Center), a communist front organization founded by Blanca's comrade and mentor, Alberto Moreau, an Argentinean-born expatriate.<sup>88</sup> Moreau's record of radical activism was extensive. He served on the central committee of the CPUSA and aided the communist struggle in Cuba and Puerto Rico's independence movement. Moreau was also the Havana correspondent to the *New Masses* and a collaborator with the Communist International. Blanca joined the Communist Party in 1930, and her first

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Vicki L. Ruiz, "Una Mujer Sin Fronteras: Luisa Moreno and Latina Activism," *Pacific Historical Review*, 73, no. 1 (February 2004): 2. ; also, Vicki L. Ruiz, "Of Poetics and Politics: The Border Journeys of Luisa Moreno," in *Women's Labor in the Global Economy: Speaking in Multiple Voices*, Sharon Harley, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press), 29-32.

<sup>87</sup> Ruiz, "Una Mujer," 2-3.

<sup>88</sup> Kenneth Burt, "Alberto Moreau, Early Communist Party Candidate," December 16, 2011, <http://kennethburt.com/blog/?p=1195> (accessed January 2012). For information on Spanish Harlem Latino activism in the 1930s, see Lorin Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen: History and Political Identity in the Twentieth Century New York City* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010), especially Chapter Three.



assignment was organizing her fellow seamstresses into *La Liga de Costureras* (The League of Garment Workers), an all Latino workers union.<sup>89</sup> As an organizer, Blanca had little financial assistance and no staff support. Nevertheless, she saw the value in grass roots organizing and the importance of union representation. “One person can’t do anything,” Blanca bluntly stated, “it’s only with others that things are accomplished.”<sup>90</sup> In 1935, Blanca’s growing reputation as a Spanish- speaking organizer caught the attention of the American Federation of Labor. The established and conservative AFL offered Blanca the assignment of organizing Latino cigar workers in Florida. Without hesitation Blanca quit her job, left her husband, and moved to the South. The AFL saw Blanca as a “green horn,” an individual who could easily be taken advantage of due to her youth and sex.<sup>91</sup> The national labor federation’s strength in the South was in Florida, but avoided organizing in the state because the Ku Klux Klan, now 33,000 strong, had a reputation of terrorizing labor organizers and anyone else who challenged the reign of white supremacy. Blanca believed like the AFL that the Klan would think twice about attacking a “picket line lady.”<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, because of Blanca’s white skin she would not upset the balance of Jim Crow Florida.

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<sup>89</sup> Ruiz, “Of Poetics and Politics,” 32.

<sup>90</sup> Luisa Moreno quoted in, Ruiz, “Una Mujer Sin Fronteras,” 7.

<sup>91</sup> Vicki L. Ruiz, Field Notes from Interview with Luisa Moreno, Interview Not Recorded, July 1978, Notes in possession of Vicki L. Ruiz.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

Barely standing five-feet tall, Blanca had porcelain white skin, jet black hair, and she spoke perfect English.<sup>93</sup> In Florida, she could have very easily “passed” for white, but chose to identify as a Latina. Blanca’s time organizing in Florida marked the last stage of her transformation—there she became, and would forever remain, Luisa Moreno. The name Moreno, meaning dark, is counter to Luisa’s given name Blanca, meaning white. Changing her name from Blanca to Moreno was Luisa’s final step in reincarnating herself from her privileged pedigree and fully embracing the class conscious woman she had become.<sup>94</sup> Historian Vicki L. Ruiz notes that the importance of Luisa Moreno’s awakening because it took place in the Jim Crow South, a region where “segregation and white domination was a way of life.”<sup>95</sup>

In Florida, the Luisa Moreno quickly proved her prowess by organizing 13,000 cigar workers from Ybor City to Jacksonville and help to negotiate new labor contracts for these workers.<sup>96</sup> Once Luisa Moreno did this thankless work for the AFL, it reassigned her to Pennsylvania. The dissident Latina unionist, severed her ties with the AFL and joined the CIO, the heart of the Popular Front.<sup>97</sup> Before Moreno left the AFL to head the CIO’s UCAPAWA union, she ignored the AFL’s regulations eschewing mass based militant action and helped Latino workers in Ybor City organize two demonstrations. One would be a mass Popular Front protest led by women, the other a strike by WPA women garment workers

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<sup>93</sup> Ruiz, “Una Mujer Sin Fronteras,” 8.; For impressions of Moreno’s appearance see, Interview with Berthe Small, Asa Zatz, and Alba Zatz, Interviewed by Vicki L. Ruiz, September 28, 1996, Interview in Possession of Vicki L. Ruiz.

