



**Women at Farah Revisited: Political Mobilization and Its Aftermath among Chicana Workers in El Paso, Texas, 1972-1992**

Emily Honig

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# **WOMEN AT FARAH REVISITED: POLITICAL MOBILIZATION AND ITS AFTERMATH AMONG CHICANA WORKERS IN EL PASO, TEXAS, 1972-1992**

EMILY HONIG

Union activism and participation in labor strikes are often portrayed as pivotal events in the lives of women workers. In films from *Salt of the Earth* to *Norma Rae*, previously isolated, passive victims of oppressive work environments band together with one another to engage in militant acts of resistance.<sup>1</sup> This, at first glance, was the experience of the Chicana garment workers who from 1972 to 1974 participated in a strike at the Farah Manufacturing Company in El Paso, Texas.<sup>2</sup> When 4,000 workers walked out on strike in 1972, demanding to be represented by the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers' Union, they were confronting the city's largest industrial employer and pitting themselves against El Paso's famously anti-union local patriarch (Willie Farah's family had been operating pants-manufacturing plants in El Paso since 1920). The two-year strike divided the city politically, destroyed long-standing friendships, and created near-warfare in many households. A union-organized boycott of Farah pants transformed the strike from a local dispute to a national campaign that was critical to the workers' eventual success in winning union recognition. Farah thereby became one of the first and only garment plants in the Southwest to be unionized.<sup>3</sup>

In 1977, three years after the strike's end, two friends and I conducted oral histories of approximately thirty Chicanas, who had been involved in the strike, and subsequently described their experiences in "Women at Farah: An Unfinished Story."<sup>4</sup> Most of the women we interviewed had related a story of profound transformation, emphasizing things they did during the

strike that they had never done before: walking picket lines, being arrested and sent to jail, participating in union meetings and working at the union office, taking union-sponsored classes in labor history, and in some cases traveling around the country to speak about the strike. Previously quiet women became outspoken and assertive about their rights. Some of the women, as a result of the strike, became active in political organizations and joined study groups to read Marxist theory. For others, the impact of the strike was more personal, as they began to question their subservience to their husbands, and in some cases sought divorce.

Yet these assessments of changes wrought by the Farah strike, like those of other organizing efforts, analyze women's experiences from a vantage point not far from the strike's end. The Farah women we interviewed in 1977, for example, had all become union activists during the three years since the strike, and most were still serving as shop stewards. (This does not mean that all, or even most, strikers became union activists after the strike; rather, as outsiders to El Paso, we were dependent on local social networks, and the one we tapped into was composed primarily of shop stewards.) The strike experience and union struggle therefore remained absolutely central to their lives at the time we conducted the interviews: at work, they rallied to sign people into the union, all the while struggling to meet production quotas; after work they filed grievances, met with business agents, and attended union meetings. The immediate post-strike years of union activism were as—if not more—transformative for many women as the strike itself had been.

If the impact on Chicanas of the Farah strike is assessed on the basis of women's 1977 accounts, then, one would conclude that the strike had a transformative effect on women's personal and political lives, as well it did. But how long-lasting were these effects and what was the long-term impact of the strike on women's subsequent lives? The existing literature on women and labor activism provides few clues, for almost no studies examine the impact of political mobilization in a long-term context. Most studies focus on women workers as a category and analyze trends in the "labor movement," rarely considering individual women's lives or continued activism outside the

labor movement.<sup>5</sup> The few studies that look at individual women tend to emphasize the very short-term effects of political activism. In the concluding chapter of her study of California canner workers, for example, historian Vicki Ruiz looks briefly at the rank-and-file activists during the years following their union's decline, finding that by the late 1940s all had left food processing and begun careers as secretaries or sales clerks.<sup>6</sup>

Having made several brief visits to El Paso during the 1980s, I knew that the legacy of the Farah strike for Chicana activists was not one of simple, clearcut continuities nor one of absolute discontinuities. I returned in winter 1992 and spring 1993 to explore more extensively the changes in women's lives twenty years after the strike, to identify its subtle, more complex legacies. During these visits, it was not possible to locate and reinterview all the women with whom we had conducted oral histories in 1977 and 1978. Instead, I had extended conversations with approximately ten of the ex-strikers, most of whom also related stories about the current lives of friends and relatives who had been strikers. Although this article focuses on four or five women, I have highlighted experiences that represent some of the broader trends that seemed evident. Whether these are "typical" is less important than how their collective experience suggests ways of analyzing the long-term impact of political mobilization.

### **CHICANAS AND LABOR ACTIVISM IN POST-FARAH EL PASO**

On the surface, it might appear that the Farah strike of the early 1970s initiated a tradition of militant labor protest by Chicana garment workers in El Paso. They once again captured the attention of the national news media when a series of walkouts at local garment plants began in the late 1980s. Supported by the International Ladies' and Garment Workers' Union and *Mujer Obrera*, an organization established in 1980 to provide services for El Paso's women workers, the striking women staged a hunger strike and chained themselves to sewing machines. The six-month strike eventually won a union contract that provided paid vacation, raises, and a modicum of job security.<sup>7</sup>

A closer look at the labor protests of the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, reveals few actual connections with the Farah strike. The two involved entirely different sectors of the garment industry. Farah represented the large-scale, relatively stable enterprises, whereas the more recent strikes involved small-scale, often fly-by-night sweatshop operations run by subcontractors.<sup>8</sup> These two sectors of the garment industry drew on different categories of workers, the latter relying mostly on recent immigrants from northern Mexico, Mexicans for whom Chicana Farah workers had felt great antipathy during the strike.<sup>9</sup> None of the former Farah strikers were involved in the subsequent garment industry strikes. In other words, the continued history of labor activism evidenced by women garment workers as an impersonal generic category does not necessarily imply continuity in individual women's lives.

