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MEXICAN AMERICAN WOMEN
IN 1930s' PHOENIX
Coming of Age During the Great
Depression

by
Jean Reynolds

PERCHED IN AN OLD ARMCHAIR, a can of beer reflecting light from a *telenovela*, spunky eighty-three-year-old Mary López Garcia recounts her story. “When the Depression started, there was no work,” she recalls. “My father didn’t have any work. I got a maid’s job through the Friendly House. They didn’t let girls work unless they were fifteen, but Mrs. [Plácida] Smith let me work even though I was fourteen. That Friendly House was full every morning with girls looking for work. I used to give my father most of the money and then he would give me money to go to the show or if I wanted to buy a new dress. You could go to Newberry’s and buy a dress for fifty cents or a dollar.” Mary’s expressive gestures reveal a large rose tattoo on her forearm, a symbol from her youth, as she describes how she navigated the landscape of Mexican and American culture while coming of age during the years of the Great Depression. As Mary worked to support her small family, she gained her independence and sampled American popular culture. Her story, and the stories of other women from her generation—Erminia “Minnie” Rangel Martinez, Ernestina “Tina” Ruiz Saldade, and Esther Ramirez Diaz—open a window on the hardships and happiness, gender and race restrictions, experienced by young Mexican American women in Phoenix during the 1930s.¹

Mexican Americans have been an important presence in Phoenix since its founding in 1867. Their labor and economic contributions were vital to community building in the Salt River

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Valley, where opportunities to begin a new life attracted a mix of Mexican, Chinese, Black, and Anglo settlers. The earliest Mexican immigrants arrived from Sonora, while others traveled from Wickenburg, Florence, Tucson, and other long-established Arizona communities. These Hispanic pioneers bought property, opened small businesses, and provided services to the small settlement of Phoenix.²

Although Mexicans composed nearly 50 percent of Phoenix's population in 1880, they soon encountered social and economic marginalization as train after train pulled into the city, filled with Anglo newcomers arriving with American dreams and American prejudices. By 1910, residents of Mexican descent composed only 10 percent of Phoenix's population. Most were clustered in neighborhoods (*barrios*) that initially contained a scattering of blacks, Chinese merchants, and some Anglos. This mixture changed as Mexican families flooded into town and the surrounding labor camps with the WWI cotton boom in central Arizona. During this time, the Arizona Cotton Growers Association and railroad interests, prompted by a shortage of workers and the exemption of Mexicans from restrictive provisions of the 1917 Immigration and Nationality Act, began recruiting workers from Mexico. Coupled with the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Mexicans fleeing revolutionary unrest, the demand for laborers boosted the number of Mexicans migrating to Phoenix and the Salt River Valley.³

Consequently, the families of Mexican American women who came of age in 1930s' Phoenix hailed from various locales. For example, Mary López Garcia was born in 1915 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Her mother, Lucia, died in 1922, and four years later, her family, including her father, Manuel, and her older siblings, migrated from Albuquerque to the beet fields in Colorado. Disliking the cold and the work, they moved on to farm worker camps on the outskirts of Phoenix in 1927. Sisters Josefita and Lina brought along their husbands and children, including four-year-old Annie Garcia (Redondo), who formed a close lifelong bond with her Aunt Mary. The extended López family eventually settled in Phoenix's Grant Park barrio.⁴

Esther Ramirez Diaz was born in 1923 to a mining family in Miami. Her parents, Gorgonia and Jose Ramirez, moved to Phoenix from Christmas in 1929, as a result of falling copper prices and



Mary Garcia, 1945. Courtesy Garcia family.

closure of the Miami bank during the early days of the depression. The family of nine next traveled to Buckeye and picked cotton, before buying a ranch closer to Phoenix. Esther's mother disliked the isolation, prompting the Ramirez family to settle in town, at 10th and Madison streets, in the late 1930s.⁵

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Ernestina (Tina) Ruiz. Courtesy Frank Barrios.

Tina Ruiz Saldate's family arrived in Scottsdale from Cananea, Mexico. Grandmother Juana Samora Verdugo and her two daughters, Dolores and Mary, joined a *renganche* (group of workers) recruited to the Valley by labor contractors. The women traveled alone, enlisting a young man to pose as head of the family in order to avoid questions by immigration inspectors. Dolores, who was single and pregnant, gave birth to Tina on a Scottsdale farm in 1923. By 1932, the family had settled in Phoenix's Central Park barrio.⁶

Minnie Rangel Martinez's family, on the other hand, had lived for several generations in Phoenix. Her father, Luis Rangel, migrated from Sonora in 1905 to work with his uncle, Jose Silva,

who owned a small dairy near Washington and 7th streets. In 1917, Luis married Josefina Maldonado, whose mother ran a local boarding house. The newlyweds purchased a home at 14th and Washington streets, where Minnie, their first daughter, was born in 1918. Because Luis ran a janitorial company, the Rangels considered themselves middle-class. The neighborhood they lived in remained predominantly Anglo until the thirties.⁷

These young women lived in a city where, by 1930, Mexicans made up only about 15 percent of the population. Most Hispanic Phoenicians were working-class, although a small merchant and professional middle class had emerged. The majority lived in neighborhoods concentrated in the area between Van Buren Street and the Salt River known as "south Phoenix." Barrio homes ranged from modest Bungalow-, Victorian-, and Territorial-style houses to simple adobe or wood-frame structures. Some families lived in tents or other types of makeshift homes, usually with dirt floors and outdoor lavatories. Many of these neighborhoods retained a rural flavor, with unpaved streets and few sewer lines. Many families drew water from wells, and collected or purchased wood for heating and cooking.⁸

It was a world where Anglo-owned restaurants, hotels, movie theaters, and other businesses routinely practiced segregation, and where interethnic contact was limited. Consequently, many Hispanic women who approached adulthood in the 1930s had experienced discrimination at an early age. Minnie Rangel Martinez recalled an Anglo friend in grade school: "We played together, and then she invited me over to her house after school. We played out in front of her house." Suddenly, everything changed. "The next day I went to school, and she told me that her mother said that she couldn't be my friend anymore," Minnie continued. "And I said, 'Why?' She said, 'Because you're Mexican and my mother says that I cannot have Mexican friends.' And I hadn't done anything wrong! So I started asking the other girls—I told them what happened. One girl said 'Yeah, a lot of Anglos, they don't like Mexicans.' And that's the first time I knew there were some people who were prejudiced. It kind of hurt—because I thought, 'I didn't do anything wrong, why don't they like me?'"⁹

In this atmosphere, many Spanish-speaking children—boys and girls—struggled to get an education. While Phoenix schools



Minnie Rangel Martinez, age 15. Courtesy Martinez family.

did not maintain a formal policy of segregated classes—unlike Glendale, Tolleson, Chandler, and Kyrene—elementary schools like Grant, Lincoln, and Lowell had predominantly Mexican American student bodies. African American children, some of whom lived in the same neighborhoods as Hispanics, were sent to all-black elementary schools like Dunbar or Booker T. Washington. Tina Ruiz Saldate, who began first grade at Lincoln School at age twelve because her stepfather kept her home to care for her younger siblings, recalled the difficulties she and other Spanish-speaking students faced. “It was so embarrassing to go to school,” Tina related, “but I went to school. . . . It was hard. Because at home we didn’t speak any English . . . but whatever little I learned, it was hard.” Schools located in the barrios utilized curriculum centered on manual training, and teachers routinely doled out punishment or demerits for speaking Spanish.¹⁰

Regardless of where they lived or attended school, some young Mexican American women enjoyed greater opportunities than others. Family size, occupation, and the presence of both parents all determined the extent of a young woman’s economic mobility. Young women’s aspirations, as well as the educational level and encouragement of their parents, also figured into the picture. Even skin color influenced mobility and social position. Mary López Garcia’s niece Annie remembered that her friend Julia received a sales position at Montgomery Ward due to her light complexion. On the other hand, Annie—who described herself as “short, dark, and Mexican”—was hired to work in shipping and receiving at Sears. As an adolescent, Annie felt the need to be “twice as good” as Anglos and light-skinned Hispanics. “The Mexicans that were light-skinned were very—uppity,” she recalled. “I always had to learn more and push more.”¹¹

