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Anarchist Groups in Early Twentieth Century El Monte, California

Luz Libertaria de El Monte, Tierra y Fraternidad de El
Monte, Acracia de Puente, and Regeneración de San
Gabriel

Daniel Talamantes

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Acracia de Puente, and Regeneración de San Gabriel
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Luna, P.; Luna, G.; Santiago, R. De; Santiago, G de; Santana, Soledad

Links to Digital Materials

The most valuable digital collection of materials relating to Ricardo Flores Magón is Archivo Magón. The database includes letters; a virtual tour of Flores Magón's travels through North America; and digitized copies of *Regeneración* (1900–1918), *Revolución* (1907–1908), and the Italian publication of *Regeneración* (1911).

La Casa de El Hijo del Ahuizote, a cultural center and archive run by Enrique Flores Magón's great-grandson, Diego Flores Magón, houses Enrique's personal archive and other materials relating to the PLM. SEMAP's Omeka archive includes material from La Casa's archive and that are directly relevant to El Monte and the SGV.

Soto, Natividad; Swain, Jaime; Swain, Jaime; Swain, Raul; Tenorio, Juanita; Tenorio, Nazarla; Tenorio, R.D.; Trigueros, Alberto; Villagran, Margarita

Luz Libertaria

Cabrera, G.; Chaves, Pedro; Chávez, Tomás; Domínguez, Cristóbal; Gonzalez, J; Gutiérrez, Santos; Hernández, Julián; Huerta, Pedro R; Gómez, José; Juemillo, Silvestro; Lomas, Gerardo; Macías, Feliciano; Macías, Manuela; Martínez, Jesus; Morales, Juan; Morales, Ruperta; Moroner; Ramirez, Felix; Romero, Ramón; Salazar, Juan; Sánchez, Agustín; Sandoval, Fidel; Sandoval, Just; Seañez, Anacleto; Teos, Gregorio; Valenzuela, Guinesindo

Luz y Vida

Aguirre, Cruz C.; Gallardo, Jesusita Rincón; García, Beatriz de; González, Florencia de; González, Ramoncita; Grijalva, Micaela L.; Hernández, Dionisia; Hernández, Florencia L.; Martínez, Elisa T.; Martínez, Juanita; Martínez, Pascuala; Medrano, Carmen; Olmos, Sara de; Pérez, Blasa; Ríos, Petra; Rodríguez, Librada L.; Rojas, Luz; Talavera, Benita; Talavera, Carmen

San Gabriel

Andez, Jesus; Asneros, Jose; Barela, Francisco; Cisneros, Jose Asneros; Cornea, Francisco; Escoedo, M.; Estrada, Estaban; Gamboa, Ramon; Hernandez, Pedro; Hernandez, Florencia; Garcia, Merced; Martinez, Ascencion; Martinez, Sosthenes; Mata, Tomas; Palma, Raul; Rincon, Amado; Rincon, Antonio; Rincon, Armando; Rincon, Jesus; Rincón, Juan (son); Rincon, Juan; Rincón, Juana T.; Rincón, Julian; Rincón, Rebeca; Rincón, Refugio S. de; Torres, C

Acracia Grupo, Puente

Alfaro, G. Alfaro, G. Alfaro, Juan; Alfaro, E.; Alfaro, Francisco; Alfaro, M.; Barrios, Guadalupe; Betancur, Antonio; Betancur, AB; Betancur, A. E.; Betencur, AR; Betancur, Dolores; Betancur, F.; Betancourt, Hilario; Betty, GP; Enciso, A.; Enciso, G; Garcia, Felipe; Garcia, TF; Gonzalez, Jesus; Guerra, Atanacio; Guerra, Juan; Guerra, Ladislao; Hernandez, Antonio; Lucio, Felipe; Luna, R.;

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- May, Acracia Grupo Puente established
- July, Ideal Emancipador group established (same members as SG group)

1915

- November 2, Luz y Vida group established

1917

- July 10, Tierra y Fraternidad de El Monte established
- July 29, Luz Libertaria de El Monte established
- August 26, Picnic in Basset with El Monte, San Gabriel, and La Puente groups
- September 23, sixth anniversary of promulgation by Flores Magón

1918

- Arrest of Rivera and Flores Magón
- Dissolution of PLM and Regeneración

Appendix II

Tierra y Fraterindad

Aguirre, Jesus; Andrade, Ángela; Andrade, Consuelo; Andrade, María G.; Andrade, Micaela; Andrade, Roman; Andrade, Rubén; Cervantes, Nicolas; de la Vega, Eusebio; Estrada, Nicolas; Estrada, Piedad; Hernandez, L.G.; Huerta, Pedro R.; Juarez, Pedro; Macias, F.C.; Macias, Manuela; Padilla, Andrés R.; Patino, Catarino; Rios, Manuela; Robledo, Amada; Romero, Ramon; Sandoval, Nicolas;

As historian Matt García recounts, as the workforce became more non-white, wages dropped, to about \$13 per week during the late 1920s and 1930s.⁵³ However, the immigrant acts of 1917 started placing caps on migration. After the labor strikes of the thirties and the boom after World War II, rapid urbanization and industrialization of the San Gabriel Valley converted the landscape. Manufacturing pushed agribusiness northward and the structures of migrant labor changed entirely. Likewise, during the era of “white flight” social tensions resulting from industrialization were often blamed on immigrants and their introduction of foreign ideologies, such as Marxism and anarchism.

