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*“We Are the Ones Who Are Out in Front”:
Women’s Leadership in the
Immigrant Rights Movement*

Ruth Milkman and Veronica Terriquez

A STRIKING FEATURE OF THE CONTEMPORARY immigrant rights movement in the United States is the extensive presence of women in formal leadership roles. Women are not only highly visible as grassroots and mid-level leaders but also as executive directors of leading immigrant rights organizations and in other high-level positions. In this regard, the immigrant rights movement is an anomaly, since men dominate the top leadership roles in most US social movements and the organizations linked to them.¹

The immigrant rights movement is national in scope, as was revealed by the massive 2006 street marches across the nation protesting proposed changes to US immigration law. Prominent female immigrant rights leaders can be found throughout the United States.² We focus here on the role of female leaders in Los Angeles, where a disproportionate share of immigrant rights organizations are headquartered. Home to the nation’s single largest concentration of unauthorized immigrants, southern California has the immigrant movement’s deepest base of popular support. And unlike regions with more diverse foreign-born populations, the immigrant community in the Los Angeles area is highly cohesive, due to its relative linguistic homogeneity: Mexicans and Central Americans comprise the majority of the area’s foreign-born population and an even greater proportion of its unauthorized immigrants.³ In recent years, moreover, Los Angeles

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has become the nation's leading laboratory of immigrant labor organizing, especially among Latinos.⁴

The LA immigrant rights movement includes four major segments: (a) service-sector labor unions with substantial foreign-born memberships; (b) immigrant hometown associations (HTAs) and ethnic organizations; (c) community-based organizations (CBOs), including "worker centers" as well as umbrella organizations that function as coalition-builders; and (d) student immigrant rights groups.⁵ The nature and extent of women's leadership varies considerably among these segments, as we show below. The variation enriches our analysis, exposing the dynamics of women's leadership in the movement as a whole. Our inquiry focuses specifically on Latinas, who predominate among top-level female immigrant leaders in Los Angeles.

The contemporary immigrant rights movement has two key dimensions. It is a civil rights movement, seeking a path to legal status and other fundamental rights for the nation's unauthorized immigrants. But it is also a labor movement, in the broadest sense of the term, promoting economic advancement for immigrants and their children. However, women's prominence among high-level leaders in the immigrant rights movement differentiates it from other US civil rights and labor movements, in which women are typically limited to intermediate and lower level positions while men monopolize the top leadership roles.⁶ In earlier Latino movements, similarly, men comprised the overwhelming majority of high-level leaders, as for example in the United Farm Workers and the Chicano movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

Why is the immigrant rights movement different? We propose a three-pronged explanation. First, an ample *supply* of female leaders has been generated by the migration process itself—which, as many commentators have noted, often improves the status of female immigrants and draws them into the public sphere. Second, because the immigrant rights movement is relatively new and has grown dramatically since the late 1980s, it has generated extensive *demand* for new leadership—in the context of a late twentieth century political culture that is broadly supportive of gender equity. The third factor is the *feminist consciousness* of immigrant women leaders themselves. Although more often expressed behind closed doors than in public, feminism

has served as a vital resource for many of these women, helping them overcome obstacles along the path to leadership roles.

GENDER AND MIGRATION

The literature on the gender dynamics of immigration from Latin America to the United States offers a starting point for our analysis. One key finding in that literature is that, despite the difficulties associated with the migration process, it tends to improve women's economic and social status relative to that of their male counterparts, generating what Hondagneu-Sotelo characterizes as "a general trend toward gender egalitarianism" in the Latino immigrant community.⁷

That trend is driven primarily by the dynamics of female labor force participation. The employment opportunities that Latin American first-generation immigrants (of both genders) find in the United States are generally superior to those in the sending countries—indeed this is the single most common reason for migration. Upon arrival in the United States, most Latina immigrants seek work outside the household out of economic necessity, generating a female labor force participation rate much higher than that in their countries of origin.⁸ Initially, paid work often is conceived as an extension of domesticity rather than a challenge to it, but over time it provides women with greater economic independence and freedom of movement than most enjoyed prior to migration and thus tends to increase their power within immigrant households.⁹

As in the US labor market as a whole, job segregation by gender produces different employment patterns for Latino and Latina immigrants and distinctive workplace cultures as well. First-generation Latino immigrant men, especially those employed in male-dominated sectors like construction, often find support among coworkers for what Robert Smith calls "ranchero masculinity," reinforced in all-male leisure activities such as soccer or drinking in bars.¹⁰ By contrast, Latina immigrants disproportionately find employment in interactive service jobs, where they gain greater exposure to "American" ideals of gender equality. Many female immigrants embrace those ideals, albeit in complex and ambivalent ways.¹¹

Although they typically earn more per hour than their female counterparts, Latino immigrant men often have less stable employment.

Latina immigrants who work longer and more regular hours may accumulate earnings equal to or exceeding those of their husbands and fathers. Even those with lower earnings often have more economic independence than they did prior to migration.¹² They also enjoy greater freedom of physical movement—traveling to work, taking their children to school, shopping, and so forth—placing them “outside of traditional normative expectations and squarely ‘in the street.’”¹³ As Zentgraf observes in her study of Salvadoran female immigrants in Los Angeles, this greater spatial mobility provides “a sense of freedom . . . a breaking down of gender-related cultural and social roles that [had] kept them tightly regulated and watched.”¹⁴

Adult immigrants experience these shifting gender roles directly, whereas those who migrate as children—the “1.5 generation”—have a different experience. For the latter, the United States offers expanded access to secondary and postsecondary educational opportunities relative to their countries of origin. And, crucially, Latina 1.5 generation immigrants enroll in postsecondary education at higher rates than their male counterparts, in part because immigrant parents seek to protect adolescent girls and thus shelter them from distractions.¹⁵

Although it is important to recognize that gender relations have changed south of the US-Mexican border as well as in *El Norte* and that the gender effects of migration are sometimes contradictory, the available evidence suggests that the migration process has a positive impact on women’s status.¹⁶ For our purposes, the key outcome is a large supply of Latina immigrants who move freely and comfortably in the public sphere, who have experienced social and economic empowerment, and who are motivated to consolidate those advances. As Pessar notes, migration-based “gains in gender equity are central to women’s desires to settle, more or less permanently, to protect their advances.” She adds: “In contrast, many men seek to return home rapidly to regain the status and privileges that migration itself has challenged.”¹⁷

These observations apply primarily to those who migrate as adults. Nonetheless, these “here versus there” orientations give immigrant civic and political engagement a strikingly gendered character, as Jones-Correa documents in his study of Latinos in New York City.¹⁸ Latino first-generation immigrant men tend to be attracted to political projects focused on their countries of origin, while Latina immigrant

women's political activity is more often directed at improving the situation of their families and communities in the United States. This has important implications for our puzzle, since it means that women face limited male competition for leadership roles in political projects focused on the situation of immigrants "here" in the United States. Indeed, as the lack of legal status has become an increasingly critical barrier to economic advancement for more and more immigrants, Latina women's US-oriented political focus has propelled them directly into leadership roles in the immigrant rights movement.