In fact, from the perspective of the former Farah strikers, the same period at first appears to be one characterized by a retreat from labor activism and a disintegration of the networks formed during the strike. By the mid-1980s and early 1990s, few of the Farah strikers had any continued relationship to the garment industry, neither to the large-scale enterprises such as Farah or Levi-Strauss nor to the small subcontracting shops. Indeed, Farah had all but shut down its manufacturing operations in El Paso. From an operation involving five separate factories that employed close to 10,000 workers at the time the strike ended in 1974, it dwindled by 1992 to a single plant employing only 500 to 600 workers. Moreover, only the jobs of cutting and distribution were performed in this El Paso factory; all the assembly work (including sewing) was done overseas, at factories in Mexico, Costa Rica, Ireland, South Africa, and Hong Kong.<sup>10</sup>

The decline of Farah was paralleled by a deterioration of its union. In 1992, the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers' Union represented only the remaining Farah plant and one of five factories operated by Levi-Strauss. From an office formerly staffed by secretaries and a dozen business agents, it had dwindled to a one-person operation by its joint board manager, Antonio Sanchez, who single-handedly answered phone calls, processed worker grievances, and struggled to negotiate union contracts with other garment factories. Sanchez de-

scribed 1992 as "the pits" for unions in El Paso.<sup>11</sup> Union weakness is confirmed by Chamber of Commerce boasts to potential investors that "the El Paso labor force has one of the lowest concentrations of unionization in the U.S. at 6%."<sup>12</sup>

The dramatic reduction of Farah's work force and weakening of the union meant that very few of the women involved in the Farah strike continued to work at Farah, let alone remained active in the union. At the same time the networks they had formed during the strike and subsequent years of union activism had mostly dissolved. In 1992, almost every woman I visited complained that she no longer saw her old "Farah friends."

Nevertheless, even though in the early 1990s few women engaged in the kind of all-consuming labor and political activism that had characterized their lives during the strike and early union years of the mid-1970s, some remnant of the Farah experience could be identified in almost every woman's life—in attitudes toward work, unions, and politics; in the conduct of personal relationships; or in negotiations with community institutions. Understanding the long-term effects on women of involvement in a major political mobilization requires looking beyond public sphere activism, for in many cases it is only in the highly personal politics of daily life that the more subtle legacies of the strike are evidenced.

## **FROM FARAH TO UNION ACTIVISM**

For a small number of women, political involvement and union activism has been almost continuous since the strike. Although she left Farah in the late 1970s, and went to work for Southwestern Bell, Virgie D. became instantly involved in the telephone worker's union (Communication Workers of America). Even twenty years after the strike, she continually boasted about the union's exceptionally high rate of membership. She regularly attended union meetings and had pressured for the implementation of Spanish-speaking services for customers who did not speak English. She made a point of attending picnics for union members throughout El Paso and in 1990 was actively involved in a demonstration protesting the twin plants.

Lilian S., too, was politicized by the strike in a way that af-

fectured most of her subsequent life. Throughout the nearly twenty years since the Farah strike, she remained indefatigably committed to the cause of workers' rights. (She was also one of the only former strikers who continued to work at Farah until the final layoffs of the late 1980s.) Having served, in the late-1970s, as a chief shop steward as well as president of the union local at Farah, Lilian devoted much of her time after work to filing workers' grievances, attending union meetings, and battling to make the union more responsive to workers' needs. "I had more confidence in myself," she recalled of that time. "I would get up on the machines and say, 'Come on people and listen to what I've got to say. Don't be afraid. You have your rights. This is your shop steward in this area.'"

Lilian did not confine her efforts to those normally expected of a shop steward. In 1988, for example, she took it upon herself to file formal complaints with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration about objectionable conditions at Farah: employee exposure to formaldehyde and cloth dust as well as the company's failure to provide personal protective equipment or protective barriers on machines. At the same time, her political interests expanded well beyond issues specific to Farah. For some time after the strike, Lilian was involved with the Texas Farmworkers' Union. Then, in the mid-1980s, she became concerned with the impact of the *maquiladoras* (twin plants)<sup>13</sup> on border cities such as El Paso. The effects of the "maquila program," based on the rapid assembly in Mexico of raw materials from the United States, became particularly serious in the years following the 1982 *peso* devaluation and debt crisis, which made Mexican workers among the least expensive in the world. Between 1982 and 1984, the number of workers in *maquilas* in Ciudad Juárez (located right across the U.S.-Mexican border from El Paso) nearly doubled, from 127,048 to nearly 222,000, most of them in electronics and textiles.<sup>14</sup> The rise of *maquila* operations in Juárez was paralleled by a decline in and restructuring of the garment industry in El Paso.

Lilian S. tracked these trends by clipping news articles about twin-plant operations in Juárez and factory closings in El Paso. When she had to write a paper for a political science class at the community college, she dispatched her husband to

the city library to gather data about the twin-plant operations, which she used to write a critique of their effects on the local economy.

Lilian hardly confined her concerns about the *maquila* to papers assigned for class. Drawing on her exposure during the strike to the workings of the political system, she began a single-handed letter-writing campaign, to local as well as national government officials, targeting among others, the mayor, the city council, congresspeople, and the head of the U.S. International Trade Commission. She detailed the effects of the twin plants on workers at Farah, enclosing copies of workers' wage stubs to document her case. She organized similar information into a letter to the editor of the *El Paso Times* and also appeared before the city council to dispute then-mayor Suzie Azar's glowing portrayal of the economic benefits of the *maquilas* for El Paso. She also testified at a town hall meeting held by El Paso Congressman Ronald Coleman. (Lilian felt the effects of the twin plants quite directly, as the operation she specialized in at Farah—attaching identification numbers to sewn garments—was one being transferred to Mexico.)

Lilian, who had dropped out of high school at age seventeen to work at Farah, and had earned her GED only after the strike, then decided to write a book—an autobiographical account that would describe her personal experiences to document the problems created by the *maquilas*. Exactly what made her think of writing a book is not clear. At one point she explained that she wanted her sons to know what she had been fighting for and why she was so often not at home. She also seems to have been inspired by the movie *Norma Rae* and at least in jest fantasized that Sally Field might someday read her autobiography and make a film based on it. It is also possible that the experience of being frequently interviewed by journalists during the strike and then having her life history recorded allowed her to see herself as a historical subject in a way she previously would not have. None of this, however, explains the vehemence with which she threw herself into the project. For several years she was completely absorbed by writing: she went to the library in search of books about the process of writing and about writing autobiographies in particular; her husband set up a little desk with a typewriter for her.



"Sometimes I write until 1:00 A.M.," she exclaimed. "It even gets in the way of my love life!"