Yet revolutionary anarchism integrated into the character of labor strikes and unions. But the aspects of kinship and care sublimated into the inner networks of community building and mutual aid-focused urban centers. In the labor strikes they manifested as *mutualistas* and “auxiliary networks” which have been studied by Vicki Ruiz’s *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives* or *Out from the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth Century America*. But some of the values and practices of anarchism on the community level became even subtler. In the seventies, there was a return to the local focus of scholarship and politics.

Appendix I: Chronology

1911

- September 23, PLM Manifesto of 1911 published with a political vision characterized as anarchist
- Regeneración de San Gabriel established

1914

⁵³ Matt García. *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970*. (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2001)

For nearly a century, El Monte’s history has been the pioneer’s tale. It is a tale of settlers prospecting riches in the Gold Rush and finding empty promises. It is a tale of the pioneer’s gaze that looked back down the mountain. For what they could not mine from the mountains they would reap from the fields. The El Monte pioneer narrative is one of opportunists. Situated between the Rio Hondo and Gabriel Rivers, in a rich “green belt” bioregion of El Monte populated for centuries by a flourishing Tongva tribe, settlers carried on and advanced the methods of extraction and domination deployed by the people of the San Gabriel Mission and subsequent ranchos. They expelled the remaining Tongva and bought up ranchos to apportion extensive acres of land for a few men to raise livestock.

The El Monte pioneer narrative is structured by traditional Jefferson values of the development, innovation, and progress of agricultural land. In the early twentieth century with the arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad, ranches were divided up to enterprising white men to establish largescale agricultural tracts. Here the white colony was fashioned. As El Monte became an incorporated municipality of Los Angeles, California on November 18, 1912, it also became highly lucrative in cash crops, especially its walnut industry. With the influx of new settlers, protestant churches, schools, quaint homesteads, and supply stores were built to support the families of these pioneers.

El Monte’s pioneer narrative is a celebration of traditional American values. It is a celebration of liberalism, patriotism, and capitalism. This is the face of this history, the one shared and reiterated in both literature and material display. The order it maintains is coded into the neighborhood grid and matrices of crops and orchards. And yet, these structures were not strong enough to maintain that order.

Despite mechanisms to control the narrative, there are traces of the *othered* in the erasure. Voices emerge from the silence. In the ephemeral orchards of El Monte’s past, itinerant laborers haunt,

whispering words of revolution and resistance. Effigies appear on borderlands. Industrial waste and contamination flow toward these segregated historical spaces. Between the legacy of homesteader neighborhoods, vestiges of Mexican migrant barrios imprint the urban landscape. In the lacunas of El Monte's pioneer order is anarchy. The San Gabriel Valley's agricultural boom from the 1910-1930s positioned El Monte, among other surrounding municipalities, to be an ideal location for the surge of Mexican migrants escaping first the exploitative practices of Porfirio Díaz and then the Mexican Revolution. At first, migrants were a convenience for the pioneers, for they supplied the cheaper labor needed to grow agricultural industry operations. Likewise, they were seasonal, thus integration in pioneer communities would seem highly unlikely to them. But as families joined the migration to California, Mexican laborers were cordoned off to zones away from the city centers and white neighborhoods.

Along with the families came radicals, militants, and political refugees from Mexico in 1910. In California they were joined by the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) who crossed the United States to Los Angeles and established their newspaper *Regeneración*.¹ Here they intersected with the labor organizing efforts of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) underway in the San Gabriel Valley to continue their fight in the Mexican Revolution, demand fair labor practices, and grow flourishing nonhierarchical communities. Flores Magón's anarchism became a powerful alternative form of resistance to the pioneer narrative.

¹ On January 4, 1904, Ricardo Flores Magón, Enrique Flores Magón and Santiago de la Hoz arrived in Laredo, Texas after they were forced into exile in the United States by the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. Joined by Librado Rivera, Antonio Villareal, Juan Sarabia, Manuel Sarabia, and Rosalio Bustamente, this group represented the revolutionary wing of the Mexican Liberal Party. September 28, 1905, in St. Louis, Missouri, through the Organizing Junta of the Partido Liberal Mexicano, Magón and other anarchists continued their efforts to organize workers in Mexico and the United States, and to build a revolutionary movement against Díaz.

Conclusion

PLM and *Regeneración* formally ended with Ricardo Flores Magón's imprisonment in 1918. In San Gabriel Valley and labor rights historiography, the legacy carried on in magónista cells which would become prominent actors in labor unions and the wave of agricultural strikes across California in the thirties. Without the formative roles of the PLM or *Regeneración* excluded from labor unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, Mexicans organized in the IWW, the Communist Party USA, the Confederación de Uniones de Campesinos y Obreros Mexicanos (Mexican Campesinos and Workers Union Confederation, CUCOM), El Congreso de Pueblos de Hablan Española (Spanish-Speaking People's Congress, or El Congreso), and the Cannery Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU).⁵¹

No longer was there as much desire to radicalize for the sake of insurrection of the nation. Instead, the demands of labor and precarity developed greater import. However, the ideologies and praxis of anarchism laid a foundation for future action. Absorbing members of PLM, the IWW group, Citrus SGV, comprised of Mexican and Russian communities around the Puente, El Monte, Pomona, Azusa, Glendora, La Verne, Covina, San Dimas Redlands, Monrovia, Upland, and San Bernardino. At the Duarte-Monrovia Fruit Exchange they began striking in 1919 and their influence remained in the region until the renowned 1933 Berry Strike. Veteran PLM militants such as Guillermo Vellarde were seminal in the development of agricultural strikes throughout California and the Northwest.⁵²

⁵¹ Devra Anne Weber. *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton, and the New Deal*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 86.