Previous research suggests that, like paid employment itself, immigrant women's activism often begins as an extension into the public sphere of traditional female obligations toward children and families, or what Temma Kaplan calls "female consciousness."¹⁹ The activism of Latina women in the community-based group "Mothers of East LA"—and in East Los Angeles community affairs more broadly—are well-documented examples.²⁰ The spring 2006 immigrant rights marches provide a more spectacular (if less enduring) illustration. Those protests were "a family affair," attracting vast numbers of women and children and had family preservation as a key demand.²¹

Although service to family and community members remains a motivating force for today's immigrant rights activists, many also draw on the legacy of earlier women's movements in the United States and elsewhere. Like Chicana activists who distanced themselves from white feminism but built a *feminista* movement within the Chicano movement, many Latina immigrant activists have developed a feminist consciousness in the course of their political careers.²² For some, involvement in left-wing movements in Central America sparked interest in feminism; for others the catalyst was exposure to Latina feminisms in the United States.²³ Whatever its source, feminist consciousness has been an important resource for many Latinas rising to leadership in the immigrant rights movement.

THE IMMIGRANT RIGHTS MOVEMENT:

GROWTH AND ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS

Unlike migration itself, the immigrant rights movement is a recent phenomenon. It has no precedent among the massive waves of European immigrants who arrived in the nineteenth and early-twentieth

centuries and who could easily become US citizens. Although Chinese and other Asian immigrants did face exclusion, legal status was seldom a concern for European immigrants prior to the severe restrictions imposed in the 1920s. Undocumented immigration became a significant issue only after 1965, when new legislation sparked a resurgence of immigration while limiting the number of legal entrants from the Western hemisphere for the first time.²⁴ By the 1980s, millions of people—mostly Mexican and Central American—were living and working in the United States without legal authorization and with severely restricted civil rights.

Political organizing and advocacy on behalf of this disenfranchised group emerged after the passage of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which enabled large numbers of undocumented persons to gain legal status. Although its intention was to eliminate illegal immigration, IRCA's provisions for tighter border security, along with subsequent enforcement efforts, stimulated unprecedented growth in the undocumented population. Many unauthorized migrants who had planned to return to their country of origin now opted to take up permanent residence in the United States to avoid increasingly perilous and expensive border crossings, and soon family members joined them.²⁵ The unauthorized population grew from about 2.5 million in 1989 (just after many had gained legal status under IRCA) to an estimated 11 to 12 million twenty years later.²⁶

As their numbers grew, undocumented immigrants increasingly became a political lightning rod. In the 1990s, restrictionists won passage of harsh measures limiting immigrant access to public services and imposing other penalties on the undocumented. In response, immigrants and their supporters mobilized, gradually drawing in the four segments of organizations enumerated above. Although the immigrant rights movement had developed over the preceding two decades, it first exploded into public view with the 2006 street protests against H.R. 4437—the draconian bill passed by the US House of Representatives in late 2005 that would have criminalized immigrants for simply being present in the country without authorization, as well as penalizing US citizens who assisted them.²⁷ Like California's Proposition 187 in 1994, H.R. 4437 never became law, but it created

widespread alarm within the immigrant community and galvanized a massive political mobilization.

On the surface, the contemporary immigrant rights movement appears as a classic civil rights movement, demanding a path to legal status and citizenship rights for the unauthorized foreign-born population.²⁸ The movement also seeks access to more mundane civil rights such as access to drivers' licenses or banking services. Less obviously, but equally fundamentally, the immigrant rights movement is a labor movement, seeking economic advancement for immigrant workers and their children.

Whereas legal Latino immigrants were not consistently supportive of their undocumented co-nationals in the past, today they are far more unified, thanks to the growing number of mixed-status households as well as the growing stigmatization and racialization of Latinos, regardless of legal status, by anti-immigrant political actors. The Latino working-class population remains internally stratified, but rather than being a source of division, that stratification often motivates immigrant rights activism: that many of their fellow Latinos have obtained stable working-class jobs with decent pay and conditions encourages unauthorized immigrants in low-wage, precarious jobs at the bottom of the US labor market to hope that they can do the same.

This aspiration for access to the mainstream of the labor market where workers earn a living wage and where employment conditions conform to legal requirements is central to the immigrant rights agenda. Similarly, the undocumented student movement focuses on improving access to higher education and winning legal status for college graduates so that they can secure employment commensurate with their qualifications. Over time, the civil rights and labor movement agendas of the immigrant rights movement have increasingly merged, since lack of legal status remains a key barrier to economic advancement for both students and adult immigrants. Many organizations support this dual agenda, including labor unions, worker centers and other CBOs, ethnic organizations, and student groups. Thanks to the escalating attacks of anti-immigrant restrictionists, even once-apolitical HTAs have been galvanized into immigrant rights activity in recent decades.

The diverse entities that comprise the LA immigrant rights movement vary in structure and culture as well as—especially relevant for our purposes—in organizational age. Some have existed for nearly a century, most notably the long-established labor unions that have in recent years recruited immigrants into their ranks. Many HTAs and ethnic organizations also date back several decades. By contrast, other immigrant rights organizations, like the worker centers and student groups, are of recent vintage, founded in the 1990s or later.

The organizational sociology literature suggests that this temporal variation matters. As Stinchcombe famously argued, the historical context in which an organization initially forms has enduring significance; more specifically, the cultural assumptions of the era in which an organization was founded continue to exert influence.²⁹ Similarly, the “new institutionalism” literature stresses the path dependency and bureaucratic inertia of organizational structures over time.³⁰

Although the organizational sociology literature rarely addresses gender issues directly, it nevertheless illuminates the varying levels of women’s leadership across the immigrant rights movement. Organizations established in recent decades, after gender equity had become a legitimate and widely accepted goal in the larger society, tend to be more open to women’s leadership than those of older vintage, which retain longstanding traditions of male-dominated leadership.³¹

The rapid growth of the immigrant rights movement in recent years amplifies the effects of organizational age. All else being equal, it is easier to diversify a growing movement than one of stable or declining size, in part because incumbent leaders typically seek to retain their positions over time. Movement growth, moreover, stimulates the formation of new organizations, in this case worker centers and student immigrant rights groups, which are not only smaller (making leadership roles in them less prestigious) but also less burdened by the patriarchal traditions typically embedded in unions, ethnic organizations, and HTAs.