At the same time, Lilian became even more outspoken in her protests against the twin plants. In 1989, she organized a Labor Day demonstration to protest plant closings in El Paso and the twin-plant operations in Juárez. Then, when April 23-28, 1990, was named "Maquila Week" in El Paso—a weeklong celebration of the twin-plant presence—she decided another demonstration was in order. Drawing on her strike experience and union connections, Lilian mobilized a number of ex-strikers to help her distribute leaflets to publicize the demonstration; others gathered in her living room to make banners and posters for demonstrators to carry. Showing me a home video of the television coverage of the demonstration (she had contacted all the local media people to inform them of this "counterdemonstration"), Lilian pointed out all the ex-strikers who participated. Lilian herself played a prominent role in the demonstration—holding a bullhorn and shouting slogans to the other participants. Interviews with her were featured in the local television news reports, and she subsequently appeared on several talk shows to discuss the plight of El Paso workers confronted by the twin plants.

Although she did not organize any subsequent demonstrations, Lilian's interest in the twin-plant problems did not wane. The day I arrived in El Paso in 1992, she asked her husband (who, as a city building inspector, was intimately familiar with industrial operations on both sides of the border) to take both of us on a driving tour of the *maquiladora* plants in Juárez and to show us as well the shantytowns where some of the workers lived in shacks made of cardboard. She asked that on the day off granted her husband for his birthday, he show me the veritable warehouse "cities" that had been constructed in the last five to ten years on the ever-expansive desert land surrounding El Paso—miles and miles of shining new buildings to store goods shipped from Juárez. For Lilian, these represented El Paso's bleak future: as manufacturing continued to move to Juárez, she imagined El Paso would have little to boast but its virtues as a distribution center.

Most of Lilian's quasi-obsession with the *maquiladoras* developed while she was still working at Farah, watching as pro-

duction line after production line was moved across the border. Her own job was reduced to several days a week, and by 1989 she had only four to eight hours of work. Knowing she would be laid off with the several hundred remaining seamstresses, she resigned. Taking advantage of a federally funded retraining program, in June 1989 she decided to study at the community college, where she developed a strong interest in sign language for the deaf.

When Lilian graduated in August 1991, with an associate degree (Paraprofessional for the Hearing Impaired), she got a job working for Handicapped Services at the community college—accompanying handicapped students to class and taking notes for them. Less than a year later, due to financial cutbacks at the college, her job was reduced to half-time. She then took on two additional part-time jobs: the first was working as a recruiter for Region 19—which involved meeting with farmworkers to inform them of their "right" to send their children to American schools; the second was working for an agency that placed developmentally disabled young adults in living units with one another. When that job became full-time in September 1992, she quit the other two.

Despite the pride and enjoyment she found in her current job, Lilian remained somewhat ambivalent about her new professional status. "It's better than working in a factory," she emphasized, "but I'll never forget that. You don't let go of your life like that, just because you're educated." The persistence of her identification as a "Farah worker" was reflected in her sorrow that none of her Farah friends attended her graduation ceremony. "I wanted them to be there," she lamented, "to see what we could do after the strike." And although she harbored absolutely no desire to return to factory work, she repeatedly described how much she missed "being with my people."

Organizing remained Lilian's passion. She sometimes hoped that the job with farmworkers (that she had done part-time) would materialize as a full-time position. "That's the kind of work I really like to do," she declared, "teaching people about their rights."

## FROM LABOR ACTIVISM TO RADICAL POLITICS AND PERSONAL LIBERATION

Like Lilian S., Lina L. remained deeply engaged politically throughout the two decades since the strike, but her politics took a very different form. In the years immediately following the strike, rather than serving as a shop steward for the union, she became active in the rank-and-file group *Unidad Para Siempre* (Unity Forever). Frustrated by the problems at Farah, she began accompanying a friend to *Unidad* meetings and quickly became active in organizing rallies and demonstrations.

A number of radical organizers and organizations were in touch with *Unidad* members, and through them Lina became involved in several Marxist study groups—one sponsored by the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP); a second by a local activist highly critical of the RCP. An intellectual and free thinker at heart, Lina appreciated the opportunity to explore new ideologies yet became frustrated by the seeming unwillingness of those running the groups to respond to her myriad questions. "It's true that we're not real highly educated individuals," she explained, "but we're not just *burros* that are gonna follow." She was alienated by *Chicanos Unidos* for similar reasons: when Lina would ask questions at meetings, the male leadership would all but ignore her and instead address their comments to the local men who were present. "Why should I be interested in their movement if they're not interested in me?" she demanded.

*Unidad* activists were among the first to be fired from Farah after the strike, and Lina was included. Collecting unemployment, she began taking classes at the community college, aiming to earn a nursing certificate (all the while continuing to distribute leaflets about the rank-and-file group outside the Farah plants). By 1978, she had begun working as a nurse assistant at Providence Hospital. Still deeply connected to her Farah experience, she became determined to unionize nurses. Undeterred by the fact that only minimal (and completely unsuccessful) attempts to organize hospital workers had been made in El Paso (she had heard that several women who had initiated a union campaign at Providence Hospital a few years earlier were fired from their jobs), Lina collected information about unionizing efforts in other parts of the country and

began talking to her coworkers. She felt most optimistic when a number of nurse assistants joined her in a "march" to the hospital administration, demanding raises similar to those granted registered nurses (and LPNs). The administration successfully diffused the anger by issuing the nurse assistants a token \$0.25 raise. The Farah legacy further hindered Lina's organizing efforts, as she was constantly confronted by coworkers who, referring to the plant closings and layoffs that followed the strike, would say, "But who wants a union? Look what happened at Farah."

Lina waged battles against injustice on numerous fronts. She filed a formal complaint, for instance, against a hospital administrator (a Chicano who claimed to be Greek) for posting a "Recipe for Chicanos" on the wall: "One stolen car combined with twenty cockroaches." After Lina raised objections to its racist content, her work life became increasingly tense (her immediate supervisor began accusing her of being lazy, sloppy, and irresponsible), until she was eventually switched to the graveyard shift. (When we visited Lina in 1979, she was working from 11:00 P.M. to 7:00 A.M., taking a class at the community college that met four hours every day, and then sleeping for three hours.)

Throughout this period, Lina continually reflected on strategies of political change. In the summer of 1979, she accompanied us on a visit to Centro Orientacion Mujer Obrera (COMO), an organization in Juárez devoted to organizing the tens of thousands of young Mexican women who worked in the *maquiladoras*. Deeply inspired by her encounter with women workers there, who enthusiastically described the development of their own political analysis, Lina became determined to establish a similar organization in El Paso. Working herself into a fury about ex-striker friends who hung out in bars or stayed home, she decided they should all be involved in creating this new center. And every time she socialized with groups of ex-strikers, Lina would passionately describe COMO, promising that they would all go over to Juárez to visit one day.