⁵² Kevan Antonio Aguilar. "Ricardo Flores Magón and the Ongoing Revolution," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History*, Jul, 2017, DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.013.445

sión and Elisa Martínez hosted at their home in 1915, the inception of the Luz y Vida all women's group.⁵⁰

Trials and tribulations remained constant throughout the lives of the anarchist groups and families. Their ability to establish networks and communities of support and mutual aid were critical in surviving these struggles. The revolutionary cause always remained an important thread that bound them to their history and future. It was at the family level that anarchist foundations of care and kinship provided growth and community.

⁵⁰ Los Angeles, Calif., November 2, 1915,

Regeneration Companions:

Health:

This letter serves to tell you that last Sunday a group of women met at the house of companero Ascensión Martínez, with the aim of organizing all the women who, like us, are convinced that the duty of the woman is to be next to man in the fight that, for human emancipation, all the intelligent proletarians of the Earth have engaged in.

Women, until today indifferent to taking their rightful part in the great world contest of the exploited against the exploiter, the oppressed against the tyrant, the poor against the rich, must be pushed to line up in the tight ranks of their brothers. The men, to give the decisive battle to the capitalist and authoritarian regime, since the victory of the oppressed will not only redeem the man, but will also reach its beneficial results to the woman, victim today of insane concerns that make her appear inferior to man, and therefore, the woman has the obligation to take part in the fight.

For these reasons we have organized ourselves into a Group that we sign below, giving our female Group the name of "Luz y Vida".

We have agreed to organize a series of dances to help Regeneration with funds, and in general to promote everything that tends to the good of the disinherited of the whole world, without distinction of race or color.

Yours for Land and Freedom.

Grijalva, Micaela L.; Martínez, Elisa T.; Medrano, Carmen; García, Beatriz de; Rodríguez, Librada L.; Hernández, Florencia L.; Aguirre, Cruz C.; Talavera, Benita; Hernández, Dionisia; Talavera, Carmen; Martínez, Pascuala; González, Florencia de; González, Ramoncita; Ríos, Petra; Gallardo, Jesusita Rincón; Pérez, Blasa; Acosta, Margarita; Rojas, Luz; Martínez, Juanita; Olmos, Sara de

El Monte's anarchist history is not just regional, Californian, or national, but transnational. In the early twentieth century, anarchism had a grander public stage than it ever would again. North America was rampant with numerous European anarchists embedded primarily in metropolitan areas of Eastern United States. While continuing to plot revolution in Europe, particularly in Russia, they had considerable influence in the labor organizing power of the IWW. It was not until the Magón brothers brought PLM to the U.S. that the real-time battleground of the Mexican Revolution became an important fight for anarchist possibility—even, utopic futurity.

Historically, when talking about anarchism, the personalities of revolutionaries and leading theorists including Emma Goldman, Peter Kropotkin, Eugene V. Debs, and Flores Magón come to characterize entire movements, ideas, or communities. This concept of *personalismo* can be found in the portrayal of anarchists and members of the PLM of the San Gabriel Valley who are called magónistas. Flores Magón's charisma, devotion, and extraordinary talent for organizing solidarity movements, writing profound discourses and manifestos, and galvanizing meaningful insurrection certainly earns him his totemic status. Flores Magón disdained the term magónista. But it shows the complexities of leadership for an anarchist movement. Nonhierarchical relations were an important virtue for Flores Magón, but sometimes personification emerges from influence. As he would submit, the power of his narrative sometimes occludes the collective efforts of communities on the ground level. Forgotten often in the revolutionary narrative are the stories of mutual aid and kinship forming responses to the harrowing conditions of migration.

Anarchism, according to Ricardo Flores Magón, "aims at establishing peace forever among all the races of the earth by the suppression of [the] fountain of all evils—the right of private prop-

erty.”² To the anarchists, equally as important as labor rights and revolution, is the theme of growing nonhierarchical, sensual communities. Since the colonial era, with the exponential and unfettered reach of the West’s state-sponsored imperial extractive and profit-driven enterprises, communities across the globe endured and suffered unnumerable violence(s) including displacement, cultural erasure, enslavement, genocide, and environmental ruin. Left were migrant peoples, seeking new opportunities within the very states that displaced them. Now within these borders, racial structures of imperialism were converted into methods of exploitation in labor, segregation in dwelling, policing of behavior, and limitations to access of basic human needs. From the brutal conditions endured, migrant communities cultivated support and collective efforts for survival emerged.