Although the Great Depression affected Phoenix less than other cities around the country, it nonetheless exerted a significant influence on the lives of young Mexican American women. Economic hardship hit Mexican families in different ways. Tina Ruiz Saldate remembered that “[S]ome kids, they didn’t have any shoes or any clothes. At least we had two dresses for school and a pair of shoes. And we didn’t use them just to ‘go around’—only to go to school and come home and take them off. And there used to be kids who didn’t go to school because they didn’t have any shoes.”¹²

In 1939, as many as 22 percent of Phoenix's Spanish-surnamed women lived without a husband or other male provider. Many of these women and their families made do with limited resources. Juana Verdugo worked constantly to support her daughter Dolores, who could not work, and her grandchildren, including Tina Ruiz. "We never suffered from hunger, because we had a little bit to eat," Tina recalled. "During the school vacation, when I was twelve years old, my sister and I used to go to the [produce] market on Madison. . . . We used to go help the people, the *fayqueros* (peddlers). They used to drive their cars or whatever to sell to the people in the houses. We used to go and help them clean up their trucks and put up their vegetables and whatever. They used to give us vegetables—tomatoes—we had everything. And my grandmother would say, 'go to the butcher on Jefferson and get me 15 cents worth of *costillas*' (ribs), and with 15 cents she made soup, with all the vegetables. We always had soup. I was raised with a lot of soup."¹³

Public welfare programs provided some relief. In Arizona, the first direct assistance came from county welfare agencies. Often this consisted of grocery store order forms. Unfortunately, the \$8.00 monthly stipend barely provided minimal subsistence to large Hispanic families. Other local New Deal programs afforded similarly meager help to the unemployed. For example, in September of 1938, the Surplus Commodities Division of the Arizona Department of Social Security and Welfare distributed nearly 300,000 pounds of food, including dried prunes, lima beans, raisins, dried skim milk, butter, canned peas, potatoes, wheat and graham flour, and rice. Annie Garcia Redondo recalled her father lugging home boxes of food. "My father had to stand in line for hours. . . ," she explained, "and I remember that my mother used to get so mad because she had to get the flour—they would give you a bag of flour—she would get the flour and get a strainer and strain it, because it was full of worms (weevils). And the rice too. But we had to eat it. . . . They used to give you beans, and the same thing with the beans. You'd have to wash and wash them because they were so old and dirty."¹⁴

Arizona's Mexican American women had limited access to other New Deal programs, such as pensions and Aid to Dependent Children. The "mother's pension law" provided assistance to widows who were U.S. citizens, and whose husbands had been citizens as

well. Old-age pensions, inaugurated in 1933, also required proof of citizenship, and were available only to elderly individuals who had resided in Arizona for thirty-five years or more. In a survey of 1,200 Maricopa County pensions from 1933 to 1936, only ninety applications were from citizens of Mexican descent. Thirty-two of them were filed by Mexican American women in Phoenix, age seventy and older. Most received \$25.00 to \$30.00 per month. Long-time residents (both Mexican and Anglo) and church officials wrote letters supporting the citizenship claims of some of these women.¹⁵

Under Phoenix's Community Chest, the Friendly House assumed a central role in offering emergency relief to the Spanish-speaking population during the thirties. Established in 1922, after the peak of the national Americanization movement, the organization began as a two-room "community house" offering classes in English, citizenship, hygiene, and homemaking to immigrants. Unlike earlier settlement houses in the United States, the Friendly House focused on providing social services, job training, and Americanization classes, rather than on social reform or religious proselytizing. Mary López Garcia remembered her father, Manuel, going to the Friendly House for food. "During the Depression . . . we didn't have any money to buy food," Mary explained. "My dad would go over there and they would give him a package, with maybe a little bit of flour, and a few potatoes, and maybe a little bit of beans, and a little bit of sugar." Because citizenship determined eligibility for relief programs, increasing numbers of Mexican immigrants enrolled in classes at the Friendly House.¹⁶

Conversely, in 1933 the Friendly House, under the leadership of Plácida Garcia Smith, helped 130 families return to Mexico. Beginning in 1929, the federal government responded to calls for removal of "foreigners" who allegedly were "flooding relief rolls," by launching deportation and repatriation drives throughout the Southwest and the Midwest. In Arizona, between 1930 and 1932, nearly 19,000 people of Mexican descent returned to their country of birth. Minnie Rangel Martinez's husband, Ray, remembered: "The mining towns is where they really got started. That's where they were coming from. The reason I say that is because my mother was contracted then to take care of some of these families . . . they brought them from the mining towns and they were placed in our home." Immigration officials paid Ray's mother, who lived in Phoe-



Minnie and Ray Martinez with their first child, Norma, 1939. Courtesy Martinez family.

nix, to house families from Jerome en route to Mexico. Often as many as ten people stayed in the Martinez home at one time. “Her only duty was to just look after the people,” Ray explained. “If they left there, why, she was to call the police. . . . [S]he was there to feed them and see that they had a place to wash their clothes.”¹⁷

Displaced miners and laborers who remained in Phoenix often found little employment. By 1933, 59 percent of Phoenix’s Mexican workforce was unemployed. Minnie Rangel and her family were an exception. “We were fortunate,” she recalled. “My dad . . . owned his own [janitorial] business, which, sure, he didn’t make a lot of money, but we didn’t have to worry about not having food. We owned our own home. We had an automobile, and we didn’t have fancy clothes or things like that, but we always had plenty to eat.”¹⁸

Women's work was crucial to the survival of Mexican American families during this difficult period. This was nothing new—decades earlier Italian, Jewish, and other immigrant young women in the eastern United States had left their homes and headed into factories to supplement their family income. While these women took on a wide variety of jobs, the majority of Arizona's Hispanic working women labored in service occupations, as domestics or laundresses. At the beginning of the 1930s, only 20 percent of Mexican women in Arizona held teaching positions, secretarial jobs, or other white-collar positions. Others performed factory and field work, or other blue-collar jobs.¹⁹

Young Hispanic working women in 1930s' Phoenix defined their social standing according to job status and pay. They not only progressed from blue-collar and service jobs to white-collar positions, but also moved within occupational categories. Some viewed agricultural work as the lowest rung on the occupational ladder, beneath domestic service and laundry. Moving out of the service sector meant entering clerical, professional, or sales jobs. Here again, working women attached social status to various jobs. Sales or layaway clerks who worked "up front" with customers occupied the most prestigious positions in retail stores; shipping clerks performed the lowliest tasks. Stenographers and typists represented the highest paying jobs, while a woman who owned or managed her own business was at the top of the occupational ladder.²⁰

Phoenix city directories provide a glimpse into some of the kinds of white-collar and service work that Mexican American women performed during the 1930s. A few women owned cafes and beauty shops, while others held positions as bookkeepers, teachers, or nurses. Esther Ramirez Diaz, whose parents divorced in the late 1930s, was typical of Hispanic women who worked as clerks and saleswomen. Each day, she went directly from school to her job as a transfer girl upstairs in the Boston Department Store. It was her responsibility to take the merchandise ticket and money from the saleswoman to the cash register, and return the change and receipt to the customer. She recalled that she was favored over other Mexican American girls who worked in the store, perhaps because of her fair complexion and blue eyes, or perhaps because of her outgoing personality. She handed over her earnings to her mother, who gave her an allowance. "I used to save my money and

I used to buy a hamburger and a pie [for lunch],” she reminisced. “I enjoyed working. . . . I used to have fun. . . . I used to like the new experiences.”²¹

But compared to most Hispanic women in Phoenix, Esther’s experience was atypical. A majority of local Mexican American women, like their counterparts across the Southwest in the 1930s, worked in service jobs—more so than Anglo women. Because the local tourist industry remained steady despite the depression, hotels, restaurants, and various small businesses needed maids, cooks, and waitresses. Dirty linen from these businesses made its way to local laundries, where Mexican women readily found work. The Phoenix, Maricopa, Arizona, and Bell laundries were the city’s largest employers of Mexican American women.²²