<sup>94</sup> Vicki Ruiz contends that Luisa Moreno, “conjugated her identity” for more see, Ruiz, “Una Mujer Sin Fronteras,” 8.; and, Ruiz, “Of Poetics and Politics,” 32.

<sup>95</sup> Ruiz, “Of Poetics and Politics,” 32.

<sup>96</sup> Vicki L. Ruiz, Field Notes from Interview with Luisa Moreno, Interview Not Recorded, July 1978, Notes in possession of Vicki L. Ruiz.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

supported by the Worker's Alliance of America. The demonstration and strike championed the interests of the unemployed, the threat of fascism, and the struggles of Latino and Latina WPA relief workers against discrimination within this New Deal Program. More important, Ybor City's Latinas appropriated Americanism and inflated its importance in their call for labor and civil rights. The concept of Americanism was a reflection of the politics ushered in by the New Deal.

## CHAPTER 5

### Demanding Workers' Rights through Women's Actions

At 3pm on May 6, 1937, Ybor City fell silent.<sup>98</sup> As women workers switched off the cigar and cigarette machines a lull swept across Ybor City. Rarely were the streets of Ybor this quiet, but on this warm Thursday afternoon stillness signaled action.<sup>99</sup> The tall, mahogany double doors of the García y Vega Factory swung open and three hundred women emptied out onto the brick-paved streets. Quickly and calmly, these women walked one block to the Labor Temple located on Eighth Avenue. This building's Moorish architecture echoed Ybor City's Spanish roots while inside its rich legacy of Cuban unionism once more came to life.

Latino men from the fraternal delegation of the Popular Front met these *organizadoras* (women organizers) with picket signs, banners, and support. All picket signs and banners were written in English. The slogans ranged from antifascist messages like "Make Spain the Tomb of Fascism!", "Stop Hitler and Mussolini!", and "Peace and Democracy," to demands for workers' rights such as "For State Wage Law!", "Equal Pay for Equal Work!", and "Workers Alliance: Jobs-Recovery-Security."<sup>100</sup> Each woman chose her

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<sup>98</sup> "Más de 7,000 Mujeres, Niños, y Hombres Fueron desde Ybor hasta la Casa de Ayuntamiento," *La Gaceta*, May 7, 1937, pp.1,4.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

picket sign and joined the 7,000 protesters waiting to march to City Hall.<sup>101</sup> An unknown number of Anglo and African American women from the WPA sewing rooms joined the Latinas to show their support for the labor rights and the antifascist cause.<sup>102</sup> Dressed all in white, at 5pm the women lined-up in rows of six, linked arms, and began their march.<sup>103</sup> The demonstrators in the front row carried an American flag. Police officers riding motorcycles flanked each side of the marching women.<sup>104</sup> The rhythmic, almost synchronized, rapping of 14,000 *tacones* (high heel shoes) made it impossible to ignore the women marchers or their messages on their picket signs and banners. With their heads held high, the demonstrators rounded the corner onto Seventh Avenue (Broadway), which was lined with hundreds of supporters from Ybor City's Latino *barrio*. Some businesses on this main thoroughfare closed their doors in solidarity with the women marchers, but also as a show of reverence for the lives lost in the Spanish Civil War overseas, that included Cubano volunteers from Ybor City.<sup>105</sup> As the women reached the end of Seventh Avenue and the cheers of their mainly Latino supporters fading, they turned left onto Franklin Street and crossed into greater Tampa, entering a potentially hostile and dangerous terrain.

By 5:30pm, the women marchers were in the heart of Tampa. The supportive Latino cheers and jubilation were exchanged for the angry jeers and glares of Anglos.<sup>106</sup> White police men stood along Franklin Street's wooden planked sidewalks prepared to "guard" the

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> While the march consisted largely of Latinas, women working in the WPA sewing room also attended the march and supported the women of Ybor. "El Jueves la Gran Manifestación de Protesta por el Asesinato...Mujeres y Niños," *La Gaceta*, May 4, 1937, pp.1.