This type of anarchy was perhaps not often named. It was an affective anarchy, *a posteriori* and contingent, containing experiences and values that are quieter, perhaps as Kropotkin would argue, because it is organic, not rhetorical. But they existed in the barrios, meeting in houses, conspiring in the fields, and attendant *en masse* at rallies in Eastern Los Angeles. From 1910-1918, unnamed anarchists and city-oriented anarchist groups are mentioned in *Regeneración* and the Magón brothers’ correspondences, now housed in the La Casa del Hijo del Ahuizote Archive, but often without descriptive detail. Most biographies reflect their participation in PLM or *Regeneración*’s important events and groups.

Groups were often formed after events and formalized in the newspaper announcements. At these events or fundraisers, they gathered to form a collective which would support both PLM propaganda and perhaps, as will be argued, foster mutual aid communities. While members of the groups interchanged, and towns they associated with did not always reflect their location, there remained

² Ricardo Flores Magón. *Land and Liberty: Anarchist Influences in the Mexican Revolution*. (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1971). 115

and Ideal Emancipator is indeterminable. It appears that it might be the title of the meetings held by the San Gabriel group. Cordero, who was at the campaign where Juan Rincon Junior was killed, spoke of the boy’s death to galvanize the crowd. At this juncture, Cordero stayed to help organize the San Gabriel group.⁴⁸ In San Gabriel, rallies grew in frequency. The group was front and center in the removal of Rafael R. Palacios from his organizing role in PLM movement after his betrayal of the *Regeneración* leaders who were in the McNeil prison.⁴⁹ From the group, El Monte residents, Ascen-

arrived in El Paso, Texas, where he participated in the defense campaign of José María Rangel and the prisoners of Texas with Cisneros and Juan Rincon.

He was arrested in December and sentenced to serve four months in prison. *Regeneración* feared that Farrell would be sent to Mexico, since it was rumored that Francisco Villa had requested his extradition. He obtained his release before completing his sentence and moved to Los Angeles where he led, with Pedro C. Paulet, a mass rally in February 1914 where Ricardo Flores Magón spoke. During this period he helped organize the Regeneration Group of San Gabriel, California.

According to Enrique Flores Magón, in 1914, the JOPLM sent him to contact Zapata again, but he was arrested by Esteban Cantú in Baja California and released for lack of merit. In 1916, he forged an armed conspiracy, in San Gabriel, California to protest the American invasion of Mexico. They were denounced and he managed to escape.

At the end of 1916 he made another propaganda tour of Arizona, he was arrested in September at the request of the Arizona State Federation of Labor, but managed to escape from Clifton jail on October 18. He was imprisoned in Tombstone, Arizona, and deported to Mexico in 1918. In the country, he organized agrarian cooperatives in Arizpe, Sonora. President De la Huerta granted him a position as an English teacher at the Mazatlan nautical school.

“Diccionario Biográfico,” <http://archivomagon.net/>, Dirección de Estudios Históricos, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Originally brought in by Flores Magón in 1911 while the PLM leadership was in prison, Palacios helped run the newspaper. PLM members accused him of stealing money. Later Magón published articles condemning his behavior and warning other radicals to be aware of him.

the Texas prison, Rincons hosted the San Gabriel groups meetings until the PLM's dissolution in 1918.⁴⁶ Also in their home, another group, Ideal Emancipator, was born from a rally held for the newspaper where notable comrades Anselmo Figueroa and Tomás Farrel Cordero came to speak.⁴⁷ The distinction between the San Gabriel

⁴⁶ SGV Data Sheet

⁴⁷ Ibid

Farrel Cordero, Tomás

In 1905, in Cananea, he contacted Lázaro Gutiérrez de Lara (then president of the Liberal Club of El Ronquillo) and they published *El Progreso*. They helped Diéguez and Baca Calderón. Witness and actor of the mineral strike. After the repression of the strike he lived in Villa Verde, worked in Cananea and Naco and, later, traveled to Bisbee, Arizona.

In 1906 he went to San Francisco, California, where he propagandized for the PLM. He went to Los Angeles and was part of the JOPLM. On the border he distributed *Regeneration* and after instructing some companions in a little school was left standing.

Due to his skills as an organizer and speaker, he made multiple propaganda tours. He participated in the 1908 uprising as a delegate from Sonora, Sinaloa, and the southwestern United States. Farrel spent the year 1911 at the Edendale Agricultural Colony and at the *Regeneration office*.; in April of this year, he became part of its newsroom.

At the Cañada Mine, he met Lucio Blanco. At the beginning of 1912 he was sent to El Paso to meet with a delegate of Emiliano Zapata at the home of Matilde Mota. Among the issues they discussed was the agrarian program of the Revolution. In June 1912, with Juan and José Olmos, he called on all workers in Los Angeles to reorganize the Los Angeles Regeneration Group while Ricardo, Enrique Flores Magón, and Librado Rivera were in prison.

The objectives of this Regeneration Group would be to create an International Center for Social Studies, support and enhance the work of *Regeneration* and the PLM, fight for the freedom of the imprisoned Magónistas, and establish a Rationalist School. That year Farrell organized a collection in Los Angeles to support Grupo Luz from Mexico City.