Another theory relevant to our inquiry is Rosabeth Moss Kanter’s classic analysis of the tendency of executive-level organizational incumbents to recruit successors with characteristics similar to their own, perpetuating male-dominated leadership structures.³² As Kanter suggests, this pattern is largely driven by the need for trust among leaders in organizations that face uncertain external environments.³³

The older organizations in the immigrant rights movement, established with male leadership in the distant past, typically confront such uncertainties and often exhibit the tendency toward “homosocial reproduction” that Kanter highlighted.

In the case of HTAs, yet another factor affects the gender composition of leadership, namely the gendered “here” versus “there” political orientations mentioned earlier.³⁴ Although HTAs have only recently been drawn into immigrant rights activity, their overall focus on immigrants’ countries of origin makes them disproportionately attractive to men and helps explain why their leadership is more male-dominated than that of other immigrant organizations.³⁵

DATA AND METHODS

Our analysis is based on in-depth interviews and focus groups with key leaders in the LA immigrant rights movement, as well as extensive informal observation of the movement over several years. Using purposive sampling, we conducted in-depth interviews with eighteen foreign-born Latina immigrant rights leaders in Los Angeles, averaging one to three hours in length. We asked each interviewee about her family background, migration history, educational experience, and involvement in the movement. We also conducted four focus groups comprised primarily of these same interviewees, along with four immigrant women who were not interviewed individually, yielding a sample of twenty-two female informants.

Unfortunately, no systematic inventories of the movement’s organizations or leaders currently exist, limiting sampling possibilities. Our sample is modest in size but includes most of the prominent immigrant female leaders in the movement in Los Angeles. Of our twenty-two Latina immigrant respondents, fourteen are Mexican-born, four are from Central America, and four are from South America. They span a wide age range, from young student activists to seasoned union and community leaders with decades of political experience. Most are citizens or legal permanent residents, but some are undocumented.

A striking feature of the sample is that sixteen of the twenty-two women are 1.5 generation immigrants who came to the United States as children or teenagers. This disproportionate representation of the 1.5 generation among female immigrant rights movement leaders

aligns with Bloemraad's research, which found the 1.5 generation to be overrepresented among civic and political immigrant leaders in Boston and Toronto.³⁶ As bilingual and bicultural individuals, 1.5 generation immigrants are especially well situated to navigate US institutions, while at the same time remaining strongly identified with the larger immigrant community. And as Abrego's study of undocumented immigrant activists shows, the 1.5 generation tends to be less fearful of political engagement in the United States than those who migrated as adults.³⁷ To supplement our data on immigrant female leaders, we also interviewed two Latina second-generation activists and two immigrant Latino male activists. Although our analysis focuses on the experiences of foreign-born Latina leaders, these four additional respondents provided valuable insights. All twenty-six of our interviews as well as the four focus groups were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using qualitative data and research analysis software.

Although our research focused on Los Angeles, there is scattered evidence in the literature that Latina leaders are also prominent in immigrant organizations in other parts of the United States. Milagros Ricourt and Ruby Danta document extensive Latina representation in the leadership of CBOs, social service organizations, and electoral politics in Queens, New York; Susan Chandler and Jill B. Jones highlight women's leadership in the predominantly immigrant labor union representing casino workers in Las Vegas; and Carol Hardy-Fanta's pioneering study found extensive involvement of Latinas in local politics in Boston in the late 1980s.³⁸

IMMIGRATION AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Most of the women we interviewed were 1.5 generation immigrants, although some immigrated as adults. The latter directly experienced the shift toward gender egalitarianism typically associated with migration, while those who arrived as children or adolescents witnessed its effects on their mothers or other female relatives. Both groups noted that it was rare for married women to work outside the home in their countries of origin, where marriage itself comes earlier in the typical life cycle. "That's what the culture was, you got married young," a Colombian-born immigrant rights leader recalled, "so the opportunities definitely were more limited for women." Similarly, a

Chilean-born leader told us, "In my family there was a recurring idea that women stay at home, and the men are allowed to work. My aunt never worked until she came to the United States."

Migration was also associated with material improvements in women's daily lives. "You have a washing machine here," one leader explained. "You don't have to go out to the river to wash clothes by hand. You don't have to grind everything. There is also a certain amount of liberty to do things, having your own identity, not as this submissive person to a husband. So the women love it here. I remember my mom saying, 'No, no, no! I don't want to go back there. It's too hard.' She loved the supermarket where she could just go pick up chicken."

Many interviewees observed that immigrants' economic situation led married women to enter the paid workforce. "Once you get here, the whole system they had back home, the stay-at-home wife, that changes. Eventually your financial needs force you to go to work. At one point all the women that migrated from my hometown worked in the factories," an indigenous Mexican immigrant leader explained. "The men might like it or not like it, but they had to let it happen, because otherwise they couldn't pay the rent."

Another leader who immigrated to the United States as a child elaborated on the implications of women's workforce participation:

Things really shift here. There's this real tension between the husband and wife. Before, the men were the heads of the family, able to provide. Now all of a sudden the women have to work, because it's not enough what they bring in with just one individual [working]. As my mother said, "Either I work or we starve."

It was harder for the men to adapt, coming to the United States. It was very easy for them to get distracted, whether it was in bars or whatever. The women had to be very strong, while the men would sometimes philander. For the women in my family, it was always about: how do you create stability? The women would complain, "These husbands, they always give up so easily." They [the men] were just having a difficult time.

For men, these changes were often painful, as gender norms rapidly shifted north of the border. "It was totally different where I grew up compared to here," a Salvadoran immigrant leader stated.

There, the men were in charge. For example, my grandfather: he always put my grandmother down; he told her what to do and not to do, and he didn't care what she said. Here it was different. Women still had to clean, cook, and do all that. But the men and the women both *had* to work; if not, they couldn't survive, or pay the bills. So here, the women could come and go freely. Also the laws are better here. Men have to provide child support, domestic abuse laws are stronger, and there are more organizations to help victims of domestic violence. Women have more legal rights.

In general, our interviews confirm the findings in the literature regarding the positive effect of migration on the economic and social status of women, largely driven by increased female labor force participation. Yet as some interviewees noted, married immigrant women were often caught between the constraints of their home country's culture and the demands of life in the United States. "My mother had to work; it was not a choice," one leader recalled. "But it was a struggle. The women still have to take care of the kids, and in many instances they are dealing with the bad side of the culture, the demanding husband and all that stuff." Indeed, some men responded to the stresses of their situation by engaging in acts of domestic violence, which often led to separation or divorce.³⁹

As immigrant wives and mothers grappled with these conflicting pressures, many urged their daughters—1.5 and second-generation immigrants—to chart a new and independent path. "My mother would talk to me about this when I was young," one leader recalled. "She'd tell me, 'Make sure you have your own money, your own bank account. You need to be able to take care of yourself and not depend on a man.'" Another recounted, "My dad was kind of conservative, he didn't want us to learn how to drive. But my mom would steal the car keys when he was not watching and say, 'Here, learn to drive!' She knew that for our future we needed to do those things."