<sup>103</sup> Photograph of the Marchers, Courtesy of the Ybor City Museum, May 1937. *\* waiting on picture to add.*

<sup>104</sup> "Más de 7,000 Mujeres," *La Gaceta*, pp. 1.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

marchers from any possible threat. In light of Tampa's long, ugly history of racial and ethnic violence, most likely that Tampa's finest were present to maintain the color-line separating the brave Latina marchers and the contemptuous Anglo crowds. As the women reached downtown Tampa, the city's political and financial center, their ranks tighten and their pace slowed. Like a uniform and well-organized brigade, the women marchers came to a halt at the steps of Tampa's City Hall. Here, Ybor City's Latinas consisting of mothers, daughters, aunts, nieces, *madrinas* (god mothers), and *amigas* (friends) patiently and calmly waited for their spokeswoman to step forward to address the mayor in English to show that the marchers had come as Americans.

During the preceding five days of planning and collaboration with the male-led Popular Front Committee, the Latino march leaders voted to make all picket signs and banners in English, compose a bilingual women's manifesto, and draw the crowd's attention by wearing white dresses.<sup>107</sup> The decision to print all material in English guaranteed that the goals of the demonstration would not be lost in translation. The white dresses would symbolize loyalty, purity of purpose, and hope, while their yellow Worker Alliance badges signaled the demonstrators' solidarity. Moreover wearing white linked the Cubanas with early twentieth century American and British suffragists and with the earlier counter revolutionary groups in Russia.<sup>108</sup> The tabaqueras coordinated clothing served to catch the public's attention, but also to communicate their intentions. By using English and dressing in white, the Latinas sought to create a climate of public opinion sympathetic to their cause. Although many of the Latina marchers allied with the Communist Party as fellow travelers,

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<sup>107</sup> "El Jueves la Gran Manifestación..." *La Gaceta*, May 4, 1937, pp.1.

<sup>108</sup> Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907-1914* (London, England: Chatto and Windus Limited, 1987).

the march was not a Party tactic. Recognizing the difference between the Popular Front and the CPUSA, the women sought to gain support for their call for civil rights through collective action. While the echoes of international sentiment cannot be denied the antifascist march was an occasion for Latinas to protest the repressive Jim Crow racial and labor policies imposed upon Ybor City Latinos by greater Anglo Tampa. On this day their demands would not be misunderstood and the Latinas would not be dismissed as foreign immigrants. As we shall see, the appropriation of the term Americanism would prove problematic for Ybor City's Latinas of foreign birth and parentage.

When Mayor Robert E. Lee Chancey emerged from the Tampa City Hall building, he was greeted by an undulating sea of women in white. The huge crowd of Latinas who packed the streets, stood poised at attention, ready to deliver their message to Tampa. It is uncertain which woman stepped forward and read the statement representing Ybor City's position on the matter of the war in Spain to the Mayor and the city of Tampa. It may have been Luisa Moreno, the tireless, devoted, and eloquent champion of working class people, her last act before departing the southern city for Pennsylvania.<sup>109</sup> It may have been one of the many working-class Latinas from Ybor City, experienced in public speaking, who had addressed government officials on behalf of Latino workers on the matter of WPA work relief or acted as a spokesperson for the Workers' Alliance of America.<sup>110</sup> That afternoon, a woman stepped forward from the ranks of her fellow marchers and presented the worker's proclamation:

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<sup>109</sup> Based on the language, I am confident the speaker and organizer was Luisa Moreno. However, there is no proof other than the consistency of language between this statement and her published works. For more, see Ruiz, "Of Poetic and Politics."

<sup>110</sup> As a note, it is interesting that the identity of the women speaking is unknown. This omission from newspapers and Popular Front Committee correspondences could speak to the collaborative nature of the event, but it could also highlight how men, both journalists and Popular Front Committee members, did not find it noteworthy enough to comment on a woman's identity.