In 1913, Farrell was a Fellow of the Center for Rational Studies and a founder of the Advisory Board of the Los Angeles House of the International Worker. In September 1913, Farrel undertook a new propaganda tour of Arizona in the company of Charles Clifton, who sought to get support from the members of the IWW for the Magónista prisoners. As part of this tour, the Grupo Regeneración Armonía Ideal from Metcalf, Arizona was organized; in October, he

two constants: firstly, groups' compositions were often familial; and secondly, a vast majority of members migrated from Mexico. Unbounded family formations and kinship networks played a critical role in these. This extended from the more anonymous members to the Magón family at the Edendale commune.

Early twentieth century El Monte evinces complex negotiations of anarchy in the emergence of groups such as Regeneración de San Gabriel, Luz y Vida, Luz Libertaria, and Tierra y Fraternidad. This article builds on Yesenia Barragan and Mark Bray's "Ricardo Flores Magón & the Anarchist Movement in El Monte, California" in *East of East: The Making of Greater El Monte* by looking into the anarchist groups in the region and the people who formed them. I will examine two episodes that demonstrate the different modes of anarchism at play in El Monte and the greater San Gabriel Valley. First, I will explore the picnic of Sunday, August 26, 1917, in El Monte after the formation of El Monte's two groups before turning to more ambiguous regionality of San Gabriel Valley in 1910-1917. Through the *Regeneración*, we have access to the inner workings of these anarchist groups and entry points to examine the rich dynamics forming their communities.

De la Familia Liberal: PLM's Last Years in El Monte

On Sunday, August 26, 1917, members from San Gabriel Valley's anarchist groups Luz Libertaria de El Monte, Tierra y Fraternidad de El Monte, Acracia de Puente, and Regeneración de San Gabriel organized a picnic to raise funds for *Regeneración*.³ Though the exact location remains unknown, the newspaper reports that the event was situated near the barrio of Basset—an unincorporated town nestled between two of Southern California's agricul-

³ Enrique Flores Magón. "Picnic." *Regeneración*, no. 259. September 1, 1917.

tural meccas in La Puente and El Monte. Considering its proximity to the numerous barrios of El Monte and La Puente it is not a surprise the event was a marked success.⁴ Enrique Magón, in a September 1, 1917, issue of *Regeneración* heralded the picnic as an example for other groups to follow.⁵ Lasting more than nine hours, comrades and attendees danced to a Mexican orchestra and the groups were able to raise over \$76.61 (\$1,720.76 today).⁶

Along with ambitions to raise money, the picnic was a great opportunity to “activar la propaganda.”⁷ Despite the exponential flux of Mexican migrants into the region, subsequent proliferation of groups in the area, and increase in interest for radicalization, regular attendance at meetings and financial support was falling.⁸ Whatever the exact reasons, this perhaps signaled a contemporaneous shift away from national events to local interests.⁹ More and more, auxiliary networks and community relations established in transient labor camps and barrios fostered anarchism. Claudio Lomnitz in *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón* wrote, “anarchist ideals took form in railcars, jungle camps, and other places of independence and refuge.”¹⁰ With Mexican migrants’ intimate sense of displacement and precarity, events like the one provided by the picnic created powerful spaces for soldering anarchism with care and culture. It was a way for families to connect and for kin-

⁴ Enrique Flores Magón. “Picnic.” *Regeneración*, no. 259. September 1, 1917. 3

⁵ Ricardo Flores Magón. “Ejemplo.” *Regeneración*. no. 260. October 6, 1917.

⁶ Untitled response to Feliciano Macías from Enrique Flores Magón, *Regeneración*, September 1, 1917, 3.

⁷ “Letter from Ricardo Flores Magón to Enrique Magón.” *East of East*. accessed April 14, 2022. <https://semapeastofeast.com/admin/items/show/266>.

⁸ Yesenia Barragan and Mark Bray. “Ricardo Flores Magón & the Anarchist Movement in El Monte, California.” Editors Guzman, Romeo, Carribean Fragoza, Alex Sayf Cummings, and Ryan Reft. *East of East: Making of Greater El Monte*. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2020). 68-73

⁹ Claudio Lomnitz. *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón*. (New York: Zone Books). 2014.

¹⁰ Ibid

before Librado was released.³⁷ Between this story and ones like the convalescence of Ricardo Flores Magón in El Monte, there is striking kinship dynamic in the San Gabriel Valley. There is an element of care here that emerges from the region throughout the PLM’s timeline.

In this house they raised Juan Rincon Jr. At young age he and Cisneros joined the revolutionary group of José María Rangel’s defense campaign in their effort fight for the labor struggle in Mexico via Texas border in 1914.³⁸ In Carrizo Spring, Texas sheriffs tracked them.³⁹ Making it to Capones Wind Mill in Dimmit County they woke up to an ambush. Shots were fired behind their backs and a comrade, Silvester Lomas, fell dead instantly.⁴⁰ The PLM workmen seized two of the assailants as the others fled and continued their march to the border.⁴¹ On confrontation with a band of rangers they released their captives and were allowed to proceed.⁴² Yet, that night, while camping in a ravine just a few hours walk from the border, a gang of “law abiding citizens” assailed them in their sleep.⁴³ *Regeneración* and *Organized Labor* both report that after Juan Rincon Jr. was shot, the antagonists tormented him with jeers and whistles as he asked for water before his passing.⁴⁴ The rest, including Cisneros, were detained in Texas.⁴⁵

However the parents might have grieved, soon after his passing though the Rincons continued to promote PLM and share their home to *Regeneración* organization. After Cisneros’s release from

³⁷ *ibid*

³⁸ Rachel Cline. “Texas Workers Face Death at Hands of Labor Exploiters.” *Organized Labor*, Volume 15, Number 32, 8 August 1914. Rachel Cline’s husband Charles Cline was the sole white American in the PLM group.