Not only did their mothers support their aspirations, but the 1.5 generation was less constrained by patriarchal traditions to begin with, in part thanks to improved access to educational opportunities. Whereas in their countries of origin men typically secured more education than women, in the United States the pattern was reversed: young immigrant Latinas are more likely than their male

counterparts to gain access to higher education.⁴⁰ As noted in previous literature, a sexual double standard contributes to this dynamic: immigrant parents often strictly regulate girls' leisure activities in an effort to protect their sexuality, while boys enjoy more freedom.⁴¹ "The boys could do a lot more, they could stay out late," one informant recalled. "They were never asked where they were going. But with the girls it was more restrictive." Ironically, patriarchal tradition proved advantageous to young female immigrants, while the liberty their brothers enjoyed often distracted them from schoolwork and led to negative outcomes.

Nearly all of the 1.5 generation women leaders we interviewed attended college, an experience that deeply influenced their lives. Several stated that they would not have been able to pursue postsecondary schooling had they remained in their countries of origin. "I have cousins in Mexico who are around my age, and a lot of the guys went to college," one leader told us, "but the females are married with kids, or they're single mothers. There's no talk about college. There's no talk about having a future. It's all about having a family, taking care of your family. That's the role of the women." Others compared their situation to that of their mothers: "My mother got married very young, she must have been sixteen. She was very intelligent, and she really supported us going to school, even though she didn't go to school herself."

Higher education not only improved the status of 1.5 generation immigrants, but it also was the context in which many first became politically aware. Several immigrant rights leaders began their activist careers in Latino student groups. As one recalled, "My whole focus when I was in college was Chicano. I got involved in MEChA [Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán]. We took over the administration building!" For younger informants, organizations of undocumented students played a similar role. Some had become activists in high school, deepening their political engagement as college students. Many recalled teachers who had encouraged them to attend college and to pursue professional careers; others spoke of teachers who were political mentors.

Higher education was far less accessible to leaders in our sample who immigrated as adults; they typically found a path to political

engagement through labor unions or CBOs. A few had significant political experience in their home countries and were drawn into US immigrant rights activism soon after immigrating.

Through these varied paths, then, our informants not only developed a political consciousness but also acquired leadership skills. The migration process itself disrupted longstanding gender hierarchies and created a large supply of Latina immigrants who moved easily in the public sphere.⁴² Women experienced significant improvement—through employment, education, or both—in economic and social status relative to their counterparts back home, so that when leadership opportunities arose in the immigrant rights movement, they were ready to step up. However, those opportunities were unevenly distributed across the various segments of the movement.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEADERSHIP

Our data cannot be considered definitive on this point, but they generally confirm the claim in the organizational sociology literature discussed earlier: women confront disproportionately steep barriers to entry into leadership roles in older entities such as labor unions, HTAs, and established ethnic organizations, reflecting patriarchal traditions embedded in these organizational structures. And in the HTAs, the negative effects of organizational age are compounded by a focus on homeland-oriented projects that appeal disproportionately to men nostalgic for pre-migration gender arrangements, as suggested in previous research.⁴³

Our data also confirm the notion that newer organizations, such as student immigrant rights groups, worker centers and other recently established CBOs, and umbrella groups that foster movement-wide coalitions, are relatively receptive to women's leadership. These organizations were formed in the late-twentieth century, when progressive political groups shared a normative commitment to gender equality. Interviewees sometimes did encounter resistance to women's leadership in these newer organizations, but patriarchal norms were less entrenched and easier to neutralize than in unions, HTAs, and older ethnic organizations.

Our interviews span the four segments of the LA immigrant rights movement identified earlier. Below we discuss the nature and

extent of women's leadership in each, moving chronologically from the oldest to the newest organizations.

Labor unions. Starting in the 1980s, several long-established labor unions in southern California began to actively recruit Latino immigrants (both male and female) into their ranks. The best-known examples are the "Justice for Janitors" campaign sponsored by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the organizing drives of the LA hotel workers union (UNITE HERE). Other unions in the Los Angeles region also organized immigrant workers, albeit more sporadically. As their immigrant memberships grew, these unions became strong advocates of immigrant rights. SEIU and UNITE HERE have engaged in multiple activities on behalf of their foreign-born members, including opposing anti-immigrant initiatives such as Proposition 187 and H.R. 4437, and advocating comprehensive immigration reform.

Immigrant women are conspicuously scarce among high-level leaders in these unions, however. The tradition of male leadership is deeply embedded, reflecting the gender norms of the era in which these organizations originated: the SEIU was founded in 1921, and the unions that comprise UNITE HERE date back to the late nineteenth century. Although in other respects they may have transcended the legacy of the past, barriers to women's entry into executive-level leadership persist.

Many immigrant women have become union activists in Los Angeles in recent years, and quite a few have distinguished themselves as rank-and-file leaders. "We have many women leaders in this union. Many are single mothers who work at night, take care of their children, and still participate in the union," a mid-level janitors' union leader told us. "I've seen many instances where women lead work stoppages, where they are the ones leading the fight against the supervisors." Indeed, union activism is a vital source of civic engagement and empowerment for immigrant women, many of whom have no previous history of political activism. As a female LA janitors' union activist told another researcher, "The union draws the women out of the closet. In our countries, politics is almost always left to the men. Few women participate. So you ignore those things;

politics doesn't interest you. To organize? Forget it. But here [in Los Angeles], suddenly, I have done a million things."⁴⁴

In the LA janitors' union, women often outnumbered men among rank-and-file union activists, and female shop stewards, union staff, and negotiating committee members were commonplace. By 1999, women made up nearly half of the union's executive board and over 40 percent of shop stewards and members of the contract negotiating committee.⁴⁵ But access to top leadership roles proved more elusive. Despite extensive participation of women at other levels, the SEIU's LA janitors' union has never had a female president.⁴⁶

Immigrant women involved in other Los Angeles unions complained of resistance to women's leadership even at the lower levels. "Women were so drawn to the issues, they did the work, packed up the kids and took them along, or figured out how to get extra babysitters," one recounted, "but when it came to the formal union positions, it was all men. In every situation it was all men. We were not allowed into the inner circle, and that was really disrespectful." Another woman declared, "I have a love-hate relationship with my union. It's very, very hierarchical. And there's a lot of folks with the old traditional mentality that think women should not be in the union, especially women of color."

One union leader—an exceptional case of a woman who did occupy a high-profile position in the labor movement—commented on the contrast between the unions and other segments of the immigrant rights movement, echoing claims about the effects of organizational age in the sociological literature (although she was unfamiliar with that literature).