“...As citizens and residents of a peaceful and democratic nation, we feel morally obliged to give all possible aid to Spanish cities that defend their democratic government against fascist aggression, thus maintaining the standard of peace and democracy in the world.”<sup>111</sup>

Mayor Chancey came down the steps of City Hall, thanked the women marchers, and promised them he would send a letter to Florida’s congressional delegation in Washington, D.C. The mayor stated he hoped his letter would convey the public’s concern for those suffering in Spain. <sup>112</sup> During his speech, Mayor Chancey invoked the memory of President Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor Policy. He expressed his desire for the United States to act as a “good neighbor” to Spain rather than as a “passive enemy.”<sup>113</sup> Mayor Chancey’s lip-service paid to the Good Neighbor Policy did not stop President Roosevelt from tolerating right-wing dictators in Latin America, his own backyard. Mayor Chancey never opposed American neutrality or acknowledged the importance of the women’s actions because he understood that taking a position on the war in Spain, went against the United State’s official stance on neutrality. Furthermore, antifascism in Spain was directly aligned with communism. Notwithstanding, the Mayor overlooked the most important aspect of the day’s events—the demonstration was by Latinas as Americans citizens and it spoke to a greater American majority. As members of a racially and socially subjugated minority, the demonstration was a protest against prejudice and a moment that promoted social and economic equality.

The Latina marchers also publicly and rhetorically confronted Tampa’s traditional southern notions of femininity. From place to language, these women made a public claim of Latinos’ rights for full realization of American citizenship. More importantly, the Latinas did

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<sup>111</sup> “ El Alcalde Recibió a una Comisión y le Ofreció Escribir a los Legisladores,” *La Gaceta*, May 7, 1937, pp. 4A.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*



not choose to make their address on the steps of the *Círculo Cubano* or the *Centro Español* because the women understood that their audience was larger than Ybor City—their message was to America. To Ybor City’s Latinos, Tampa was their America. It was exclusively white and saw difference based on race, ethnicity, and, in the case of Latinos, U.S. citizenship. When the women of the *García y Vega* Factory joined the men of the Popular Front Committee and made the decision to march to City Hall, it would be to address their *fellow* Americans. At this event Ybor’s Latinas went against the dictates of Jim Crows’ color-line, they crossed it to make themselves heard as Latinos and as Americans.<sup>114</sup>

Fearing violence, Ybor City’s Latino males were reluctant to protest in the streets. Latinas therefore were chosen as the public political actors because of the safety of their sex. Just as the southern African American communities mobilized women as public political figures during the height of Jim Crow, Ybor City’s Latino community did the same.<sup>115</sup> Latina women could cross fixed social boundaries with less threat of police or vigilante violence. Although the act of women protesting and marching was unruly and unfeminine, an act by “Amazons,” it was still construed as threatening.<sup>116</sup> In May of 1937, Ybor City’s Latinos had planned their demonstration to present a restrained and “feminine” image of Cubanas so as not to undermine their march or put themselves and their community in harm’s way.

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<sup>114</sup> The male leaders of the *Comite de Defensa del Frente Popular* (Popular Front Committee) were: José Martínez, Victoriano Manteiga, Aurélio Prado, Pedro Ramírez Moya, Gustavo Jiménez, Benjamin Blanco, and Pedro Ramírez. “El Jueves a las 1:45 de la Tarde Llegara Don Fernando de los Ríos,” *La Gaceta*, November 18, 1936, pp.1.

<sup>115</sup> For more on African American women and political/social movement, see, *Glenda Gilmore, Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Press, 1996).; and, Tera Hunter, *To Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors after the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

<sup>116</sup> Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*.

Therefore, while gender was often a restriction, Ybor City's Latinas, like other racial minority women, found a relative medium of power in sexual double standards.

Tampa's Anglos remained unswayed because of their deep felt prejudices toward Latinos. To many of Tampa's Anglos, Latinos were not black, but they certainly were not white because they occupied an ambiguous space within the South's understanding of race.<sup>117</sup> The powerful racial binary of Jim Crow created two notions of Americanism. Being Cuban was equated by Anglos with being "foreign" and thus not worthy of inclusion. This line of thinking led to the Anglo run WPA to deny Latinos federal work relief. Furthermore this racialization of Latinos by Anglos led them to believe Latinos were accustomed to a lower standard of living. In order to speak openly and express their concerns about discrimination at home and fascism abroad, Ybor's Latinos had to walk the color-line cautiously. A march by Latina women provided the safest means for Ybor City's Latino community to express their concerns as American citizens.