Mary López worked at the Phoenix Laundry in the late 1930s, after her marriage to Archibaldo Garcia. Typically, she operated the mangle that steam dried and ironed clothing and linen. “It was very hard, you know. You had to be real fast because in the mangle they just fly. That mangle’s just going and going,” she explained. Some women fed the clothing and linen into the mangle, while others folded as it came out. Still others counted the stacks. “We’d feed for an hour, then fold for an hour, and then we’d turn around,” Mary recalled. “I made 35 cents an hour.”²³

Tina Ruiz left her waitress position at Sing High Restaurant in 1938 to work, for 11 cents an hour, at the Arizona Laundry. She recalled how difficult it was to fold quickly and stack the hot towels coming from the dryer rollers. Men sorted and washed the dirty clothes in the back of the laundry, and then carried “baskets and baskets of clothes fresh from the ringers” to the women up front. “It would be put on the rollers—and all that steam!” Tina exclaimed. Anglo women either supervised the Mexican American women, or worked in the front office. Tina stayed at the laundry until 1941.²⁴

Fourteen-year-old Minnie Rangel found a job as a maid for a beauty parlor in downtown Phoenix. She recalled long hours, working mornings in the shop, and then switching to a second job in a hand-laundry run by a Mexican woman. “At that time I was holding two jobs. . . .” Minnie explained. “At seven o’clock in the morning I’d go to this beauty parlor and I’d sweep the hair and mop, and wash the basins and clean the combs, sterilize them and do the



Sing High Restaurant. Courtesy Frank Barrios.

rollers, separate them in sizes, and clean their bathroom. . . . I'd be through with the beauty shop by about noon or one o'clock and then I'd work at the hand-laundry until five, six, sometimes seven [o'clock]. There was no water inside and I had to lug it from outside . . . put it on the stove to heat. And there was only one washer . . . and three tubs that you rinsed the clothes in. She paid me three dollars a week. I wanted to work, and I wanted to help [my family], and I wanted to buy clothes and things that my dad couldn't afford to give us." Minnie kept most of her earnings because her father earned enough from his business to provide for the basic needs of their four-member family.²⁵

The Friendly House, located in the middle of the Grant Park barrio, operated as the main employment agency for domestic work. Here, Mexican women and girls found jobs as personal maids, earning from four to seven dollars a week. In August of 1936, the Spanish-language newspaper, *El Mensajero*, advertised a free, federally funded, six-week course designed to teach women between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five "chores related to being a housekeeper or a servant." Graduates would either be offered

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La "American Girl" No Cumplió su Ambición.

De Volar a París y la Flapper y su Piloto Bajaron en Alta Mar y Fueron Salvados

PARIS, Oct. 13.—Salvo abordaje de un vapor Docho que sirvió de tanque de aceite fueron recogidos hoy Miss Ruth Elder y George Haldeman, su copiloto y navegante, después de haber experimentado uno de los más asombrosos peligros de salvación en la historia de aviación. Los dos libertados iban esta noche en el vapor tanque hacia entre Lands End, Inglaterra, y el Azores.

El monoplano American Girl, en el cual iba Miss Elder y Haldeman que saltaron ayer del campo Roosevelt, L. I., en su intento vuelo sin escala de New York a París, fueron aterrizados forzosamente esta madrugada al

lado del tanque Docho "Earendrecht" con uno de los tanques de gasolina quebrado. La Muchacha Americana había volado como 3000 millas, y probablemente le faltaban otras mil millas para llegar a París y ganar fama.

Por medio del radio el Capitán del vapor Docho dió aviso de haber rescatado a Miss Elder y a su piloto, y que ambos estaban bien y salvos; estas buenas nuevas fueron recibidas con gran regocijo y cuando ya todo el mundo creía que a los intrépidos aviadores les había pasado la misma suerte de otros que han intentado cruzar el Atlántico.

Los mensajes refieren que una vez que fué libertada la aviadora y su compañero ella quiso también salvar el avión "American Girl" pero al ser subido abordó del vapor uno de sus tanques de gasolina hizo explosión y se incendió y fué destruido.

Rebeldes Capturados Llegaron a Jalapa

C. MEXICO, Oct. 12.—Aproximadamente como 600 rebeldes, que comprendían la mayoría del grupo de Gómez y Almada y que se rindieron después de una durísima derrota por las fuerzas leales del gobierno en el Estado de Vera Cruz, han llegado a la ciudad de Jalapa, según publica el periódico "Gráfico" de esta.

El telegrama al mismo papel dice que muchos oficiales insisten en decir que ellos no sabían que eran guiados a una revuelta cuando salieron de esta capital diez días pasados.

Los oficiales son comentados por el periódico en decir que fueron informados por sus superiores el perseguir al General Robertson Cejudo quien había encabezado una revuelta en Vera Cruz, y que su primer conocimiento de creer que ellos mismos eran los rebeldes fué cuando divisaron un aeroplano explorador del gobierno.

La Secretaría de Gobernación ha recibido información que un jefe insurrecto de nombre "Viernes" y 13 de sus comparsas fueron muertos por las fuerzas militares de la región de Orizaba en una batalla que tuvieron cerca de Huatusco, y cosa de 40 millas de Pirote, en donde los federales derrotaron una parte de los rebeldes del Gral. Gómez, escapando este para la sierra. El reporte dice que el Col. Carlos Terrazas fué el comandante de esa batalla que tuvo lugar el día 12.

GRAN Baile

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El Mensajero. *Courtesy Frank Barrios.*

jobs, or at least go away with skills to assist them in the "practical management of a home" after marriage. Included with the course were "two house dresses to wear during work hours." The advertisement specifically targeted young girls on vacation from school. By the end of the 1930s, the agency was providing "2,500 temporary placements and 320 permanent placements per year." Most graduates worked for upper-class Anglo families in north Phoenix.²⁶

Although the jobs obtained through the Friendly House were largely menial, the women appreciated Plácida Garcia Smith and the opportunities the agency offered. Minnie Rangel Martinez remarked that the director “was so caring and she wanted to help everybody. . . . [W]here would I have found a job without her and the Friendly House? I don’t remember there being ads in the paper to hire anyone at that time. . . . [I]t was just by word of mouth that you found a job, or through the Friendly House.” Plácida, whose husband was Anglo, worked diligently for the Mexican American community and later helped start the Phoenix chapter of LULAC.²⁷

The Friendly House played a key role in Mary López Garcia’s life. The depression hit her family hard when her father lost his job. Mary dropped out of school at age fourteen in 1929 and attended morning classes at the agency, located a few blocks from her home. An older Anglo woman, Mrs. Schiffer, taught classes on how to set tables and serve coffee and meals, while Plácida Garcia Smith, the director, managed the front desk. When it came time to apply for a job, the women running the organization determined the kinds of positions for which the girls were best suited.

After a year, Mary López began working a steady five-day week for Myrtle Pruitt, a physician’s wife. Mary rode the trolley car and walked part of the way to the Pruitt home on 15th Avenue and Wiletta, in the upscale Encanto-Palmcroft neighborhood. She remembered Myrtle Pruitt as “the kind of woman that had everybody—the movie stars if she could—over to her house. . . . I’d do the housework. Well, it wasn’t real bad because she always kept it real neat. I’d vacuum and clean and dust. And then she bought me these little dresses. They were like Dutch dresses . . . they were pleated . . . then the skirt was kind of full, and the collar had lace—and a real neat apron. . . . She taught me to wait on the table: ‘You never go to this side, you have to put things through this side . . . and when you pick up the plates, don’t pick them up like that.’ She showed me everything.” During dinner, Myrtle rang a bell to signal Mary when to serve the next course. Mary, who didn’t like other women she had worked for, respected Mrs. Pruitt because she treated her well.