Lina's ambitions and devotion to her ideals gradually dissolved, in part due to the reality of a job that consumed most of her time and energy, the lack of resources, and the sheer loneliness of trying to organize single-handedly a COMO-like

group. (An aside: in the early 1980s, a COMO-like group, *Mujer Obrera*, was organized in El Paso and ever since has engaged in providing political education, legal assistance, and organizing resources for women workers. Lina had barely heard of *Mujer Obrera* and had no contact with it, most likely because it focused its efforts on organizing workers in the small, subcontracting garment shops, as described above.)

Frustrated and exhausted by her job at the hospital, in the mid-1980s Lina took a job with an agency that assigned her work as a private nurse at individual patients' homes; but in spite of the isolating work environment, Lina did not suspend her political concerns. She would constantly phone a local radical lawyer and bombard him with questions about the legality of injustices she perceived in El Paso. She kept close tabs on every local strike taking place. When I visited her in 1987, her proposal for how to spend an afternoon together was to "go check out the picket lines at Safeway," where a strike had been underway for several months. She also considered doing some volunteer work for the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). Several years later, in 1990, she actively helped Lilian S. organize the demonstration protesting the *maquiladoras*: she printed leaflets herself when the original supply was exhausted and distributed them at factories all over El Paso. In 1992, she hoped I would attend a Democratic Party convention with her one Sunday afternoon and wanted to discuss the fate of socialism in China and Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, she was deeply concerned by her nephew's professed interest in studying business administration. "Business is always against workers," she complained, "and I would not like him to be hurting workers."

The continuities between Lina's recent life and the Farah experience were underlined by the ways in which she still looked back on the strike as one of *the* major events of her life. (Only her short-lived career as a bullfighter came anywhere close in importance.) The strike remained a constant reference point for her. Complaining once about how old she was (forty-eight at the time), she asked my age. "Thirty four!" she exclaimed, when I answered. "That's how old I was when we went out on strike!" "I'm thrilled when I think about it!" she declared some twelve years after the strike's end. "It was so exciting, and we

were doing so many different things. That and bullfighting were the two exciting things I've done in my life." Her house decor reflected this: in her spare room, one wall displayed photographs of her wedding; on another hung a bright yellow "Boycott Farah Pants" flag and a large graphic depicting women Farah strikers. Showing me the room, she jokingly explained, "That wall is my love life and that wall is my [pause, trying to think of the right word] political life."

The link between Lina's "love life" and political life reveals another arena of continuity with the Farah strike. Her post-Farah years are characterized not only by a continual concern with politics, but also by an increasing sense of independence and growing confidence in herself as a woman who did not have to subscribe to conventional expectations. Married for ten years to a sometimes violent and physically abusive drug addict, Lina had left her husband during the Farah strike. Despite her family's pleas that she return to live with them, she was determined to rent a place of her own, even if it meant feeling lonely and missing the company of her siblings. For some time Lina had no desire to date or remarry. "Men in one way or another bring problems," she declared in 1979, "and I don't want problems. I just want to live peacefully right now." Eventually, however, she began going out with another man, with whom she ended up living for five years. Concluding that she received little emotional or intellectual sustenance from him, but instead constant displays of his explosive temper, she ended the relationship. "You get trouble all day at work," she complained to me at the time, "so who wants to go home to more trouble?"

Shortly after that she mustered her savings and bought a small house of her own, not too far from her mother's home. When I visited her in 1992, it was obvious that the house was a source of pleasure and stability. She repeatedly declared that she felt happier than she had ever been, explaining that she felt very peaceful living by herself and did not expect to ever be with a man again. "The way men are these days and the way I am just do not match," she complained.

## FROM UNION ACTIVISM TO DOMESTIC ACTIVISM

Virgie D., Lilian S., and Lina L. all exemplify women for whom the Farah strike represented not only a short-lived moment of political activism but also a profoundly life-changing experience. One did not have to look hard or listen long to find continuities with the strike experience in their interests and actions twenty years later. Even during the alleged political backlash of the 1980s, they remained politically active.

But not all of the former Farah strikers shared this experience. In contrast to those who remained active in union and political organizing were others who retreated from, or even explicitly rejected, the Farah experience. Yet even for these individuals, some continuities—even if not obvious or clearcut ones—were evident.

Isela A., for example, had been an extremely energetic, dedicated, and outspoken shop steward for five or six years after the strike ended. In the late 1970s, believing it was "time to do something better with myself," Isela left Farah to study typing and accounting through an adult education program. Having just left her job at Farah and position as shop steward, she was still accustomed to daily confrontation and found some in which to engage at the adult education program. She was outraged, for example, that she had been sent to the dean for smoking and was ordered to pay a fine. Smoking and hand-holding were against the rules, she was informed. This was treating students in a condescending and humiliating way, she protested. "It's humiliating because at the high schools people are smoking and making out all the time . . . and we're adults!"

Isela, in the late 1970s, felt very conflicted about having left her "people and struggle" at Farah. But she anticipated looking for an office job after completing the classes at adult education. She did not intend to be a secretary, however, "I just can't see myself running around with a little notebook," she laughed.

Despite these intentions, Isela secured a job as a clerical worker at the community college's Veterans Affairs Office, and at first it appears that the Farah experience was something left far behind. Family—particularly her growing flock of grandchildren—rather than work (and certainly not politics) became the main priority in her life during this time. When another ex-striker friend (who also worked at the community college)

had lunch with her in the early 1990s, Isela complained that during her involvement with the union she had completely deserted her husband and children, something she would never do again.

Union organizing did become an issue at the community college in the late 1980s. However, rather than inspiring her to embrace the effort, Isela's Farah experience made her determined to remain uninvolved. When Lilian S., who had been one of her close friends during the strike, approached Isela to sign a membership card, she professed disinterest. She was slightly less hostile to the several union organizers, who having learned she had been a Farah striker, enthusiastically solicited her assistance. Isela reluctantly offered to type leaflets on her home computer but declared, "I'll sign up to join a union, but I'm not going to get involved in going to meetings or anything like that. 'It's your turn now,' I tell them, 'I did my turn when I was young, when it was my day, but now it's yours.'"