Red baiting was another formidable obstacle. Ybor City's Latinos had long been victims of condemnatory accusations and red-baiting charges. In November 1935, three labor organizers met at a local home in Ybor City to discuss and plan a political demonstration in Tampa.<sup>118</sup> These men were found, captured, tarred, feathered, and hanged. Wake of Tampa's reinvigorated Ku Klux Klan openly attacking Latinos, but in line with the tenets of Southern chivalry it was believed that women would be left unharmed. Luisa Moreno remembered that while in Florida the Klan never threatened her.<sup>119</sup> However, a reactionary worker did attempt

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<sup>117</sup> See, Guglielmo, *Are Italians White?*.

<sup>118</sup> Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantism*, 183-184.

<sup>119</sup> Vicki L. Ruiz, Field Notes from Interview with Luisa Moreno, Interview Not Recorded, July 1978, Notes in possession of Vicki L. Ruiz.

to take her life with an ice pick during a union meeting.<sup>120</sup> As the Ybor City Popular Front planned the upcoming march, these recent acts of violence against the Ybor City community were undoubtedly on their minds. By mobilizing women, the voices and concerns of the Latino community would therefore be heard, with a minimal risk of racial assault.

The bombing of Guernica gave women a particular reason to protest as they responded to the reporting of this act of violence against innocent Spaniards. On April 27, 1937, the front page headline of *La Gaceta* read “Fascist German Airplanes Annihilated Hundreds of Defenseless People in Guernica.”<sup>121</sup> The story detailed the fascist offenses towards *los vulnerables*—the vulnerable women and children of the Spanish Republic. For nine days before the women’s planned march, this gendered rhetoric appeared in the pages of *La Gaceta*.<sup>122</sup> In its reports of the war in Spain the local Latino newspaper highlighted the sufferings of women and children and called for local aid from Latinas, a call to mobilization of mothers, sisters, and daughters. Through a language of femininity, *La Gaceta* created an image of the Spanish Republic as a suffering damsel ravaged by fascist regimes. By contrasting the impression of a bloody, torn, Spanish motherland with a sense of American strength and stability, *La Gaceta* echoed the sentiments of Ybor City Cubans. As Ybor’s Latinas prepared for their demonstration, a tabaquera declared “our hearts bleed for all civilized women; fascism shreds our sentiments and we will protest with the vigor of our bodies as we call for justice.”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> “Aeroplanos Alemanes de los Facciosos Anquilaron a Centares de Seres Indefensos en Guernica,” *La Gaceta*, April 27, 1937, pp.1.

<sup>122</sup> A survey of newspaper headlines from April 27-May 10 in *La Gaceta* clearly highlights this point.

<sup>123</sup>“ Entusiasmo de la Mujer,” *La Gaceta*, May 4, 1937, pp.1.

As we have seen, Ybor City openly opposed the United States' policy of non-intervention and viewed the platform of neutrality to be ineffective and irresponsible.<sup>124</sup> On May 3 the following antifascist pledge was printed in *La Gaceta*. It declared:

“We disagree with all fascists.  
We disagree with all “neutrals” regardless of ethnic group or mutual aid society.  
We have arrived at a moment where being neutral is being fascist.”<sup>125</sup>

After the bombing of Guernica, mass efforts to purchase medical supplies were well underway. Ybor Latinos joined other Latino communities to agitate local and national sentiments. Specifically, they sought to push the American nation, as the international protector of justice and democracy, to defend the Spanish Republic.

The women's march of May 6, 1937 expressed issues of civil liberties, international solidarity, and U.S. citizenship. No strangers to protest, Ybor City's working-class men and women used a language of labor to articulate their concerns. The bombing of Guernica rallied Ybor Latinas and exemplified the power community mobilization. As women, Latinas could demonstrate their cause to the larger Anglo Tampa community as Americans who had embraced the cause of the Popular Front.

The Latinas of Ybor City who stood united in downtown Tampa represented a new generation of working class Latinas when seen through the lens of the Popular Front. The Popular Front was a “movement of movements” a challenge to southern restrictions, a call for a new concept of ethnic Americanism, as well as a call for international solidarity against the growing threat of fascism.<sup>126</sup> The potential promise of the women's march seemed great,

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<sup>124</sup> “La Obra de la Retaguardia de Tampa,” *La Gaceta*, April 30, 1937, pp.1. While this article provides a keen example of antifascist rhetoric, a survey of any day from April 29-May 8, will support this claim.