The Pruitts paid Mary three dollars a week, and occasionally threw in an extra three to five dollars for helping with a party. Mary



Mexico Caf . Courtesy Holguin family.

gave her earnings to her father, and received an allowance in return. "He would give me money to go to the show, or if I wanted to buy a dress," she explained. "You could go to Newberry's and buy a dress for fifty cents, or a dollar. It wasn't real hard to get that dollar." After Doctor Pruitt's death in 1933, Myrtle no longer required so much of Mary's service. So for the next five years, Mary worked for five dollars a week at the home of Mrs. Matheson on 15th Avenue and Culver. Mr. Matheson was a meat buyer for Safeway grocery stores. When he learned through Mary that her brother Adrian needed a job, he referred Adrian to the Maricopa Packaging Company, who hired him as a meat cutter.²⁸

Some Mexican American women worked as waitresses and cooks, or in other capacities, in Phoenix's Mexican, Anglo, and Chinese-owned restaurants. Sixteen-year-old Tina Ruiz left fifth grade at Lincoln Elementary School in 1936, after the school nurse suggested that Tina's mother withdraw her older children because of their poor attendance. Tina began working as a dishwasher at

Santos Vargas's New York Café, but soon moved to a higher-paying job as a waitress on the night shift at the Sing High Restaurant. "It was hard to start with, since we were raised without a father and it was a depression," she recalled. "It was real hard. It got a little better when I started working."²⁹

Government agencies and New Deal programs opened other avenues of employment to Mexican American women in depression-era Phoenix. From 1931 to 1932, fifty-five Hispanic women (compared to 571 men) found work through the Unemployment Relief Bureau. In 1938, the National Youth Administration employed a few Mexican American girls to repair and package books and magazines for distribution to rural areas in Apache and Navajo counties. In November of 1935, the Works Project Administration began offering jobs that paid from 50 cents an hour for unskilled labor to \$1.25 per hour for technical and professional skills. Phoenix women performed library and clerical work; conducted research and special surveys; helped with recreation, health nutrition, canning, and landscape beautification; and assisted in community service centers and on sewing projects.³⁰

Like their Anglo counterparts, Mexican American women working in federal programs often earned substantially less than men. In 1936, women were paid 36 cents an hour for work in sewing rooms, while unskilled male laborers made 50 cents an hour. The State Director of Employment, under the Arizona Board of Social Security and Welfare, defended the wage difference by claiming that the women only performed "light work." He went on to explain that the clothes they sewed were distributed to the needy, and even to the women's own families, "absolutely free of charge." Raising their wages to 50 cents an hour would leave the women "with no incentive . . . to accept private employment at a wage below this figure." These WPA projects lasted until 1943, by which time they were directed more toward supporting the war effort than providing economic relief.³¹

Many Mexican American women worked in their homes, taking in laundry, selling food, sewing, or renting to boarders. Margarita Miramon, for example, took out an ad in *El Mensajero* offering her services hemstitching and making artificial flowers. Tina Ruiz Saldate's grandmother, Juana, followed a centuries-old tradition among single Mexican women in the Southwest by work-

ing as a *lavandera* in her home. Tina recalled that in the late 1920s Juana worked for a woman named Petra, “who used to do a lot of hand-washing and ironing for people in hotels and barbershops. . . . [S]he [Petra] had her own little business in her house . . . that’s how she managed to stay alive.” Juana took on some of the business after Petra became ill. Tina remembered her grandmother washing hotel employees’ dresses, and even their underwear. Most of her customers were Anglo. Sometimes they left tips, and some customers even brought the family toys and other items for Christmas.³²

Esther Ramirez Diaz’s husband, Fernando, recalled that he and his mother sold tortillas and empanadas in the neighborhoods. Esther’s mother, Gorgonia, helped her husband sell vegetables he purchased from the market and wood that he trucked to farm workers’ families outside Phoenix. The couple also sold merchandise, such as bedspreads, bought from the L. B. Pride store. After her divorce, Gorgonia worked as a cook, but continued to sell tostadas and other items from the family truck at the Mexican dances held in local parks. Gorgonia also set up a food stand at University Park during the Fiestas Patrias celebration, where for long hours she sold tamales, sweet bread, and candy made from prickly pear cactus fruit or sweet potatoes.³³

Agricultural work was a constant component of Mexican American women’s lives. Although wages varied, farm workers typically earned \$1.50 to \$2.50 a day during the 1930s. Arizona field hands earned less than their counterparts in California, Texas, and New Mexico. Entire families made the journey into the fields, especially to the rows of cotton where a single family could earn as much as four to five dollars a day. They toiled five or six days a week, without a toilet and supplying their own food and water. The Arizona Cotton Grower’s Association, and later the Farm Labor Service, heavily recruited workers through radio and newspaper ads, placards, and word-of-mouth. Frequently, a surplus of migrant laborers competed with each other and resident workers for jobs.³⁴

Mary López Garcia recalled her own experiences in the fields. “They [workers] used to go to the *marqueta*, they called it,” she explained. “There was a big market there in downtown, and they’d wait there for the trucks to come. And then they’d pick them up, and take them. To the watermelon, you know, or the cantaloupes.” Mexican woman and men worked for both Anglo and Japanese

farmers. One of Mary's early memories was of picking olives. "I helped a little but I didn't like it," she related. "I was afraid to get up on the ladder. I just picked them up off the ground. It's so dirty. It was in the mud. . . . When they irrigated, everything was nothing but mud. It was hard work—the fields are very hard work, chopping and piling the vegetables."³⁵

Even though women often labored in menial, low-paying jobs, their work constituted the lifeblood of family and community survival and success during the 1930s. As was traditional, most Mexican American young women stopped working after marriage. But, if their husbands allowed it, many returned to work to support their new families during hard times, or would later enter the burgeoning WWII job market. Some women who stopped working when they married missed the sense of independence that a job provided. Tina Ruiz Saldate wanted to continue working after she married, but her husband insisted that she remain home. Other women were relieved to leave the labor market and settle into a traditional domestic role.³⁶

While family finances may have been tight, young Mexican American women growing up in the thirties still found time to socialize and to enjoy American popular culture. Like immigrant groups who had settled in the United States before them, they lived in two worlds: the traditional, often rural-based, Mexican culture; and the ever-present American culture marketed in movie theaters and magazines. Many leisure activities required young women and girls to spend their earnings or the small allowance their parents doled out. At the same time, working provided young women with a sense of independence that they expressed by patronizing downtown shops and theaters.

Movie theaters attracted young people from all ethnic groups. As in other cities across the Southwest, most Phoenix theaters were segregated. The Orpheum, Fox, Rialto, and Studio all relegated Hispanics and blacks to the balcony. Smaller theaters such as the Ramona and the Rex, on the other hand, welcomed Mexican American patrons. The Ramona showed Hollywood and Mexican movies, hosted vaudeville shows, and even brought in films that catered to African American audiences. The Rex, billing itself as "El Teatro de la Raza," showed Mexican movies exclusively. Its opening in 1936 attracted more than 3,000 patrons. With such a



Ramona Theater. Courtesy Frank Barrios.

wide selection of motion pictures, young women had their fill of Hollywood stars and stories. According to Mary Lopez Garcia, “The Strand Theater had continued movies—they always continued, like the *novelas*. We couldn’t miss a chapter on Saturday.” Minnie Rangel Martinez liked to watch movies that featured her favorite actresses. “It was the actors who played that we wanted to go see, not so much the movies,” she recalled. “Clara Bow was my favorite for a while, and then Joan Crawford. If they were in it, I wanted to see the movie, whether it was good or not.”³⁷

Young Mexican American women, influenced by movies and advertising, cut their hair short and dressed in the latest styles. Caught up in the burgeoning American consumer culture, they



Fox Theater. Courtesy Julian Reveles.