Moreover, Isela does not believe the working conditions for clericals at the community college warrant union representation. "I couldn't have it better!" she exclaimed, recounting benefits she could never have imagined at a clothing factory such as Farah. Most important of all, "there is no time clock—I don't have to punch in or out."

Pleased as she may have been by the conditions of her job, and reluctant as she may have been to become involved in a union, Isela nevertheless retained an unmistakable sense of her "rights." She knew exactly how many vacation and sick days she was allowed, and she objected to her boss's attempts to negotiate with her about when they would be taken, experiencing this as an infringement of her rights. She insisted on what she was entitled to, although not in an explosive or combative way. For instance, the day after I visited her in 1992 she was going to have to drive her niece (who was living with her) to a job interview. Anticipating that her boss would contest her taking that particular time off, she decided to simply call it a sick day and say she had to go to the doctor. (And unlike at Farah, she would not have to present a doctor's note to verify the visit.) Her entire narration of this incident was punctuated by a rhetoric of "rights," one that bore a striking resemblance to the language she used to describe her Farah experience.



In addition to a continued sense of her "rights," Isela maintained an independence in her marriage that she attributed to the strike. She had absolutely no qualms, for instance, in adamantly refusing to join her husband in Yuma, Arizona, when his job was transferred there several years ago. Ironically, her refusal to move ultimately worked to their advantage, for after nine months he was transferred back to El Paso precisely because his wife had not moved. By then, however, Isela had become accustomed to doing things independently and experienced a trying readjustment upon her husband's return.

For Chayo P., as for Isela, the strike experience at first glance appears an isolated moment of her youth that has been left far behind (she was in her early forties in 1992). On the surface, her story seems to be one of a person who left her activist, political days behind (and well she had). But, if we look more closely, we find a woman who continued to hold very strong convictions about what is "right" as well as a fierce determination to fight for those beliefs.

Chayo, who credits the strike with having made her an outgoing person who would speak up for her beliefs, initially devoted herself to the union cause after the strike's end. She refused to be discouraged by the frustrations of serving as a shop steward or as a member of the negotiating committee for the second union contract. "If you let go of what hopes you have, then it's not worth living," she declared in 1977. During the years following the strike, she became involved in a number of political efforts. Like Lilian S., Chayo worked with the Texas Farmworkers' Union, having been impressed by Cesar Chavez when he came to speak in El Paso during the Farah strike and also because of the connections between the union's efforts and her own father's history as a farmworker. Chayo also joined the study group sponsored by the rank-and-file group Unidad Para Siempre, and began reading books about labor history. Through Unidad, she met organizers from the Revolutionary Communist Party, and one of them befriended her. Although she remained skeptical of the merits of communism, she helped her friend sell RCP newspapers at the local unemployment office.

When we met Chayo in 1977, she harbored no desire to leave her job at Farah or relinquish the union cause. "For my-

self, I would like to continue working where I am," she insisted. "I think of going to school and getting a secretarial job, but I think it would be boring at school. I like to be where the action is." Although she emphatically hoped her sons would get better jobs, she was adamant about her own preference to remain in the factory.

I like being in the factory. I like the challenge. You don't know what the next day's going to bring. You might get fired! It's better than just being a secretary, sitting there and typing. I don't think I could see myself sitting there at the back of a desk, answering phones, when you could be fighting somewhere else, having a grievance, or fighting with your supervisor—giving them hell!

During this time her life was so filled with meetings that her husband complained, "You're just like the men!"

Two years later in 1979, union work was becoming more frustrating to Chayo, particularly as Farah reduced its operations, targeting union members for the required layoffs. At the same time the demands of managing her household escalated. Her sister, who had lived with Chayo's family and helped care for her sons, decided to return to their parents' home in California; in addition, her maid from Juárez took another job. (Many working-class Chicanas and Chicanos in El Paso were able to afford the relatively inexpensive maids who lived in Juárez and crossed the Rio Grande each day to work in El Paso.) Chayo resigned as president of her local, although she continued to serve as a shop steward.

Chayo contemplated the possibility of going to college (having earned her GED during the strike): she hoped to attend the University of Texas at El Paso in the fall, to study social work. Accompanied by her friend, Lilian S., she had investigated the possibility of getting financial assistance at the university, but she was informed that, like Lilian, she was "middle class" and ineligible. "What do you mean?" she had retorted. "Do you think we work in factories for fun or because we want a little extra spending money?" She figured her only option would be to take classes at the community college, in the evening, after work. During the next year she did take several classes, English and typing, and she continually hoped to return to study more.

Chayo was laid off from Farah in 1983, and from then on managing the household and raising her sons became her pri-

ority, to the exclusion of almost everything else, including school. (Her husband's job as an accountant made it possible for her to stay at home and not seek another job.) In addition to immediate family members, she was often burdened by the responsibility of taking care of her mother-in-law, who moved in with Chayo's family several times when she was ill. (Because her husband had no sisters, Chayo explained, it was logical that she—the daughter-in-law—would be responsible.) During those periods, Chayo felt like the equivalent of a full-time nurse.

When I visited Chayo in 1992, it was initially difficult to discern any continuities between her current life and her strike experience. She picked up her youngest son at school every afternoon and spent the rest of the time doing chores around the house. She expressed no desire to return to work and give up her time at home. Occasionally she considered doing some type of social service volunteer work—perhaps working with senior citizens. To this, her husband replied, "Aren't you doing enough social service right here at home, taking care of my parents? Why would you want to go do something else?" "I kind of agree," she told me. The idea of working with a group like *Mujer Obrera* had once crossed her mind. "But I don't think I want to get involved in that kind of stuff again," she admitted.

It was only when Chayo began to discuss her younger son, Damien, that traces of the woman who fifteen years ago was consumed by a determination to seek justice in the workplace became evident. If there is an arena where the passion for activism that she acquired during the strike is expressed, it is in confronting Damien's problems.

Although Damien had never liked school, serious problems developed only when he entered junior high. Torn between loyalty to his parents and to friends who encouraged him to join neighborhood gangs, he became seriously depressed. Concerned, Chayo took him to a school counselor, who advised them to "just wait it out until he is sixteen, and then he can drop out of school." (Chayo later regretted that she did not sue the school system for this—"it's a question of what's right!" she indignantly told her husband.) She drew on every outside resource available and eventually took Damien to a psychologist (through her husband's health plan). Meanwhile, she devoted

enormous amounts of time and energy to ensuring that the school provide a good educational environment for her son. "No, I'm not involved in the PTA," she declared. "I'm too outspoken and radical for them!" Instead, she would meet directly with the teachers and principal, voicing her concerns about the school.