³⁹ *ibid*

⁴⁰ *Ibid*

⁴¹ *ibid*

⁴² *ibid*

⁴³ *ibid*

⁴⁴ *ibid*

⁴⁵ *ibid*

street at comrade Jose Cisneros' home.³² It is, in fact, here the first iteration of a Regeneración group was announced in the region and included members recorded to be in El Monte—just after the general announcement in *Regeneración*.³³ The Rincons, specifically Juan, Refugio, and Juan's brother Amada, had been long contributing, active, and celebrated members of the PLM.³⁴ Not only did they assume administrative roles with the rest of the San Gabriel group, but both Juan Jr. and Refugio had written important articles including Refugio's "No me extraña."³⁵

Family ties to the valley were intrinsic and organic in the PLM movement of San Gabriel Valley and Los Angeles. Ultimately, while the metropolis offered important spaces and venues to disseminate propaganda and host rallies, work was available mostly in the eastern regions of Los Angeles. But the group was assigned important roles for the newspaper and meetings of high importance took place in their homes. Why exactly the San Gabriel group and Rincons were held in such high esteem and trust is unknown, but their remains a direct line between them and the Magóns and Rivera's throughout PLM's duration in Los Angeles. The richest depictions of our historical lifeworld haunt the lacunas of everyday.

Perhaps one of the most tender moments between the PLM leaders and San Gabriel group was in 1914. While the Flores Brothers and Ricardo's closest comrade and PLM co-founding father Librado Rivera faced another prison sentence, Librado's wife, Concepción Arredondo de Rivera, was diagnosed with tuberculosis.³⁶ It was in Rincon's care that Concepción was cared for and eventually passed

³² SGV Data sheet

³³ T. Mata. "Se Multiplican los Grupos 'Regeneración.'" *Regeneración*. February 11, 1911

³⁴ "Diccionario Biográfico." <http://archivomagon.net/>. Dirección de Estudios Históricos, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

³⁵ Refugio Rincon. "No me extraña." *Regeneración*. November 11, 1911

³⁶ SGV Data sheet & "Diccionario Biográfico," <http://archivomagon.net/>, Dirección de Estudios Históricos, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia

ship formations. Perhaps through this focus on community it has taken away from the more pragmatic means of the PLM and *Regeneración*'s sustenance based on organizing resistance efforts particularly for the Mexican Revolution.

As Enrique and Teresa Magón attended the picnic as honorary guests, Teresa used the occasion to collect funerary and living funds for their La Puente neighbor, Florencia Hernández, whose husband, Pedro Hernández had passed on August 6, 1917, from a head injury sustained by a mare that bolted while he was loading propaganda into a wagon for a PLM meeting.¹¹ Helping Florencia was important for Teresa, not just as a familial gesture for a "neighbor" but as she was a *comadre* and long serving party member of PLM.¹² Nicole M. Guidotti-Hernández in *Archiving Mexican Masculinities in Diaspora* writes, "Anarchist expressions of communal loss became actionable through the monetary support of a socially marginalized, Afro Mexicana destitute widow, Florencia Hernández."¹³ Teresa was able to raise \$4.60 (\$110 today) for Florencia by articulating the importance of common struggle and more importantly the value of kinship in forming anarchist groups.¹⁴ Being that Florencia was from El Monte, the anarchist value of family is perhaps best represented in the case that the thirteen of the comrades who donated to Florencia were part of

¹¹ Florencia, first as a participant in the Regeneración de San Gabriel, organized collections at the campaign "Against the Death of Regeneration" which was to help with PLM's first financial crisis in 1914 before joining the exclusively women run and participated Luz y Vida Regeneración Group. Her and Pedro were raided by the police on April 15, 1916, under the suspicion that they were storing weapons. In the search and seizure, police destroyed what was the Regeneración de San Gabriel archive. "Diccionario Biográfico." <http://archivomagon.net/>. Dirección de Estudios Históricos, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (DEH-INAH)

¹² Nicole M. Guidotti-Hernández. *Archiving Mexican Masculinities in Diaspora*. (New York, USA: Duke University Press, 2021). 131-133

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ *ibid*

Luz Libertaria de El Monte, demonstrating their ethos of mutual aid and sharing.¹⁵

This 1917 period coincided with the greater involvement of the El Monte community in PLM efforts. Letters between the brothers indicate that in this interval Enrique labored in the orchards of El Monte and La Puente while Ricardo convalesced, swimming in San Gabriel River.¹⁶ Both were interacting with the communities of La Puente and El Monte in different ways, and this is perhaps reflected in their changing attitudes toward the movement. As Yesenia Barragan and Mark Bray write in “Ricardo Flores Magón & the Anarchist Movement in El Monte, California,” the Enrique “faced challenges experienced by any laborer in precarious, temporary work, as when he complained that the boss, “el burgués,” hadn’t paid them yet.”¹⁷ On an intimate level, while Enrique established “De la familia liberal” in *Regeneración* as a space for the PLM to mourn, commemorate, and celebrate the lives of its members, Ricardo wrote private letters to Enrique explaining that while he enjoyed his El Monte compañeros he was longing for home. From these more emotional dynamics of the brothers is a prism refracting unique visions of their anarchist ends.