Rialto Theater. Courtesy Frank Barrios.

spent part or all of their paychecks or allowances on fashionable clothes and home furnishings. Some girls saved money to purchase fabric for a special dress. "When we were teenagers . . . every spring and into the summer, there used to be a color that was very popular," Minnie Rangel Martinez remembered. "Oh—we had to have a dress that color! And my sister was a pretty good seamstress so she and I used to make a lot of our clothes. . . . My sister used to do the cutting and I used to do the hemming, and sewing buttons. Sometimes we would buy a pattern—but it cost 25 cents—boy, we'd really have to hustle to save up for it! We shopped at Newberry's, Kress, Goldwater's and the Boston Store. Everybody went shopping on Saturday night."³⁸

El Mensajero published several editorials by "Armando Mitotes" that provide a glimpse into the kinds of social expectations young Mexican American women faced in the 1930s, and how older community members frowned on modern dress and attitudes. In an editorial entitled "The Modern Young Woman," Armando criticized popular clothing styles and the use of makeup: "The physical type of the ultra modern young woman is generally the following: a head of feather dusters, short hair that gives them the appearance of tragedy, an excessively painted face, penciled eyebrows, mascara on the eyelashes, red lips in the form of a heart, [and a] short skirt . . . another innovation is that they don't use a corset, they don't like secrets, and so they go to parties, gatherings and dances more undressed than the famous goddess Venus."³⁹

Armando placed the blame for "immorality" and misbehavior among the young people squarely on their mothers' shoulders. Mothers were not disciplining their daughters properly or controlling their behavior. He particularly objected when mothers—"Without a protest leaving their lips"—allowed boys to dance with their daughters. "According to them," he explained, "their daughters are not in danger because they are careful. How stupid! As if [the mothers] being with them will allow them to avoid the carnal instincts which awaken upon feeling the embrace and pressing of a man, in those modern dances which seem to have been invented especially to awaken lewdness. The mother of the family, if she wishes to be as God commands, has very high duties to fulfill, and very big responsibilities before God, before her husband, and before society."⁴⁰



Mary Garcia (center) and friends Alice (left) and Concha (right), 1931. Courtesy Garcia family.

Incurring the disapproval of men like “Armando” didn’t seem to discourage young women in the least. They waited all week to go dancing on Saturday or Sunday night. Just as Los Angeles youth were overtaken by the “dance craze,” young women flooded into Phoenix dance halls. The Riverside Ballroom, another segregated venue, set aside Sunday as “Mexican night.” Minnie Rangel Martinez explained how the dances at the Riverside operated: “We had a lot of friends—both boys and girls—we all got together. . . . The boys had to pay to dance. They had to buy a ticket, but the girls didn’t. . . . There were different doors or gates to go into the . . . club, and they had a woman or a man there taking tickets. . . .

There were different booths or benches or tables, and we'd sit around in different places. The boy would say 'Oh I want to dance with her,' and they'd go to where you were sitting and ask you to dance." Parents usually chaperoned, or required that chaperones be present, although sometimes young women escorted each other to and from social events.⁴¹

Strict parents or limited finances prevented some young women from going to the movies, shopping, or attending dances. Esther Ramirez, whose family was Protestant, was not allowed to frequent dance halls. She recalled that many girls in the community were kept at home, particularly if they were the eldest child and therefore were required to help their mothers with the other children and housework. Their brothers, on the other hand, were free to roam. Tina Ruiz Saldate described how her grandmother's strictness and the family's meager income limited her social activities. Tina, who spent much of her teenage years working, looked forward to Sunday afternoon trips with her friends, Ernestina and Stella, to the Playland Penny Arcade, where they watched movies in the nickelodeon.⁴²

Fortunately, city parks provided free entertainment. During the 1930s, Phoenix began using federal funds to develop municipal parks and recreational programs. Mexican American children frequented Grant Park, in particular, dubbed by city officials as the "Recreation Department's Mexican Community Center." Here, Mary López pitched for the Olympics, the all-Mexican girls' softball team, organized by Grant Park's senior director, Laura McClelland. Mary drove the team in her father's car to out-of-town games. The Olympics also competed with other local girls' teams, including the all-black East Lake Park club. Mexican Americans, who were barred from most public pools, could swim at Grant and Broadway parks. Grant Park also offered volleyball, crafts, and folk dancing classes. Teams from Grant and Broadway parks regularly competed against one another.⁴³

Young women frequently met their future husbands at city parks, dances, or downtown. Mexican culture prescribed that parents maintain a strict set of rules when it came to their daughters' relationships with young men. Some did not allow their daughters to date, while others required that they take along chaperones. Not every daughter complied, and more than one woman eloped



Fourteen-year-old Mary Garcia (standing, second from left) with the Grant Park “Olympics” softball team, ca. 1930. Courtesy Garcia family.

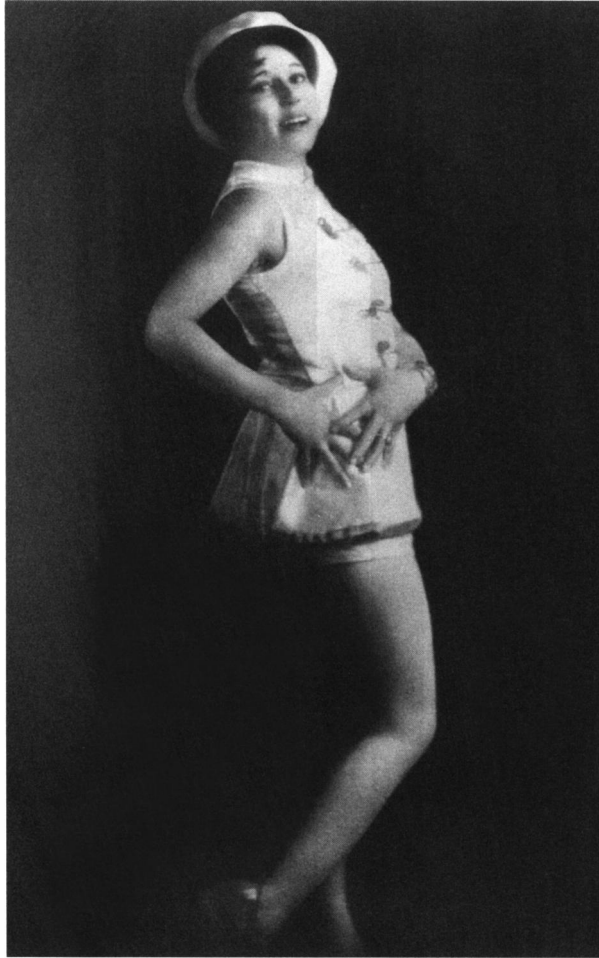
when her parents tried to interfere. Minnie Rangel, for example, took matters into her own hands. “My sister, who was not quite two years younger than I, she got married first and she was sixteen,” she explained. “So they got real possessive of me and they didn’t want me to go out anywhere, just work and come home. I was going out with Ray [Martinez]—we were dating—so naturally they took a disliking to him, because they didn’t want me to get married, I guess. So we ended up eloping because they wouldn’t even let him come to visit. . . . I sneaked out of my bedroom, and went over to his house. His family was very nice to me . . . they approved of me. I bought a suit, it was charcoal, and had a pink blouse and a little pillbox hat, and I had my gloves. . . . I snuck the gloves in my purse, so my mother wouldn’t say, ‘Where are you going with those gloves?’ And then we had our witnesses—a girlfriend of mine and a very close friend of Ray’s. A few days later I went to get my clothes

and I had bought a bedroom set and several things. They wouldn't give them to me. They said, 'No, everything stays here, just [take] your clothes.'"⁴⁴

Having acquired a sense of independence, some young women refused to rush into marriage just because it was expected. Instead, they carefully considered who and when they would marry. Mary López Garcia, who married at age twenty-four, even thought about family planning. "Most of my friends, they got married—that's the first thing they thought about, just get married. I wanted something different," she explained. "I wanted to get married if I could find somebody . . . that if we had a family we could at least give them school. I didn't want to just have a kid and have a kid . . . I used to think, since I have had such a hard time struggling to get through—I didn't even get my education—I'd like to have something for my kid, maybe send him to school. If I have one or two, we can afford it. If you have ten (laughter)—I don't think so."⁴⁵