Just when it seemed that Damien was faring better at school and coping with gang pressure, he informed his parents that his former girlfriend was pregnant and he was the father. Fifteen years old, the girl refused to consider abortion, although Chayo encouraged her to do so, certain that neither she nor Damien would finish high school if the baby was born. Chayo then dedicated herself to educating her son about the responsibilities of fatherhood. "He can't think that a man can just sleep with a woman, have a baby, and then have no responsibility," she adamantly told me. "No—I am going to make sure he understands his responsibilities. 'Sometimes you are going to have to give up doing things with friends because of the baby,' I told him. 'Some nights, if Maria wants to go out, you are going to have to stay home and take care of your child.'"

Chayo worried that Damien was still so much a child himself. "When he comes home from school every day, all he wants to do is watch Batman," she said. "Even when girls phone, he won't talk to them until Batman is over!" But, she underlined, if he was old enough to get a girl pregnant, he was old enough to learn to be a father, not the "older brother" to a baby sibling that he envisioned.

Withdrawing from the workforce to manage a home and family can be read in two ways. On the one hand, Chayo's experience with her son could be seen as falling within women's conventional responsibilities as mothers, who were *expected* to fight for resources for their children. In some cases, as Mary Pardo argues in her study of Mexican American women in Los Angeles, such a struggle for resources could become the basis of women's networks and community activism; it is these networks, she shows, that form the juncture between "everyday life and organized politics."<sup>15</sup> This was not the case for Chayo, however, whose quest remained a very individual one. On the other hand, if one sees the home as a workplace where power, economic, and gender relationships are contested,<sup>16</sup> then

Chayo's experience, individual as it may have been, is not divorced from politics and does not necessarily imply a complete negation of the bold, politically assertive person Chayo saw herself becoming through the Farah strike and union-building effort. Instead, it may remind us that work, or union activism, are not the only realms in which to seek legacies of the strike. In cases such as Chayo's, the activism previously expressed in the struggle to build a union may have been reformulated and articulated in a more personal realm, evolving into a kind of "domestic activism."

### **THE MEANING OF ACTIVISM**

The above accounts all suggest that although individual women appear to have left the Farah strike behind, some continuities with that experience can be found in their subsequent lives. It would be misleading, however, to imply that any and all legacies of the strike have equal meanings: that "domestic activism," not at all oriented toward social change, is analogous to continued labor or political activism; that mobilizing resources for one's son, or insisting on a very untraditional approach to men's responsibilities has the same significance as organizing demonstrations to protest the twin plants or attending to labor issues throughout El Paso.

Furthermore, although the strike became emblematic of women's political awareness and self-confidence, not all acts of assertiveness, independence, and insistence upon one's rights can be mechanistically attributed to the strike experience. In spite of their own emphasis on the transformation from quiet submission to outspoken assertiveness wrought by the strike, few of these women were ever so entirely timid and passive, as children or as young adults, as their interviews imply. In fact, their life histories are punctuated by incidents of resistance to both parental, school, and male authority. In addition, although most of the women associated a newfound sense of community and solidarity with the strike and union-building effort, these "communities" undoubtedly built on—even if they transcended—networks that grew from women's pre-strike work culture, as Patricia Zavella's study of cannery workers in California so poignantly suggests.<sup>17</sup> This is not to deny the profound impact

of the strike on women but rather to place it in the context of their prior lives as children, teenagers, and young adults.

Women's post-Farah experiences of the 1980s need to be contextualized in several other ways as well. First, they are not necessarily linear or one-dimensional. For example, it would be tempting, but misleading, to read the experience of Lilian S., who subsequent to the strike had become so concerned with the twin plants, as a simple, straightforward story of a woman whose political consciousness was permanently transformed by the strike and whose subsequent life was one of continual labor and political activism. Despite her seemingly boundless commitment to labor organizing, her activism cannot be isolated and interpreted apart from other aspects of her life. Nor can it be assumed to have been consistently dominant. In at least one period it is clear that religion was far more central than politics to her life.

In the early 1980s, Lilian S., exhausted by her union work, suffering from shingles, frustrated by the gradual Farah plant closures, and disillusioned with the union, turned to born-again-Christianity. "The best thing that ever happened to me," she told me during a visit in 1983, "is getting closer to the Lord. If I didn't, I don't know what would have happened to me. I see that we can't beat the system, and it gets worse and worse." Instead of frantically fighting with union officials, she devoted herself to Bible study and church meetings, where she found a communal commitment to a cause that the union no longer provided.

Lilian's newfound devotion to "the Lord," however, eventually threatened her marriage in a way that union activism never had. Her husband, who had not only tolerated but had supported Lilian's nightly union meetings as well as trips to Los Angeles or Houston for Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers' Union conventions, adamantly opposed her religious activism. Her rejection of the Catholic Church infuriated him, and near-warfare erupted each Sunday when they went to separate churches. When it became clear that she would have to choose between born-again-Christianity and her marriage, she stopped going to church altogether. She consulted with the priest, who counseled that "the Lord did not want divorce." Although her beliefs never changed, she threw herself back into

union activism. "Was it you I told that I was getting into being a better Christian?" she asked once when I phoned several years later (1987). Looking back, she referred to "that time when I was very religious" and describes it as a strained and strange phase of her past.

For Lilian, devotion to religion was a short-lived phase, one that was followed by a return to labor activism. Even if not prolonged, however, her religious "interlude" reminds us that transformations in political consciousness brought about by the strike did not follow a simple, linear path. For a number of other women, increasing religious commitment was an equally, if not more, significant part of their post-Farah experience as any political or union activity. To isolate that activity from the context of religion is seriously to distort its meaning.

The importance of religion is particularly vivid in the experience of Lina L., who had become a nurse after leaving Farah. She had always been the most radical of the women, as well as the most religious. In the early 1990s, however, religion assumed a far more profoundly dominant role in her life, reflected even in questions she asked me. In previous visits she would want to know about "the movement" and whether it was "going to succeed"; she would solicit my opinion of Chicano nationalism or inquire about any political activities in which I engaged. And although when I visited in 1992 she wanted to know "what is happening to socialism in Russia and China," she was far more curious about my religious beliefs. What did it mean to me to be Jewish, she wanted to know. "What kind of God do you believe in?" "What is your philosophy of life?" "Do you believe in an afterlife?"