Why are there two groups in El Monte where most cities have one? It is difficult not to speculate on the Magón brothers’ late involvement in the community. Only two weeks prior to Luz Libertaria’s emergence, the July 28, 1917, edition of *Regeneración* announced Tierra y Fraternidad’s formation on July 10, 1917.¹⁸ It was the September 1, 1917, edition of *Regeneración*, that

¹⁵ Barragan, 69

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ “Letter from Ricardo Flores Magón to Enrique Magón.” *East of East*. accessed April 14, 2022, <https://semapeastofeast.com/admin/items/show/266>

¹⁸ Feliciano Macías. “Nuevo grupo, El Monte California. Julio 29 de 1917.” *Regeneración*, September 1, 1917 & Ramon Andrade. “Tierra y Fraternidad.” *Regeneración*. July 28, 1917

The column published a list of members including notable, recurring characters in the San Gabriel Valley anarchist timeline like Tenorio mentioned

Years ago, Los Angeles was just a mere outpost of the San Gabriel Mission and rancho, and by 1913 it was Los Angeles’s twenty-eighth incorporated city. Along with its tardy incorporation, San Gabriel Valley to this day contains an uncanny number of unincorporated territories. A cursory investigation would reveal San Gabriel’s agricultural history and perhaps composition of the labor and settlement demographics within valley. With rapid industrialization and a pivot toward manufacturing and distribution, the hierarchies of location and production are mutable and riddled in asymmetry. One could fathom how two towns could flip roles under a decade. One could also fathom these shifts in centers from San Gabriel to Los Angeles tangential to a racial dimension.

Different than other incorporated areas however were the ability for Mexican immigrants to own housing in San Gabriel. Where in areas such as El Monte and La Puente segregation was common law, San Gabriel appears to have a less restrictive zoning ordinance. That is not to say that Mexicans in the community did not face serious discrimination. For example, in 1857, before the mission a crowd of Mexicans were assembled by the justice of peace in the region to watch Miguel Soto’s brutal execution.²⁹ Across the valley, vigilantes like the El Monte Boys, paroled and persecuted Mexicans, indigenous, and Asians indiscriminately.³⁰ While San Gabriel made landowning a possibility, other forms of violence were applied to reinforce racial order.

Just two blocks up from the mission, first theater, and across the road from the suburban developments was the home of the Rincon family at 214 S. Mission Drive.³¹ They were the first families to join *Regeneración* movement in 1911, in a house just down the

²⁹ William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb. “The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin or Descent in the United States, 1848 to 1928.” *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 2 (2003): 416. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3790404>

³⁰ Barragan, 70

³¹ SGV Data sheet

butions section members in El Monte, who were also active participants in Oxnard, Santa Paula, San Gabriel, and Los Angeles groups throughout the years. Most of the contributions from El Monte happen to be in September, which aligns with walnut harvests—the industry pervasive in El Monte.²⁴ While early formations of these groups and their members are difficult to pin down, it does appear that the San Gabriel Valley was represented by *Regeneración* de San Gabriel.

San Gabriel's fuse came by way of Pacific Electric Railway's installation in 1911, but its boom came by its incorporation to Los Angeles in 1913. This rupture in San Gabriel personified the trends and changing tides of Los Angeles in the early twentieth century. For what was a productive citrus growing region became an expansive suburban development project.²⁵ Just north of the Southern Pacific railroad was seated the San Gabriel Mission.²⁶ Mission Drive bisected the city's past and future. On the west side is a growing urban sprawl with common commercial enterprises like grocers, butchers, sundries, blacksmiths, restaurants, and saloons.²⁷ To the east are the remaining citrus groves and labor tenements with "two wash houses and a general store...Chinese peddlers brought the vegetables in one-horse wagons to the back door of every city dweller and of every farmhouse."²⁸

²⁴ Paul F. Starrs and Peter Goin. *Field Guide to California Agriculture*. Berkeley: U of California, 2010. 148-54, 208-210, 216-219.

Barragan, 68.

They write, "Tomas Mendoza sent in 60 cents on September 9, 1911. C. Martinez also sent in 1 dollar on September 21, 1912, Feliciano Macías and his compañera S. Morales sent in \$5, and an anonymous compañero also contributed an undisclosed amount on September 12, 1910"

²⁵ "City of San Gabriel: Historic Preservation and Cultural Resource Commission Special Meeting." Wednesday, June 23, 2021. <https://www.sangabrielcity.com/DocumentCenter/View/14911/62321-HPCRC-Agenda>. 40-45

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

once Tierra y Fraternidad member secretary Feliciano Macías introduced a new group's formation on July 29, 1917, called Luz Libertaria de El Monte.¹⁹ It was to be in support of Tierra y Fraternidad but also a separate group of the editor (then, Enrique Flores Magón).²⁰ The group was formed after a rally on July 28, in which Macías dedicated his house to become the new meeting place for the Sunday group meetings.²¹ Crossover from the Tierra y Fraternidad are few apart from Pedro Huerta, Ramon Romero, and Macías.