Influenced by images they saw on screen and in American magazines, young Mexican American women, from the big city of Los Angeles to the small town of Phoenix, dreamed of lives different from the traditional path of marriage and home. Mary López and her friends regularly visited the Union Station train depot, where they purchased *Screen Play* and *Photo Play* magazines for twenty-five cents. "I wanted to be somebody, you know what I mean? I used to see those magazines, and I'd see girls coming out of college. I used to dream," Mary reflected. "I wanted to learn different languages and maybe travel. . . . When I'd be reading I'd see those girls coming down the stairs—they had graduated from college. And in the movies too, you'd see them." Mary may have dreamed of college, but economic reality forced her to leave high school and work in order to contribute to the family income.⁴⁶

Even though she was unable to complete school, Mary had the opportunity to pursue another dream—dancing. Mary's employer, Myrtle Pruitt, "used to see me dancing around with a mop," and asked if Mary would like to take tap lessons with Gene Bumph, a well-known instructor who operated a studio near the Pruitt residence. "I used to give her two dollars out of my paycheck and she would pay the rest for lessons," Mary explained. As Bumph's only Mexican American student at the time, Mary danced from the age of fifteen until eighteen. "All my life, I always wanted to be a dancer,



*Mary Garcia in tap dance costume, 1931.
Courtesy Garcia family.*

that's what I had in my mind," she reflected. "Los mexicanos, they all used to think that if you were going to be a dancer, you were going to dance in the cabarets. But that wasn't my intention. I wanted to make it a professional dancing if I could. I never got to do it, but that's what I wanted."

Mary and her fellow students staged a recital at the Orpheum, Phoenix's most auspicious vaudeville and movie theater. "I never

thought that I would get to dance at the Orpheum, or anywhere,” she reflected. “There was a Ramona Theater and they used to bring vaudeville shows there . . . but I didn’t want to do that, you know, because with Gene Bumph it was different—I don’t know—more class, I guess. Because when Gene Bumph put somebody on as a dancer, they were gonna dance!” Mary performed several dances, including “Tea For Two” and “Strike Up the Band.” Unfortunately, once she stopped working for the Pruitts, Mary could no longer afford lessons and stopped dancing. Financial need had once again prevented her from fulfilling a dream.⁴⁷

Even as American culture beckoned to young Mexican American women, they continued to participate in traditional social activities and cultural events. Often, these involved the entire family. Esther Ramirez Diaz recalled Sunday walks with her family to the Capitol building or to Encanto Park. Young women also attended Phoenix’s Fiestas Patrias celebration every September, where some campaigned for election as “queen” or “princess.” Other Fiestas activities included parades, elaborate ceremonies, speeches, and music. In a distinctly American twist, the 1934 festival featured a “beauty contest of Senoritas in bathing suits” at University Park.⁴⁸

Thinking back on her family’s activities, Minnie Rangel Martinez remembered watching the Phoenix Indian School band perform and attending social events hosted by the Leñadores del Mundo (Woodmen of the World) and the Alianza Hispano Americana, mutual aid groups to which her father belonged. Minnie especially recalled walking to Donofrio’s ice cream parlor, downtown. “My dad used to buy us a cone, or a dish of ice cream, and every once in a while, when he could afford it, he’d buy us an ice cream soda,” she reminisced. “Oh, well I was in heaven!” The Rangels also participated in *jamaicas* (fund raising carnivals) held at Immaculate Heart Church.⁴⁹

The church and everyday spirituality were other avenues by which young women of Mexican descent—most of whom were Catholic—maintained their culture and traditions. Three Catholic churches served Phoenix’s Mexican community in the 1930s. St. Mary’s, built in 1881, was the city’s oldest, but la Iglesia Inmaculado Corazón de María, or the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, located on east Washington Street, was the church dearest to the hearts of the community. Mexican Catholics had established the



Immaculate Heart Church. Courtesy Frank Barrios.

parish in the 1920s, in response to a 1915 policy at St. Mary's that relegated parishioners of Mexican descent to the basement.

Fundraising for the new church began in 1924 under the leadership of a Claretian priest, Father Jose Nebreda. Minnie Rangel Martinez recalled that the parishioners "used to give dances, they used to give dinners, things like that. My dad, he worked for the Donofrio family . . . and they had a building that had a dance hall on the second floor. They used to tell him to go ahead and use it and give a dance to raise funds, and that's how they raised the funds. My mother and father were on the committee to raise funds for the bells of the church." Dedicated in 1928, Immaculate Heart stood as a testament to the Mexican community's determination to

create a social and spiritual space where their culture, traditions, and ethnic identity were respected. St. Anthony's Church, originally called the Yavapai Mexican Catholic Church, began in 1924 as a Claretian mission of Immaculate Heart Church.⁵⁰

Not every young woman attended church consistently, but many followed the spiritual traditions passed down through generations of Mexican women. Mary López Garcia was greatly influenced by her mother Lucia's spirituality and faith, and remembered going as a young child with her to the San Ignacio Church in Albuquerque at 6 A.M. and at 6 P.M. every day. She also recalled her mother and other women making adobe and plastering walls to build the church. Every night, Lucia prayed the rosary with her children. Mary's niece, Annie, was similarly influenced by her mother, Josefita, and her grandmother. Home altars were another important family tradition. "It's part of an upbringing, that's the way we grew up," Annie noted. "I always had my little altar and I always had my little things that I wanted to do which were considered part of your living. . . . It depends on the person. My mother knew all the prayers because she was bred like that." In the Rangel family, Minnie's mother, Josefina, taught her daughters important prayers and how to make a confession before they participated in their first communion at St. Mary's. In these ways, Mexican American women passed on their spiritual traditions from one generation to the next.⁵¹

Shared religious traditions also created a sense of community among Mexican families. Minnie recalled that her neighbors "had from Immaculate Heart [Church], the Virgin Mary . . . and it was in a [glass] case. . . . It would go from family to family for a week, and you made a *novena*, and then you invited your friends and relatives to go make the *novena* with you. And you served a little dessert or something after the *novena*. Then you'd take it to the next house and they'd do the same thing." In this way, religion centered in the home formed a vital component of many Catholic Mexican American women's lives.⁵²

Catholic churches were not the only religious centers in Phoenix's Mexican American community. As in Tucson, Houston, and Los Angeles, small Protestant churches vied for Mexican converts during the depression era. Some of these congregations had long histories in the Valley. For example, la Primera Iglesia Metodista

Unida (Mexican Methodist Episcopal Church) had been established by the Methodist Episcopal church in 1892. During the 1930s, the congregation held its services at 2nd Street and Madison, on the edge of Chinatown. La Primera Iglesia Mexicana Baptista (First Mexican Baptist Church) opened its doors, under the Baptist Home Mission Society, in 1917. By 1939, it was holding services at 10th and Jefferson streets. In 1909, the First Presbyterian Church of Phoenix opened a Sunday school, known as the Railroad Mission, on Tonto and 1st Avenue. La Iglesia Mexicana Presbiteriana (Mexican Presbyterian Church) grew out of this mission in 1924. In the 1930s, the church stood on 2nd Avenue and Grant Road.⁵³

Esther Ramirez Diaz began attending La Iglesia Mexicana Presbiteriana during the 1930s. Esther's family initially had attended Salvation Army services, affiliated with the Baptist and Methodist churches, where they enjoyed watermelon, music, and singing. Esther recalled a young woman inviting the children to visit the Mexican Presbyterian Church, and that her mother began attending services there soon after. It was a small congregation, according to Esther, "maybe ten families—never over 100 people." Although Esther was Protestant, most of her childhood friends were Catholics who attended Immaculate Heart Church.