During the early 1990s, the Catholic Church began to dominate Lina's social and intellectual life. After spending the late afternoons and dinner-hour with her adored seventeen-year-old nephew, Lina tried to go to church every evening, often taking her mother along and giving rides to several other friends as well; on Wednesdays she attended rosary meetings; Saturday evening meetings sometimes turned into church-sponsored "parties." When she had time to read, she worked her way through church-issued literature—only some of which concerned strictly theological issues. Much of it dealt with more explicitly political matters, railing against the evils of abortion,

homosexuality, and communism. For example, a church-issued two-hour video that she owned documented all the "verified" appearances made by the Virgin Mary in the twentieth century. In the course of this video, the Virgin Mary becomes increasingly political in her comments: when she appeared in South Korea in the early 1980s, for instance, she urged her followers to oppose abortion and protect the lives of unborn children; in a subsequent appearance in Japan, she expressed her concerns about the "breakdown of traditional family values," sounding suspiciously like the Republican Right.

Lina's former belief in political education and activism seems to have been replaced by a conviction that faith in God is key to solving the world's myriad problems. Violence, crime, the lack of morality, she argued, can be attributed to the breakdown in religious belief. Thus, although she opposed George Bush on most issues, she admitted that his support of prayers in the schools appealed to her, as she believed it was crucial to cultivate a sense of faith and morality in young children.

It is not difficult to understand why religion came to play such a major role in Lina's life. Frustrated by the failures of political activism, it provided some hope for a less violent and more just world. It allowed her to remain committed to a "cause" without having to assume responsibility for any of its shortcomings or failures. Working in the relatively isolated environment of individual patients' homes, Lina obtained social interaction; detached from the networks formed through the strike, union activism, and study groups, the church provided a community.

The role of religion and the reasons for its prominence in the recent lives of some of the former Farah strikers is far more complex than this brief discussion can suggest. The important point is that legacies of the Farah experience, such as a continued commitment to unions, participation in political demonstrations, or an expanded interest in radical politics, cannot be separated from other aspects of women's lives. Those legacies have a very different meaning when it is recognized that religious commitment may be equally, and sometimes even more, vital.

This should not be read as implying that religious faith and political activism are inherently antithetical or mutually



exclusive, and, in fact, several studies of Chicano communities in the Southwest document political movements based on church networks and religious organizations.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, several churches in El Paso have reputations for political and community activism; indeed, Our Lady of the Light played a crucial role providing both moral and material support for the Farah strikers. Neither case described above, however, involves an integration of religious conviction or parish community with political activism; both women themselves understood religious practice as a retreat from politics.<sup>19</sup>

### CONCLUSION

By looking at the lives of Chicana workers over a twenty-year period since their involvement in the Farah strike, this article has attempted to explore the legacy of political mobilization on women. These legacies might be contextualized in several ways. Implicit is the conviction that a close reading of individual lives may bend our understanding of a particular era that is based on broader social categories.

If, in the case of El Paso, one were to look at the nearly two decades since the strike through the lens of generic categories, two contradictory characterizations might emerge. From the perspective of garment workers as a group, there is a record of continued labor protest and organizing, as attested to by events of the late 1980s and early 1990s. But from the perspective of Farah workers, one finds during the post-strike decades a record of job layoffs due to plant closures and relocation overseas, fragmentation of political networks, and near-dissolution of their union.

Neither of these trends accurately describes the experience of individual women who had become union activists during the Farah strike; moreover, their collective experience suggests an entirely different view of this period. Although they were not involved in the more recent garment worker protests (which, as noted above, concerned a different sector of the industry), one finds their post-strike lives textured by varieties of political and personal activism that may be otherwise invisible or considered insignificant. A demonstration protesting the *maquiladora* presence in El Paso may not have been as news-

worthy as the prolonged garment worker protests, but it is notable that a group of women who had been involved in the Farah strike were, nearly fifteen years later, organizing such a demonstration. It is even more remarkable when one recalls that most of these women no longer worked or socialized together, nor did they share the union "cause" that had bonded them in the past.

For individual women, the legacies of the Farah strike have been neither predictable nor uniform. They defy any easy correlation to women's post-strike work experience, such that women who continued to work outside the home remained more connected to the Farah experience or vice versa. These women do not conform to any simple narrative charting a transition from political activism to passivity, from the public world of union politics to the private world of the home, from a passion for politics to a fervor for religion. They include all these elements but in constantly shifting configurations; individual lives, as we have seen, do not chronicle simple, linear stories.

Our understanding of the legacy of the Farah strike, or of any other political mobilization, depends largely upon the chronological perspective from which the story is told. Farah strikers who told their stories in the mid-1970s stressed the conspicuous continuities in their lives since the strike—their union activism, expanded political interests, and personal independence. In the early 1990s, however, the strike's legacy was much less clearcut, obvious, or "upbeat," and sometimes it was only between the lines of a woman's account that the more subtle legacies of the strike could be found.

These legacies are significant not only for what they reveal about the long-term impact of a major labor movement on women but also as a reminder that individual lives do not necessarily conform to overarching trends, even if they are deeply affected by them. The Farah strike took place at a moment when the civil rights movement, Chicano and women's movement, and radical Left were particularly vibrant. The 1980s, in contrast, have been often characterized as a period of political retrenchment: when unions and the labor movement weakened, leftist organizations declined, and the radical Right gained a powerful following. This broad political transformation may help explain some of the experiences described here, but it does

not characterize them. What we see in women's poststrike lives are the less visible yet myriad niches where politics—often a deeply personal politics of daily life—may be negotiated.