The immigrant rights movement actually has *far* more women leaders than labor does. I think it's because there wasn't already a structure of leadership in place. Immigrant rights organizations were created; they were brand new. Since women were grassroots leaders in the immigrant rights movement, it was a natural thing for them to become the formal leaders of the organizations that emerged. But the labor movement already has a set structure. If you're in there, you're in there for life. You rarely get out. It's a much harder thing to get into as a woman.

However formidable, these obstacles are not impossible to overcome. In Los Angeles's main UNITE HERE affiliate, a woman did ascend to the top leadership spot: in 1989, a (US-born) Latina, María Elena Durazo, was elected president after a fierce battle contesting the white male incumbent leadership.⁴⁷ In 2006, Durazo, a prominent advocate for immigrant rights throughout her career, went on to become the head of the LA County Federation of Labor, the single most visible labor leadership position in the region.

Established hometown associations and ethnic organizations. HTAs and Latino ethnic organizations have existed for many decades in Los Angeles, which has long been the single most popular US destination for Latin American immigrants. HTAs grew with the surge in immigration after 1965, although some were founded even earlier. Today they number in the hundreds. Most HTAs began as largely apolitical, socially oriented, transnational organizations, but they have become increasingly involved in politics on both sides of the US–Mexican border in recent years. Mexican and Central American governments regularly engage HTAs in economic development efforts as well as in political affairs in immigrants' home countries: HTAs have also joined the wider immigrant rights movement in response to the escalating attacks on Latino immigrants inside the United States.⁴⁸ Ethnic organizations, especially among Mexican Americans, also have a long history in the Los Angeles area: they, too, have been drawn into immigrant rights advocacy in recent years.

Although their history does not reach back as far as that of labor unions, most HTAs and ethnic organizations originated prior to the emergence of Second Wave feminism, and barriers to women's entry to upper-level leadership positions are often salient. One of our interviewees, who served on the executive board of a major Latino ethnic organization and eventually became its top leader, maintained her position only by filing a lawsuit against a group of male board members who tried to oust her. She recalled:

The guys—certain members of the board—tried to fire me. They wanted to put in a man. I was a skinny little troublemaking hippie

lawyer. I didn't look like a leader to them. I sued them for violating the bylaws. They didn't even follow the rules! They wanted to put in [a former elected official] as the head. They said, "He has leadership qualities." I took them to court and I won.

The HTAs are even more male dominated than the ethnic organizations, largely because their external focus makes them disproportionately appealing to male first-generation immigrants. Thus, as Goldring notes, HTA activities "provide an important vehicle for gaining male status and deploying political power."⁴⁹ Even commentators who are not particularly attentive to gender issues have observed that the leadership of HTAs is almost entirely male.⁵⁰

Our interviewees also commented on the patriarchal culture of the HTAs. "The *machista* tradition is deeply ingrained," a female HTA leader stated. "The first time I went [to a meeting] a woman raised her hand. Her husband was sitting next to her, and he said to her, '*tu no hablas* [you don't speak]. I thought, 'I'm glad I don't have a husband!'" Another interviewee complained, "Those men [in the HTAs] think that women don't have good ideas. If a woman proposes something for the group, it never gets done. If the man proposes the same thing, they celebrate it. They are totally *machistas*." A third declared, "Those organizations are very hierarchal and patriarchal. It would take a revolution to change them!"

Most HTA leaders are male immigrants who garner resources from their compatriots in the United States to benefit their hometown communities. In so doing they often recuperate the gender status they lost in the course of migration. Frequent travelers, they command respect on both sides of the border. "When we have the fiestas to collect funds [in Los Angeles], I am the leader and am treated with respect," a male Salvadoran HTA leader told a researcher. "When I go back home to inspect the works paid for with our contributions, I am as important as the Mayor."⁵¹

Women often find cross-border travel difficult, especially if they are mothers. Yet there are exceptions to the pattern of male domination of HTAs. One of our informants is the president of an HTA with a significant indigenous membership. "In many of the other Mexican HTAs, the women mainly take care of the beauty pageants and the food," she told us, "In my community we participate more equally. We are one of the only hometown associations with a woman president."⁵²

Community-based organizations. Although male immigrants may feel nostalgia for the patriarchal culture they left behind, the opposite is usually true for women. As Goldring observes, “Over time, and especially if their families are in the United States, women may lose interest in maintaining transnational spaces.”⁵³ In contrast to politically active immigrant men who take a keen interest in homeland-oriented affairs, female activists tend to focus on US-based issues and institutions.⁵⁴ As a result, immigrant women are disproportionately involved in worker centers and other CBOs. “Women are more organized. We are the ones who are out in front, leading these organizations,” one prominent leader told us. “Women are more willing to take the risk and step up.”

These newer organizations tend to be far more receptive to women’s leadership than unions, established ethnic organizations, and HTAs. The movement of women into high-profile positions in immigrant rights-oriented CBOs sometimes occurs by default, insofar as men demonstrate less interest in projects oriented toward immigrants’ lives “here” rather than in their home countries. Moreover, as relatively small and poorly funded organizations, CBOs and worker centers may offer less attractive and less well-remunerated leadership positions than older organizations.

Most worker centers and CBOs were founded in the late-twentieth century, after the women’s movement had led many progressive organizations to at least nominally incorporate the goal of gender equality into their internal cultures and structures. Some worker centers focus their efforts on organizing immigrant women in female-dominated sectors of the economy (such as domestic work); others use “explicit language about gender and gender oppression in their work,” as Janice Fine has pointed out.⁵⁵ But women also lead worker centers with male-dominated and gender-mixed constituencies. One interviewee who developed a popular education program on gender relations for a worker center reported, “We are getting more and more women participating, we have really strong women leaders who make themselves heard. Organizers have become more conscious, they talk constantly with the workers about respect and equal participation of men and women.”

The extent of women’s representation in CBO leadership is impressive, although the path to the top is not always easy. Some

women encountered resistance as they moved up the leadership ranks, especially early in their careers. But this segment of the LA immigrant rights movement has far more female leadership than unions, HTAs, or ethnic organizations. Only student organizations contain a greater proportion of female leaders.

Student immigrant rights groups. A recent portrait of the Los Angeles student immigrant rights movement in the *New York Times Magazine* noted that the movement has been “largely powered by women” and that “women have also stuck with the movement long after many men have dropped out or burned out.”⁵⁶ Our interviews confirm this account, especially among student activists at four-year colleges and universities. “It’s a woman-run show,” one female student leader told us, “We’re always scrambling to find men. The women are doing the work and organizing.” Another noted, “The women are usually elected leaders, in part because few men run against them.” Still another stated, “We definitely have a very strong presence of women leaders taking a stance on undocumented student issues. Last year we only had one male on our board.”

Not only are student groups unencumbered by the patriarchal traditions that characterize older organizations, but their predominantly female leadership also reflects the gender disparity in college attendance among immigrant Latino youth.⁵⁷ “The reality is that most of the students in college are women,” one student leader noted, “because men are going to war or they’re going to jail.” In addition, many immigrant women student activists are self-consciously building on the legacy of Chicana or other Latin American feminisms, which they learned about in ethnic studies classes and campus political organizations.