Esther threw herself into church activities, attending Christian Endeavor meetings and interdenominational conventions (*las convenciones evangelicas*). As a teenager, she taught Sunday school and played piano at the Guadalupe Presbyterian Church. Her social life, including dating, revolved around the church. Her mother was strict, so Esther only dated boys from church. This is how she met her future husband, Fernando Diaz. With other women, Esther helped plan, cooked meals, attended meetings and nightly services, and sang in choir competitions at the annual statewide *convenciones evangelicas* of Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian Mexican churches. As in the Catholic tradition, these small Protestant congregations created a sense of community though their fellowship and reinforced many traditional Mexican values.⁵⁴

Although aware of economic disparities and discrimination, Phoenix's Mexican American women "placed faith in themselves and in the system." Esther Ramirez Diaz's mother and father encouraged her to achieve her goals and to take pride in herself. "My mother was always an outgoing person and she taught us that

there is nobody better than you," Esther proudly recalled. "Growing up, I remember my dad telling me that I was a very good looking little girl and that I could do anything anybody else could do. To just bear it in mind that you can do anything that you want to do, or anything that you want to be."⁵⁵

The stories told by these Mexican American women help broaden our understanding of the American experience during the dark days of the Great Depression. Overall, these young women led similar lives to those of the daughters of Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles, El Paso, or Detroit. Wives, daughters, widows, and single mothers pitched in to sustain their families during difficult times. Some young Hispanic women worked because they enjoyed the opportunities that came with their paycheck, others worked to survive. Regardless of their reasons for entering the labor force, Mexican American working women contributed to the growth and development of Phoenix—and, occasionally, they used some of their wages to fulfill their own desires and dreams. It was a transforming experience. While clinging to their cultural traditions, these depression-era women also responded to the enticements of consumerism and popular culture, frequenting movies and dance halls, and enjoying recreation at new city parks. With the onset of the 1940s, the small city of Phoenix felt the first tremors of the economic boom that characterized the 1950s and beyond. Women of Mexican descent would continue to be active participants in the social fabric of Phoenix's Mexican American community for decades to come.

NOTES

1. Mary López Garcia interview with Jean Reynolds, March 3, 1997, Phoenix, tape recording. All interviews are in author's files.
2. Pete Dimas, *Progress and a Mexican American Community's Struggle for Existence: Phoenix's Golden Gate Barrio* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999), p. 22.
3. Bradford Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix: A Profile of Mexican American, Chinese American, and African American Communities, 1860-1992* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994), pp. 2, 37; Rosales, "Lost Land," p. 16.
4. Mary López Garcia interview.
5. Esther Ramirez Diaz interview with Jean Reynolds, March 14, 1997, Phoenix.
6. Ernestina Ruiz Saldate interview with Jean Reynolds, March 12, 1997, Chandler.
7. Minnie Rangel Martinez interview with Jean Reynolds, January 23, 1998, Phoenix.
8. Dimas, "Progress and a Mexican American Community's Struggle for Existence," p. 102; Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, pp. 39-40 (percentage based on calculation of

Mexican American Women in 1930s' Phoenix

Luckingham's census figures for Mexican population and total population of Phoenix); Jean Reynolds, *"We Knew Our Neighbors and It was Like One Family": The History of the Grant Park Neighborhood, 1880-1950* (Phoenix: City of Phoenix Historic Preservation Office, 1999), p. 2.

9. Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, p. 40; Minnie Rangel Martinez interview.

10. Esther Ramirez Diaz interview; Fernando Diaz interview with Jean Reynolds, May 11, 1998, Phoenix; Ernestina Ruiz Saldate interview; George Shill, "Handicrafts in the Grant and Lowell Elementary Schools of Phoenix, Arizona" (M.A. thesis, Arizona State Teacher's College, 1942), p. 46; Reynolds, *"We Knew Our Neighbors,"* p. 14.

11. Annie Garcia Redondo interview with Jean Reynolds, March 18, 1997, Phoenix. Annie recalled that her friend Julia's family was a little better off financially than her own, because all of Julia's siblings worked to provide income for the family. Because Annie was an only child, her family did not bring in as much income.

12. Bradford Luckingham, *Phoenix: The History of a Southwestern Metropolis* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), p. 102; Ernestina Ruiz Saldate interview.

13. *1939 Phoenix City Directory* (Phoenix: Arizona Directory Company, 1939); Ernestina Ruiz Saldate interview. Tina's mother, Dolores, may have had multiple sclerosis and, consequently, could not work. Tina's stepfather had left the family some time before.

14. Karen Anderson, *Changing Woman: A History of Racial Ethnic Women in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 109-110; Juan Franco to Rawghlie Stanford, 1937, folder 11; State Department of Social Security and Welfare memo, August 24, 1938, folder 10, both in box 10, Rawghlie Clement Stanford Papers, RG 1, Office of the Governor, SG 12, Arizona State Library, Archives, and Public Records (ASLAPR), Phoenix; Governor's Unemployment Relief Bureau Report, 1932, folder 11, box 5, W. P. Hunt Papers, RG 1, Office of the Governor, SG 8, *ibid.*; Annie Garcia Redondo interview. Annie's father brought home boxes containing powdered milk, macaroni, beans, lima beans, and lard, with orange food coloring, for butter.

15. Anderson, *Changing Woman*, p. 109; Old Age Pension applications, 1933-1936, Maricopa County Board of Supervisors Box, RG 107, ASLAPR. The 1937 Act for Old Age Assistance required that the recipient had to be over sixty-five years old and had lived in the state for five years.

16. Mary Ruth Titcomb, "Americanization and Mexicans in the Southwest: A History of Phoenix's Friendly House, 1920-1983" (M.A. thesis, UC Santa Barbara, 1984), pp. 7-17, 38-46; Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 48; Mary López Garcia interview; Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, p. 44.

17. The U.S. and Mexican governments both supported voluntary repatriation. Persons residing in the country illegally, convicted of criminal or immoral activities, possessing physical or mental defects, participating in anti-government activities, or having become a public charge within the first five years of his or her arrival in the U.S. were deported. Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), pp. 122-23, 174-75. The numbers tallied at the border stations may reflect repatriates who were migrating through Arizona from other states. Titcomb, "Americanization and Mexicans in the Southwest," pp. 38-41, 43; *El Mensajero* (Phoenix), March 28, 1936, and May 29, 1939; Ray Martinez interview with Jean Reynolds, January 8, 1998.

18. Minnie Rangel Martinez interview; Ernestina Ruiz Saldate interview; Shirley Roberts, "Minority Group Poverty in Phoenix: A Socio-Economic Survey," *Journal of Arizona History*, vol. 14 (Winter 1973), p. 354.

19. Elizabeth Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars: Life and Culture on the Lower East Side, 1890-1925* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1985), p. 193; *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Population, Volume 5, General Report on Occupations* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1931-1933), pp. 86-90.