<sup>125</sup> “La Obra de la Retaguardia de Tampa,” *La Gaceta*, May 3, 1937, pp.1.

<sup>126</sup> I borrow the phrase “movement of movements” from Van Gosse. For more on historiography of the new left see, Van Gosse “Movement of Movements: The Definition and Periodization of the New Left,” in Roy

but in the Tampa Anglo community the demonstration was soon forgotten. The *Tampa Daily Times*, only briefly mentioned the march. The short article was featured in the community pages, sandwiched between a furniture ad and the local “question-answer” column.<sup>127</sup>

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Rozenweig and Jean-Christophe Agnew, eds., *A Companion to Post 1945 America* (Malden, MA:Blackwell, 2002).

<sup>127</sup> Mrs. J. De La Grana, “Women Protest,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, May 7, 1937.

## Conclusion

### In Search of Civil Rights and Citizenship

Scholars have characterized the Tampa demonstration of 1937 as an aberration. Historian Elna C. Green explained that Tampa was an “unusual city in an increasingly unusual ‘southern’ state.”<sup>128</sup> However, in light of the longer, broader, more complicated context of the event, what makes the women’s demonstration relevant is not its unusualness, but its commonness. Like New York, Chicago, San Antonio, and Los Angeles, Tampa was a labor town with an active union culture. Throughout the Tampa’s history, strikes were frequent and workers were militant. Women did not sit on the sidelines but marched with their fellow workers and demanded equal labor rights for themselves and their families. It is true that Tampa’s diverse population was not typical in the American South, but it was not a national exception. During the 1930s, Latino communities organized some of the era’s most vocal as they fought for their rights as American workers and American citizens. On May 6, 1937, the Latina women of Ybor City reminded Tampa and the United States that Latinos were present and would demand social justice and economic equality.

The Latina demonstration of 1937 had different meanings to different constituents. From the perspective of Anglo Tampa, the march threatened the balance of power in the cigar factories. Through ugly white supremacy and vigilante violence, Tampa maintained its control of the cigar factories and silenced Latinos through repression exclusion. Ybor’sLatinas contested the policy of American neutrality and furthermore demanded to be

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<sup>128</sup> Green, “Relief from Relief,” 1012-1013.

heard as well on the matter of WPA relief. The *Tampa Morning Tribune* reported that the march was simply in protest to the bombing of Guernica. While the bombing sparked the march, it was not the full cause. Ybor's Latinos united through their local *Frente Popular* (Popular Front) to demand social and economic justice. As American citizens and knowing the full meaning of the demonstration Latinos planned every detail of the march from dress color to parade route. Tampa Mayor Robert E. Lee Chancey may have overlooked the march's significance, but Latinas walked with a purpose.

Like the black freedom struggle, the Latino struggle for equality transcends place and time. Latinas figured permanently in this struggle, Vicki Ruiz remarked, that celebrated Latina labor and civil rights leaders, like Dolores Huerta, are deemed exceptional only because "their specialness lies in their success, not their activism."<sup>129</sup> Long before Dolores Huerta, women like those of Ybor City rallied communities and showed through example that they too were entitled to the benefits of labor equality and citizenship. Luisa Moreno was deported in 1948, after her hearing before the Un-American Activities Committee in San Diego, California, Luisa Moreno's last remarks were applicable to the activities of Ybor City's Latinas on behalf of their community.

"They can talk about deporting me, but they can never deport the people I've worked with and with whom things were accomplished for the benefit of hundreds of thousands of workers—things that can never be destroyed."<sup>130</sup>

The Latinas Moreno helped united in Ybor City in the summer of 1937, fought for the right to labor and live as equal citizens.

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<sup>129</sup> Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Lives, Cannery Women: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 2.

<sup>130</sup> Steve Murdoch, *Our Times*, Sept. 9, 1949, file 53, Kenny Papers.; For more information on Luisa Moreno and her deportation, see Ruiz, "Una Mujer Sin Fronteras," 19.

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