Although women have remarkably ready access to leadership roles in the immigrant student movement, they do confront sexism at times, especially from outsiders. One complained, “The media always wants us to put a man in front of the camera, not a woman, to speak on our behalf.” Finally, young women leaders, like their older counterparts, sometimes encounter disapproval from family members or romantic partners. As one noted, “A lot of the gender issues that happen are behind closed doors, when people are dealing with their families or with dating.”

FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS

Women immigrant rights leaders strategically—although not always publicly—incorporate gender-based or feminist claims into their political work. As we noted above, the immigrant rights movement's central aim is to establish a path to legalization for the undocumented and help them access civil rights and economic opportunities from which they are currently excluded. Some campaigns focus on class-based inequities and employer abuses of immigrant workers. Others highlight racial and ethnic injustice, challenging the racialized anti-immigrant discourse that stigmatizes Latinos generally, regardless of legal status. Calls for gender equality do not figure centrally in the movement's public claims-making repertoire, yet women leaders do promote women's rights inside movement organizations.

When we asked our informants if they considered themselves to be feminists, a large majority responded affirmatively—and some exclaimed, “*cien por ciento* [100 percent]!” One immigrant rights coalition leader declared, “I'm a feminist and a proud one.” A union leader answered, “Yes! That's the only way to survive in this *machista* world.” A student leader was unequivocal: “I want equal opportunity for both men and women, based on merit, not gender. . . . I'm very much against patriarchy.” And an immigrant rights coalition leader stated, “Growing up, I saw the double standard culturally of how women were treated, and I really rebelled against that. I don't want any part of that side of our culture.”

Even those who rejected the label “feminist” endorsed the idea of gender equality. “I have a lot of feminist values,” one declared, “and I got a lot of my self-confidence from thinking like a feminist.” Some insisted on a qualified definition of the term. “I'd say I'm a feminist with a vision of making sure that everyone is incorporated,” one declared. Another stated, “I see the world from a women's perspective, understanding how policies and the system impact women and then doing something about it.”

Many leaders in our sample who had come of age in the 1960s and 1970s had been active in the Chicana feminist movement. One cut her political teeth on a campaign against forced sterilization of Latina women in an East LA hospital and went on to persuade an influential Mexican-American organization to support the struggle for abortion rights. Another was part of a women's caucus in the Central American

solidarity movement. This generation tended to be critical of mainstream “Anglo” feminism, however. As a union leader explained:

I hesitate to call myself a feminist because in my mind it still equates with a white upper-class women’s movement . . . I do consider myself a feminist in the context of the labor movement and for women of color. And I think that the feminist movement is starting to acknowledge working women’s issues as a real priority, so hopefully the women coming after me won’t have the feeling that “feminist” means white and upper class.

Another woman from this older generation told us:

I see myself as a feminist, but feminism is defined differently for Latina women. The mainstream women’s movement didn’t always relate to the reality of most women. Like in the 1980s when the women with the blue suits and the bow ties tried to be men. That’s not going to do it, because you’re not accepting who you are. I feel comfortable being a woman. I love this skin I am in. I love being a woman. I love being a Latina. I wouldn’t want to be anything else. Gender has been central to everything I do and how I see the world, but I don’t have to talk about it. I just do it.

Nearly all our interviewees expressed a feminist consciousness. Although their immigrant rights work was framed in the language of civil rights, labor rights, or human rights, they were acutely aware of the reality of male domination in the wider society and in their own organizations. One explained, “There is a basic lack of respect for women and their work. It’s so normal for us to be pushed aside that we often just accept it. You want the work to get done and so you just let it happen. The men take advantage of that.” Another described her experience when she became the director of a major Los Angeles CBO:

Soon after I became the executive director, I remember once I went to a meeting and one of the men there says to me, “*You are the executive director? And I thought you were just a pretty thing!*” And later when we were sitting there in the meeting, the guy reaches under the table and touches my leg. I was so angry! We ended up asking that he be removed from his job. It was a very male-centric movement for a long time. The presence and leadership of women was very shocking to the old-timers.

A union leader agreed: “Women were disrespected in the sense of not being allowed into the inner circle . . . We pushed but we never wanted it to go to the point where there would be a division in the ranks.”

Like feminists in the civil rights and Chicano movements of earlier years, those in today’s immigrant rights movement choose their battles.⁵⁸ As one stated, “Sometimes we don’t want to rock the boat, because the issues we’re dealing with are so critical. It’s a matter of life and death for people, whether someone gets deported or maybe gets killed, so we passively accept the reality.” Another suggested, “Sometimes you don’t want to raise the gender issue as a problem because you want to seem strong, as tough as the guys. You just want to focus on the policy issues. So it may not get talked about.”

Feminism served these women leaders well when they encountered obstacles blocking them from positions of leadership. On those occasions, they often challenged men directly—although typically behind closed doors. One informant reflected on a collective effort to advance women’s leadership inside her organization:

We wanted the men to understand that they have to share power, that they have to support and be in solidarity with women. It may mean that they will not run for office the next time, that instead they are going to support a woman. For men to get to that level of consciousness, women have to wage a struggle. Someone who has that power isn’t going to give it up easily.

Other women fought back individually. As one recalled, “A couple of times the guys would lock horns with me, but they didn’t do that too often because I didn’t take it kindly. Whenever I’ve been confronted I push back, I definitely push back. You don’t mess with me.” Another woman recalled a board member of her HTA who insulted her repeatedly.

I have a good relationship with the board members, with just one exception. There is a gentleman who feels that he lives back in the old country. He cannot stand it when I raise my hand. He makes a face. One day I decided to say, “Enough!” I got a big board and I wrote on it: “*Pido la palabra por favor* [Please give me the floor].” The *machista* tradition is very deeply engraved, but we are the trailblazers, so we have to keep them in check.

Women leaders were thoughtfully strategic in confronting such problems. As one explained, “When you go there challenging the man’s need to control it’s a battle, and you need to know how to wage it—knowing that it may end up breaking your organization.” Similarly, a young activist told us, “The recognition that you get as a leader is really different if you’re a woman, compared to a man. But it’s hard to decide, how much should I confront this? How much do you swallow it for the sake of the organization? And at the same time, how much energy do I spend addressing it so future women leaders don’t have to?”

Feminist consciousness helps explain the extensive representation of women among immigrant rights leaders, enabling them to overcome obstacles they encounter along the path to high-level leadership, while also contributing to gender equity in individual organizations and in the movement as a whole.