From alternate valence, there were members who lived in El Monte but participated in other groups, members who participated in El Monte groups but lived elsewhere, or members who were at some point donating to *Regeneración* from El Monte before either of

above, Jesus Aguirre who Ricardo references in his letters to Enrique, and Secretario Ramon Andrade. Ramon Andrade's election as secretary could in part be due to his enduring service to the paper and organization. Though it cannot be confirmed it was an R. Andrade who contributed 1 dollar and 5 cents in 1910, and 1 dollar on June 1, 1912. Evidence against this would show in a 1910 census him living in Essex, California around this time.

Tierra y Fraternidad included several members of his family as well, such as his wife Maria, and others of unknown relation like Angela, Consuelo, and Jesus. A 1920 census relocated him and his family to the once goldmining boomtown of Belleville, California where he worked on the Southern Pacific and Arizona Eastern Railroad Company.

Like Andrade, these families and people were never very stationary. They drifted from town to town to find seasonal work. Thus, the census is perhaps not a great indicator of where they were located, nor indications found in donation section of the newspaper. The number of relatives joining a group can also a probable explanation for these discrepancies as well. In nearly every group it is rare to find just one person attributed to a surname.

On occasion, they will only use their first initial, which only complicates the matter further.

¹⁹ Feliciano Macías. "Nuevo grupo, El Monte California. Julio 29 de 1917." *Regeneración*. September 1, 1917.

²⁰ ibid

²¹ ibid

the groups' existences.²² Florencia Hernandez's case is not unique in that often groups of one region will support and aid someone as distant as a mother of a fallen militant in Mexico. These seemingly random connections convey a different side of anarchist revolution.²³ Long-lasting affiliations with several groups symbolize anarchy's commitment to community support for networks of migrant families that are always on the move. It also points to the conditions of the barrios. Established for workers, they were often empty when the city's crop was not in season. Midway through the 1910s, to stay competitive crop shares changed their products to remain viable all year. This required year-around labor and the formation of more sedentary neighborhoods. Under these new conditions, families established community support and kinship networks to survive harsh migrant conditions in the United States.

Whether intentional or not Luz Libertaria's formation at the end of July was created as an alternative to El Monte's *Tierra y Fraternidad* established only a few weeks earlier, could be reflective of IWW affiliations, or separation between different barrios in El

²² Benita Televera, who lived in South El Monte, first appeared in a 1910 fundraiser for the mother of Juan Sarabia (one of the founding members of PLM who was arrested in Mexico during the Diaz reign) before joining the Luz y Vida party in 1915. Tomas Mendoza, who contributed sixty cents on September 9, 1911, to the newspaper from El Monte, was affiliated with the Santa Paula the Lázaro S. Alanís Regeneration Group of Santa Paula—an active group in early PLM days of Southern California and where Ricardo gave his 1914 speech, “El miedo de la burguesía es la causa de la Intervención.” Also, from the Lázaro S. Alanís Regeneración Group of Santa Paula, was a man named Ancension Martinez who contribute to the newspaper on September 12, 1910, and September 21, 1912, from El Monte. Before his participation in Santa Paula, he was a founding member of the Oxnard group, then joined the one in San Gabriel after Santa Paula. In 1915, it was at his and his partner Elisa Martinez's house that the Luz y Vida group was born along with their child in June 1917. “Diccionario Biográfico,” <http://archivo-magon.net/>, Dirección de Estudios Históricos, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

²³ For example, the multiple fundraisers, such as Fundraiser for Sarabia or for Cuban prisoners, which went beyond national borders

Monte, or Enrique's attention away from Ricardo's revolutionary efforts—one that was at odds with his frustration with the contemporaneous outcomes of the Mexican Revolution. By February 1917, the Mexican Constitution was adopted by Constitutionalist Governor of Coahuila, Venustiano Carranza. The constitution provided for liberalist ideals such as the separation of Church and state, government ownership of the subsoil, holding of land by communal groups, and the right of labor to organize and strike. While many of the laws were modeled off Ricardo's positions, it was far from what he wanted. The fight for liberation and dissemination was a commitment for Ricardo. As communities of El Monte and others in region required more attention, balancing revolution and community would always be a difficult task.

While revolutionary anarchism was fading by the time PLM emerged in El Monte, the values and purpose of anarchism remained in the formation of new, sedentary communities. In the years following PLM's dissolution, anarchism would not remain center-stage as the organizing body or mentality behind groups in El Monte and San Gabriel Valley. But the foundation was set, and spirit lasted for decades to come. Unions of families, collectives, and people were fostered, supported, and flourishing because of the PLM, *Regeneración*, and the Magón family. The dynamics of anarchism can be as complicated as families, but equally as meaningful and important.

Ideal Emancipators: Early years of PLM in the San Gabriel Valley

While PLM did not formalize a *Regeneración* group in El Monte until 1917, barrios there often served as temporary homes for the Mexican families finding seasonal labor. For years, the families and laborers were itinerant, some traveling as far as Merced to find employment. In the early years of PLM, we see in *Regeneración* contri-