## NOTES

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1. This is not meant to imply that all historical accounts subscribe to a model of pre-strike passivity and isolation that turns into assertiveness and solidarity through labor protest. A number of scholars have stressed the continuities between women's community and workplace culture, on the one hand, and patterns of protest, on the other. See, for example, Ardis Cameron, "Bread and Roses Revisited: Women's Culture and Working-Class Activism in the Lawrence Strike of 1912," in *Women, Work, and Protest: A Century of U.S. Women's Labor History*, ed. Ruth Milkman (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 42-61. Also see Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, "Survival Strategies among African-American Women Workers: A Continuing Process," in *ibid.*, 139-55. Patricia A. Cooper's *Once a Cigar Maker: Men, Women, and Work Culture in American Cigar Factories, 1900-1919* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); and Dorothy Sue Cobble's *Dishing It Out: Waitresses and Their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991) provide particularly detailed analyses of connections between women's work culture, daily acts of resistance, and more formal labor protest.
2. When the strike began in 1972, Farah operated five plants in El Paso; two in San Antonio; one in Victoria, Texas; and one in Las Cruces, New Mexico. It was one of the largest non-union garment plants in the United States.
3. The strike's victory made Farah the largest enterprise with union representation in El Paso. Before the Farah strike, only about 1,500 of El Paso's approximately 20,000 garment workers were covered by union contracts. Billy the Kid was the only plant that was completely represented by the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers' Union; one of the four Levi-Strauss factories in El Paso was also represented by Amalgamated. See Deborah De Witt Mally, "How the Union Beat Willie Farah," *Fortune*, August 1974, 167.
4. The oral histories were conducted by Laurie Coyle, Gail Hershatter, and myself. We returned in 1978 to interview the same women again, this time focusing on their family histories. For our account of the strike, based largely on these interviews, see Laurie Coyle, Gail Hershatter, and Emily Honig, "Women at Farah: An Unfinished Story," in *Mexican Women in the United States: Struggles Past and Present*, ed. Magdalena More and Adelaide R. Del Castillo (Los Angeles: Chicano Studies Research Center Publications, University of California, 1980), reprinted in *A Needle, a Bobbin, a Strike: Women Needleworkers in America*, ed. Joan Jensen and Sue Davidson (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984).
5. For example, the excellent study by Jacquelyn Dowd Hall et al., *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), documents periods of activism and retrenchment in the labor movement during the first half of the twentieth century, but it does not trace continuities or discontinuities in individuals' lives. The same is true of Karen Brodtkin Sacks's model study of an organizing drive, *Caring by the Hour: Women, Work, and*

*Organizing at Duke Medical Center* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988). Although Sacks traces continuities and discontinuities in women's labor activism, she confined her analysis to the workplace. Studies that do examine the long-term impact of political mobilization tend not to focus on working-class communities or on women. See, for example, Margaret M. Braungart and Richard G. Braungart, "The Effects of the 1960s' Political Generation on Former Left- and Right-Wing Youth Activist Leaders," *Social Problems* 38 (August 1991): 316-32.

6. Vicki Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 121.

7. The factories involved in this strike were the DCB Apparel Group, Inc., Apparel Conditioners Corporation (an industrial laundry), H & R, and Sonia's Apparel. For accounts of the strike, see *El Paso Times*, 2 July 1990; 27 June 1991; 30 June 1991; 29 Sept. 1991; 19 Jan. 1992.

8. According to one account, these plants "typically employ fewer than 70 workers in old warehouses with stacks of fabric piled on filthy floors. Windows, if any, are small and may be sealed shut. Fire exits often are locked. There is neither air conditioning in summer nor heat in winter. Paint peels of the walls. And owners don't provide water, although the summer heat usually breaks 100 degrees and workers regularly faint at their machines." *El Paso Times*, 29 Sept. 1991.

9. In fact, one of the hunger-strike activists of 1991 had actually worked at Farah during the strike but had not participated in the strike. "I had just come from Mexico and didn't understand the situation, so I didn't go out on strike," she recalled (interview with Julietta Parra, October 1992).

10. Farah shut down the Third Street plant in 1985; in 1986 it laid off the remaining 1,000 workers at the Paisano plant and shut it down, leaving only Gateway. See *El Paso Times*, 12 Apr. 1986. The last sewing line in El Paso was terminated in May 1990 (*El Paso Times*, 21 Mar. 1990). For a more detailed account of Farah's post-strike history, see Allen Pusey, "Clothes Made the Man," *Texas Monthly*, June 1977, 134-38.

11. Interview with Antonio Sanchez, El Paso, 28 Sept. 1992.

12. *The Complete Twin Plant Guide* (El Paso: Solunet: Solutions Network, 1989), 163.

13. *Maquiladoras* are Mexican assembly or manufacturing plants that can be completely foreign-owned and managed. Mexican law permits the importation of capital equipment and machinery from abroad; U.S. customs law provides that only the value of processing in Mexico (as opposed to the value of the product) be subject to import duty. For more specific details of *maquiladora* operations along the U.S.-Mexican border, see *Borderline Magazine*, August-September 1992, 27. For a broader discussion of the history and operation of the *maquilas*, see Augusta Dwyer, *On the Line: Life on the U.S.-Mexican Border* (London: Latin American Bureau, 1994); Susan Tiano, *Patriarchy on the Line: Labor, Gender, and Ideology in the Mexican Maquila Industry* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

14. Dwyer, 17. For a discussion of women workers in the *maquilas* in Juárez, see Gay Young, "Gender Identification and Working-Class Solidarity among Maquila Workers in Ciudad Juárez: Stereotypes and Realities," in *Women on the U.S.-Mexican Border: Responses to Change*, ed. Vicki L. Ruiz and Susan Tiano (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 105-28; Devon Peña, "Tortuosidad: Shop Floor Struggles of Female Maquiladora Workers," in *ibid.*, 129-54.

15. Mary Pardo, "Creating Community: Mexican American Women in Eastside Los Angeles," *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, Special Issue on "Las Obreras: The Politics of Work and Family (spring-fall 1991): 39-72.

16. See, for example, Dana Frank, *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gen-*

*der, and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919-1929* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

17. Patricia Zavella, *Women's Work and Chicano Families: Cannery Workers of the Santa Clara Valley* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

18. See, for example, Pardo; Sally A. Marston and George Towers, "Private Spaces and the Politics of Places: Spatioeconomic Restructuring and Community Organizing in Tucson and El Paso," in *Local Politics in a Global Era*, ed. Robert Rishin and Joseph Kling (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1993), 75-102; George Towers, "Alinsky Organizing in El Paso and San Antonio: EPISO, COPS, and Mexican American Politics" (Paper presented at the Meeting of the Association of Borderlands Scholars, Reno, April 1991).

19. For a far more detailed account of the move from politics to religion by women activists, see Judith Stacey, *Brave New Families: Stories of Domestic Upheaval in Late-Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).