CONCLUSION

The immigrant rights movement is still a relatively young social movement, and the possibility that as it matures men will take over top-level leadership roles cannot be ruled out. But the fact that women currently enjoy the advantages of incumbency at the peak of many prominent immigrant rights organizations in Los Angeles, the city where the movement is most extensive and visible, may help prevent that outcome. In any case, the current extensive representation of women in top-level leadership roles in the immigrant rights movement is an anomaly that demands explanation. To summarize, it results from three interrelated factors:

First, the migration process has given rise to a large supply of foreign-born Latinas who move easily in the public sphere, who have experienced gains in gender equity, and who are eager to build on those gains. Access to employment is one driver of this dynamic, but for the 1.5 generation Latinas, who are particularly prominent among immigrant leaders, access to higher education is even more critical. The homeward-looking political orientation of many male immigrant activists also matters here, reducing the competition women face for leadership roles in US-oriented immigrant organizations.

Secondly, the rapid growth of the immigrant rights movement since the 1980s has generated growing demand for leaders. The extent

of female leadership varies among the different types of organizations that comprise the movement, with the greatest inroads taking place in younger organizations relatively unburdened by patriarchal organizational traditions, such as student groups and worker centers. But in some cases women have secured leadership roles even in older organizations, including labor unions, established HTAs, and ethnic organizations.

Finally, the feminist consciousness that nearly all the Latina immigrant rights leaders we interviewed share is a third factor contributing to their leadership trajectories. That consciousness served as a key resource that enabled women to confront and overcome obstacles they encountered as they rose into positions of leadership. Their feminism may enable them to consolidate their gains in future years, as the immigrant rights movement continues to grow and mature.

NOTES

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1. Organizations focused on women's rights or family issues are, of course, an exception and are led almost exclusively by women.
2. See Irene Bloemraad, Kim Voss, and Taeku Lee, "The Protests of 2006: What Were They, How Do We Understand Them, Where Do We Go?," in *Rallying for Immigrant Rights: The Fight for Inclusion in 21st Century America*, eds. Kim Voss and Irene Bloemraad (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 3–43.
3. Karina Fortuny and Randy Capps, "The Characteristics of Unauthorized Immigrants in California, Los Angeles, and the United States," report for the Urban Institute, Washington, DC, March 6, 2007, <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=411425>.
4. See Ruth Milkman, *L.A. Story: Immigrant Organizing and the Future of the U.S. Labor Movement* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006); and Ruth Milkman,

- Joshua Bloom, and Victor Narro, eds., *Working for Justice: The L.A. Model of Organizing and Advocacy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).
5. Arguably the movement also includes a fifth component, namely churches and faith-based organizations. The most important of these, especially for Latinos, is the Catholic Church, which formally excludes women from its leadership structure. Other faith-based organizations engaged in the immigrant rights movement *are* led by women: a notable example is Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE), whose executive director is Alexia Salvatierra (a US-born Latina). For more details, see Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *God's Heart Has No Borders: How Religious Activists Are Working for Immigrant Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).
 6. See Belinda Robnett, "African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965: Gender, Leadership, and Micromobilization," *American Journal of Sociology* 101, no. 6 (May 1996): 1661-93; and Ruth Milkman, "Two Worlds of Unionism: Women and the New Labor Movement," in *The Sex of Class: Women Transforming American Labor*, ed. Dorothy Sue Cobble (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).
 7. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 196. See also Sylvia Pedraza, "Women and Migration: The Social Consequences of Gender," *Annual Review of Sociology* 17 (1991): 303-25; Sherri Grasmuck and Patricia R. Pessar, *Between Two Islands: Dominican International Migration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Rita Simon, "Sociology and Immigrant Women," in *Seeking Common Ground*, ed. Donna Gabaccia (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1992), 23-40; Patricia R. Pessar, "Engendering Migration Studies: The Case of New Immigrants in the United States," *American Behavioral Scientist* 42, no. 4 (January 1999): 577-600; Nancy Foner, "Immigrant Women and Work in New York City, Then and Now," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 18, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 95-113.
 8. Nevertheless, due largely to their higher marriage and fertility rates, Latina immigrant women have lower labor force participation rates than both US-born women and Latino immigrant men, especially among the unauthorized. See Richard Fry, "Gender and Migration," Pew Hispanic Center Report, July 5, 2006, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2006/07/05/gender-and-migration>.
 9. Denise Segura, "Inside the Work Worlds of Chicana and Mexican Immigrant Women," in *Women of Color in American Society*, ed. Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1994), 95-111.
 10. Robert Courtney Smith, *Mexican New York: Transnational Lives of New Immigrants* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 94-122.
 11. See Grasmuck and Pessar, *Between Two Islands*; Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gendered Transitions*; Cecilia Menjivar, "The Intersection of Work and Gender: Central American Immigrant Women and Employment in California," *American Behavioral Scientist* 42 (January 1999): 601-27; and Kristine M. Zentgraf,

- “Immigration and Women’s Employment: Salvadorans in Los Angeles,” *Gender & Society* 16, no. 5 (October 2002): 625–46.
12. Pessar, “Engendering Migration Studies.”
 13. Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gendered Transitions*, 194.
 14. Zentgraf, “Immigration and Women’s Employment,” 637.
 15. Veronica Terriquez, “Educational and Employment Profile of California Youth,” UC/ACCORD Research Brief, July 2012, http://pathways.gseis.ucla.edu/publications/201207_terriquezRB.pdf; Yen Le Espiritu, “We Don’t Sleep Around Like White Girls Do: Family, Culture, and Gender in Filipina-American Lives,” *Signs* 26, no. 2 (Winter 2000): 415–40; Nancy López, *Hopeful Girls, Troubled Boys: Race and Gender Disparity in Urban Education* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Robert Courtney Smith, “Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the School Outcomes of Second-Generation Mexican Americans in New York,” in *Latinos: Remaking America*, ed. Marcelo Suarez-Orozco and Mariela Páez (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 110–25.
 16. Matthew C. Gutmann, “Dystopian Travels in Gringolandia: Engendering Ethnicity among Mexican Migrants to the United States,” *Ethnicities* 4, no. 4 (December 2004): 477–500; Pessar, “Engendering Migration Studies”; Emilio A. Parrado and Chenoa Flippen, “Migration and Gender among Mexican Women,” *American Sociological Review* 70, no. 4 (August 2005): 606–32.
 17. Pessar, “Engendering Migration Studies,” 587. Zentgraf also found this pattern among immigrants with working-class backgrounds, but in her sample the women who had been middle class prior to migration resembled male immigrants in that the status loss they suffered upon arrival in the United States made them nostalgic for their countries of origin. See Zentgraf, “Immigration and Women’s Employment.”
 18. Michael Jones-Correa, *Between Two Nations: The Political Predicament of Latinos in New York City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).
 19. Temma Kaplan, “Female Consciousness and Collective Action: The Case of Barcelona, 1910–1918,” *Signs* 7, no. 3 (Spring 1982): 545–66.
 20. Mary S. Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists: Identity and Resistance in Two Los Angeles Communities* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998); Lisa Garcia Bedolla, *Fluid Borders: Latino Power, Identity, and Politics in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
 21. Irene Bloemraad and Christine Trost, “It’s a Family Affair: Inter-generational Mobilization in the Spring 2006 Protests,” and Amalia Palleres and Nilda Flores-Gonzalez, “Emerging Voices: New Actors in the Chicago Protests,” both in *Rallying for Immigrant Rights*.
 22. Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power! Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011); Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America’s Second Wave* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