20. Annie Garcia Redondo interview with Jean Reynolds, March 18 and November 13, 1997; Mary López Garcia interview.

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21. *1931 Phoenix City and Salt River Valley Directory* (Phoenix: Arizona Directory Company, 1931); *1935 Phoenix City Directory* (Phoenix: Arizona Directory Company, 1935); *1939 Phoenix City Directory* (Phoenix: Arizona Directory Company, 1939); Esther Ramirez Diaz interview. The Boston Store, owned by the Jewish Diamond brothers, employed most of the Mexican American women listed for the three years. An 1898 advertisement in the first issue of *El Mensajero* indicates the store's long history of interaction with the Mexican community.
22. According to the 1930 census, 57 percent of all women employed in Phoenix worked in white-collar positions, while 37 percent labored in service occupations. Keeping in mind that Mexicans comprised only 15 percent of the city's population, these figures suggest that Mexican women most likely filled the ranks of service workers to a larger extent than Anglo women. Blue-collar occupations represented 66 percent of the jobs listed in 1931; 52 percent in 1935; 55 percent in 1939. *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Population, Volume 4, Occupations By State, Arizona*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1931-1933), pp. 138-39; Vicki Ruiz, " 'And Miles to Go . . .': Mexican Women and Work, 1930-1985," in Lillian Schlissel, Vicki Ruiz, and Janice Monk, eds., *Western Women: Their Lives, Their Land* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), p. 118; Yolanda Chávez Leyva, "Faithful Hardworking Mexican Hands': Mexicana Workers During the Great Depression," *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies*, vol. 5 (1995), 66. According to the *1939 Phoenix City Directory*, the largest businesses were Phoenix Laundry & Dry Cleaning, Arizona Laundry & Dry Cleaning, Bell Laundry, Inc., and McKean's Model Laundry & Dry Cleaners.
23. Mary López Garcia interview. In the later 1940s, Mary moved to the American Linen, where she made 55 cents an hour. She also joined the union.
24. Ernestina Ruiz Saldate interview.
25. Minnie Rangel Martinez interview.
26. Titcomb, "Americanization and Mexicans in the Southwest," pp. 44-45; *El Mensajero*, August 8, 1936.
27. Minnie Rangel Martinez interview; "Autobiographical Resume: Plácida Elvira Garcia Smith," Hayden Arizona Collection, Arizona State University Library (ASUL), Tempe; "Plácida Garcia Smith: A Life Lived Through Teaching Self Help," *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix), July 24, 1981. For more information on Plácida Garcia Smith, see Titcomb, "Americanization and Mexicans in the Southwest."
28. Mary López Garcia interview.
29. Ernestina Ruiz Saldate interview.
30. Governor's Unemployment Relief Bureau Report, 1932, folder 11, box 5, Hunt Papers, ASLAPR; Report of Work Project 471 at Phoenix, May 1938, Reports Concerning Outstanding Work Project Units by State, 1938, Records of the Office of the Director of the NYA, box 1, Record Group 119, National Archives (NA), Washington D.C. A special thanks to Bill Collins at the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office for providing this information. WPA Press Release, August 28, 1935, box 839, Works Project Administration, Central Files: State 1935-1944, Arizona 660-661, RG 119, NA; P. H. Brooks to R. C. Stanford, November 3, 1937, folder 10, box 10, Stanford Papers, ASLAPR.
31. L. W. Phillips to B. B. Moeur, August 10, 1936 and Letter to Governor B.B. Moeur from Earl Shirley to Moeur, July 30, 1936, folder 37, box 7, RG 1, Office of the Governor, SG 11, ASLAPR; Federal Works Agency—Arizona WPA form letter, folder 28, box 28, Sidney Osborn Papers, RG 1, Office of the Governor, SG 14, *ibid.*
32. Anderson, *Changing Woman*, p. 105; Deena Gonzales, "The Widowed Women of Santa Fe: Assessments of the Lives of an Unmarried Population, 1850-1880," in Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol Dubois, eds. *Unequal Sisters: A Multi-Cultural Reader in U.S. Women's History* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 40-41; Ernestina Ruiz Saldate interview.
33. Esther Ramirez Diaz interview; Fernando Diaz interview.
34. Frank Urtuzuastegui, "The Farmworkers Conditions in Arizona During the 1930s," pp. 3, 7, manuscript, Chicano Research Collection, ASUL. Despite the economic effects of the Great Depression, the surplus of labor combined with low wages to produce a slight increase in production and profits for Arizona cotton farmers during the 1930s. For example, from 1921 to 1930, the yield of short staple cotton was 332 lbs. per acre; from 1931 to 1940, the

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yield increased to 436 lbs. per acre. See Rork and Sutter, *1950 Arizona Cotton Harvest: A Study of Hand and Machine Picking in Cotton in Arizona* (Tucson: Agricultural Experiment Station, 1939), p. 312; Malcolm Brown and Orin Cassmore, *Migratory Cotton Pickers in Arizona* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1939), pp. xix, 24-25; Edwin Pendleton, "History of Labor in Arizona Irrigated Agriculture" (Ph.D. diss., University of California Berkeley, 1950), pp. 239-46. Conditions for migratory workers were very bad in 1937, due to the overabundance of labor, low wages, and poor living conditions. Many migrant workers came to the Salt River Valley because of the relief offered by Phoenix social service organizations. Michael Kotlanger, "Phoenix, Arizona: 1920-1940," p. 443, explains that Mexican laborers refused to work when valley cotton growers lowered their pay. This resulted in a labor shortage, which the farmers blamed on the relief system, claiming that farm laborers preferred welfare relief to work. Governor Benjamin Moeur responded by ordering the welfare board to implement a "no work no eat" policy and mandating that "the names of all pickers refusing harvest work be stricken from the relief rolls." Whether this collective action was the result of labor organizing remains to be discovered. Regardless, it shows the power growers exerted in Phoenix and the Salt River Valley.

35. Mary López Garcia interview.

36. Ernestina Ruiz Saldate interview.

37. Mary López Garcia interview; Minnie Rangel Martinez interview; Douglas Monroy, "'Our Children Get So Different Here': Film, Fashion, Popular Culture and the Process of Cultural Synchronization in Mexican Los Angeles, 1900-1935," *Aztlan*, vol. 19 (1990), p. 86; Annie Garcia Redondo interview; Teatro Rex advertisement in *El Mensajero*, November 10, 1939; "Pete Bugarín," Arizona Collection, ASUL.

38. Minnie Rangel Martinez interview; Vicki Ruiz, "'Star Struck': Acculturation, Adolescence, and the Mexican American Woman, 1920-1950," in Adelita de la Torre and Beatriz Pesquera, eds., *Building With Our Hands: New Directions in Chicana Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 112.

39. Ruiz, *From Out of The Shadows*, pp. 54-55; *El Mensajero*, May 8, 1936.

40. *El Mensajero*, April 3, 1938.

41. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, p. 185; Minnie Rangel Martinez interview; Mary López Garcia interview; Ruiz, "'Star Struck'," p. 119.

42. Esther Ramirez Diaz interview; Monroy, "Our Children Get So Different Here," p. 88; Ernestina Ruiz Saldate interview.

43. A. Francis Cane, "A Survey of Municipal Recreation in Phoenix, Arizona" (M.A. thesis, Arizona State Teacher's College, 1944), pp. 24, 47-49; Mary López Garcia interview. The Olympics traveled to Prescott, Globe, Miami, Tolleson, Tempe, and other towns. Annie Garcia Redondo interview with Jean Reynolds, March 18, 1997. Grant Park had a swimming team that competed with Eastlake and Riverside park teams. There were various Mexican teams in Cuatro Milpas, Hollywood, Tolleson, and Tempe as well. Mexican men and women taught folk dances at Grant Park for 5 cents a lesson.

44. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows*, pp. 58-61; Minnie Rangel Martinez interview.

45. Mary López Garcia interview.

46. Monroy, "'Our Children Get So Different Here'," p. 86; Mary Lopez Garcia interview.

47. Mary López Garcia interview.

48. Esther Ramirez Diaz interview; Ernesto P. Mendivil, "A 15th and 16th of September Celebration, and Why" (1939), pp. 12-29, public institutions file, box 9, Arizona Writers Project Collection, RG 91, Works Progress Administration, ASLAPR.

49. Minnie Rangel Martinez interview.

50. Jean Reynolds, "Por los Mexicanos y para los Mexicanos: The Creation of la Iglesia Inmaculado Corazón de María in Phoenix, Arizona" (1996), unpublished manuscript, author's files; Ray Martinez interview; Adam Diaz interview with Jean Reynolds and Alberto L. Pulido, March 26, 1996, Phoenix; Minnie Rangel Martinez interview; Reverend John Moreno telephone interview with Jean Reynolds, April 26, 1997, Phoenix.

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51. Mary López Garcia interview; Annie Garcia Redondo interview; Minnie Rangel Martinez interview.
52. Minnie Rangel Martinez interview.
53. *1939 Phoenix City Directory*; Thomas E. Sheridan, *Los Tucsonenses: The Mexican Community in Tucson, 1854-1941* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986), p. 151; Arnoldo De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt: A History of Mexican Americans in Houston* (Houston: University of Houston, 1989), p. 28; Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, pp. 156, 166. Phoenix's Chinatown was located between 1st and 2nd streets and Madison. "Desert Views," March 13, 1992, photocopied article from United Methodist Archives, Phoenix; Reverend Juan Martinez telephone interview with Jean Reynolds, May 3, 1997; Esther Ramirez Diaz interview; Richard K. Smith and J. Melvin Nelson, *Datelines & Bylines: A Sketchbook of Presbyterian Beginnings and Growth in Arizona* (Phoenix: Synod of Arizona, 1969), pp. 76, 89.
54. Esther Ramirez Diaz interview.
55. Vicki Ruiz, "'Star Struck'," p. 122; Esther Ramirez Diaz interview.