23. Nora Hamilton and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla, *Seeking Community in a Global City: Guatemalans and Salvadorans in Los Angeles* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2011).
24. Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).
25. Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002).
26. Jeffrey S. Passel, "The Size and Characteristics of the Unauthorized Migrant Population in the US," Pew Hispanic Center Report, March 7, 2006, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/61.pdf>; Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, "US Unauthorized Immigration Flows are Down Sharply Since Mid-Decade," Pew Hispanic Center Report, September 1, 2010, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/126.pdf>.
27. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Angelica Salas, "What Explains the Immigrant Rights Marches of 2006? Xenophobia and Organizing with Democratic Technology," in *Immigrant Rights in the Shadows of Citizenship*, ed. Rachel Ida Buff (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 209–25.
28. The 2003 Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride explicitly linked the 1960s civil rights movement to the immigrant rights movement. See Steven Greenhouse, "Riding Across America for Immigrant Workers," *New York Times*, Sept. 17, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/17/national/17IMMI.html>. Although African Americans were never subject to deportation, they were concentrated in the same types of jobs (in agriculture, domestic service, hospitality, and low-wage manufacturing) that unauthorized immigrants have today, and they were routinely deprived of basic civil rights, including the franchise.
29. Arthur L. Stinchcombe, "Social Structure and Organizations," in *Handbook of Organizations*, ed. James G. March (Chicago: Rand-McNally, 1965), 142–93.
30. Michael T. Hannan and John Freeman, "Structural Inertia and Organizational Change," *American Sociological Review* 49, no. 4 (April 1984): 149–64; Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields," *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 2 (April 1983): 147–60.
31. For a similar analysis of four cohorts of US labor unions, see Ruth Milkman, "Gender and Trade Unionism in Historical Perspective," in *Women, Politics, and Change*, ed. Patricia Gurin and Louise Tilly (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1990), 87–107.
32. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Men and Women of the Corporation* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).
33. *Ibid.*, 48.
34. Jones-Correa, *Between Two Nations*.

35. See Luin Goldring, "Gender, Status, and the State in Transnational Spaces: The Gendering of Political Participation and Mexican Hometown Associations," in *Gender and U.S. Immigration: Contemporary Trends*, ed. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 341–58.
36. Irene Bloemraad, *Becoming a Citizen: Incorporating Immigrants and Refugees in the United States and Canada* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).
37. Leisy Abrego, "Legal Consciousness of Undocumented Latinos: Fear and Stigma as Barriers to Claims-Making for First and 1.5 Generation Immigrants," *Law and Society Review* 45, no. 2 (June 2011): 337–70.
38. Milagros Ricourt and Ruby Danta, *Hispanas de Queens: Latino Panethnicity in a New York City Neighborhood* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003); Susan Chandler and Jill B. Jones, *Casino Women: Courage in Unexpected Places* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011); Carol Hardy-Fanta, *Latina Politics, Latino Politics: Gender, Culture, and Political Participation in Boston* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1993).
39. See Deborah A. Boehm, "'Now I Am a Man and a Woman!' Gendered Moves and Migration in a Transnational Mexican Community," *Latin American Perspectives* 35, no. 1 (January 2008): 16–30; Kathleen M. Coll, "'Yo no estoy perdida': Immigrant Women (Re)locating Citizenship," in *Passing Lines: Sexuality and Immigration*, ed. Bradley Epps, Keja Valens, and Bill Johnson Gonzalez (Cambridge, MA: David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2005), 389–410.
40. Terriquez, "Educational and Employment Profile."
41. See López, *Hopeful Girls, Troubled Boys*; Smith, "Race, Ethnicity, and Gender"; and Espiritu, "We Don't Sleep Around."
42. As noted above, this generalization does not apply across the board. Gender relations have changed not only in the United States but also in the sending countries of Latin America. See Gutmann, "Dystopian Travels in Gringolandia"; Pessar, "Engendering Migration Studies"; Parrado and Flippen, "Migration and Gender among Mexican Women." Space does not permit a full exploration of those complex dynamics here. For our informants, however, the key changes in gender relations typically occurred after their migration to the United States.
43. See especially Goldring, "Gender, Status, and the State."
44. Cynthia Cranford, "It's Time to Leave Machismo Behind: Challenging Gender Inequality in an Immigrant Union," *Gender & Society* 21, no. 3 (June 2007), 432.
45. *Ibid.*, 418.
46. However, a woman, Mary Kay Henry, became the top national leader of SEIU in 2010.

47. See Ruth Milkman and Kent Wong, *Voices from the Front Lines: Organizing Immigrant Workers in Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education, 2000).
48. Natasha Iskander, *Creative State: Forty Years of Migration and Development Policy in Morocco and Mexico* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).
49. Goldring, "Gender, Status, and the State," 341.
50. Roger Waldinger, Eric Popkin, and Hector Aquiles Magana, "Conflict and Contestation in the Cross-Border Community: Hometown Associations Reassessed," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 1 (September 2008): 854; Luis Eduardo Guarnizo, Alejandro Portes, and William Haller, "Assimilation and Transnationalism: Determinants of Transnational Political Action among Contemporary Migrants," *American Journal of Sociology* 108, no. 6 (May 2003), 1211–48.
51. Alejandro Portes, "Towards a New World: The Origins and Effects of Transnational Activism." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22, no. 2 (March 1999): 466.
52. Such variations in the gender politics of HTAs in part reflect the "regional patriarchies" that López-González has analyzed, the nature and extent of which differ significantly from one region to another within Mexico and other Latin American countries. See Gloria López-González, "Fathering Latina Sexualities: Mexican Men and the Virginity of Their Daughters," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66, no. 5 (December 2004): 1118–30.
53. Goldring, "Gender, Status, and the State," 347.
54. Jones-Correa, *Between Two Nations*.
55. Janice Fine, "Worker Centers and Immigrant Women," in *The Sex of Class: Women Transforming American Labor*, ed. Dorothy Sue Cobble (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 216.
56. Maggie Jones, "Coming Out Illegal," *The New York Times Magazine*, October 24, 2010, 37–39, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/24/magazine/24DreamTeam-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.
57. Terriquez, "Educational and Employment Profile."
58. Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power!*; Robnett, "African-American Women"; Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*.