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Shelley Fisher Fishkin Prize

Internationalism and Its Limits

DAVID STRUTHERS

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An hour before Emma Goldman took the stage of Los Angeles's Burbank Hall in May 1907 for the first of four lectures in the city, an enthusiastic crowd filled the building's seven hundred seats despite the refusal of the *Los Angeles Times* to print a paid advertisement for the event. The occasion marked Goldman's return to the "Sunny City" after last visiting in 1898, and she remembered it fondly: "If I have accomplished nothing more than to rekindle the enthusiasm of our long-lost brother, W. C. Owen, my work at Los Angeles has been amply rewarded." She continued with high praise for the English immigrant anarchist, "Few of our young readers and comrades are familiar with that name, but those of us who remember such intellectual towers as Dyer D. Lum and John Edelman will recollect W. C. Owen as one of the ablest and ardent workers in the movement at that period." Goldman's visit prompted anarchists in Los Angeles to organize the Social Science Club to "form a nucleus for further educational work" with the support of "fifty-five charter members."¹ That July, Goldman traveled with Max Baginski to the International Anarchist Conference in Amsterdam, where she shared her thoughts on the state of the anarchist movement in the United States gathered during her recent cross-country speaking tour. She reported to her comrades that "anarchist agitation in the United States is being carried on in almost all the various languages spoken in this country, including Japanese, Armenian, etc."²

Locally, in Los Angeles, the disparate pieces of an interracial and multilingual community of solidarity came together in 1907. In March the African American preacher and socialist orator George Washington Woodbey established an office for "the next two or three months" across the Los Angeles River from the plaza on Lamar Street.³ The Pozzo Construction Company erected Italian Hall, a new center for the local Italian community that

also hosted radical speakers, a block from the plaza on North Macy and Main Streets the same year.⁴ Ricardo Flores Magón and Enrique Flores Magón contributed to the breadth of the radical community when they surfaced publicly in 1907. The brothers had surreptitiously arrived in Los Angeles in autumn 1906 after a continent-stretching journey attempting to escape agents of the Mexican president Porfirio Díaz.⁵

The racial diversity of workers who lived or passed through Los Angeles increased as the city's population expanded. The city's political left unevenly reflected these demographic trends. Organizing by Mexicans, African Americans, Japanese, and other non-Anglos pushed their diverse agendas, while many white-led organizations also learned how to draw upon this racial diversity in locally rooted organizing practices to forge new alliances and create more inclusive movements. However, the racism and nationalism of whites continued to draw lines of exclusion. Consistent with California's past, whites directed their most vehement racism against the increasingly diverse Asian population: Chinese, Japanese, and South Asian. Internationalist ideals reached their limit unevenly across ideology, individuals, and organization, but their limit was race. Leftists who raised their voices to challenge racism through strident appeals to internationalism moderated this trend and created space for institutional multiracial organizing in Los Angeles.

As George Fredrickson noted, the word "racism" was adopted in the 1930s to "describe the theories on which the Nazis based their persecution of the Jews." He built a contextual understanding of racism more specific than its being "merely an attitude or set of beliefs," holding that racism "also expresses itself in the practices, institutions, and structures that a sense of deep difference justifies or validates." Fredrickson continued, "Racism, therefore, is more than theorizing about human differences or thinking badly of a group over which one has no control. It either directly sustains or proposes to establish a racial order."⁶ The extension and then denial of AFL institutional resources based on race discussed in chapter 3 reflected the maintenance of a Anglo-dominated racial order within the labor movement. While most people, leftists included, held deeply racialized understandings of people, radicals tended to focus on the relative organizability of people according to race, which often led to positive conclusions drawn from the labor militancy of Japanese, Mexicans, and Italians. Local forms of internationalism gave rise to interracial solidarities in Los Angeles in an environment of continually lurking racism on the left, which draw out the racial understandings of Anglos and their manifestation in maintaining or refuting the Anglo-dominated racial order. The events examined document challenges to and the continuation of race-based decisions within leftist movements. The challengers sought to reconfigure the racial order in the United States and around the world through internationalism; others reached more limited conclusions with their use of an internationalism mired in race and nation.

The Growth of the Institutional Left in Los Angeles

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The formation of the Mexican branch of the Socialist Party marked the first time a nonwhite group created an institutional home in a white-led leftist organization in Los

Angeles. The Mexican branch chartered in 1907 and grew into a major forum for Mexican working-class organizing in Los Angeles. Lead organizers Rafael Carmona, a Spaniard, and Lázaro Gutiérrez de Lara, recently arrived from Mexico, contributed greatly to its success, and their enthusiasm gathered new members. They spoke Sunday afternoons on the plaza and taught a socialist night school for Mexicans and Spaniards in the Socialist Party reading room.⁷ The socialist newspaper *Common Sense* credited the men with the growth of the branch and complimented Gutiérrez de Lara for his “fast improving in the use of the English language.”⁸ Anselmo Figueroa also actively participated in it. The leaders of the Club Liberal Justicia and the Mexican Branch of the Socialist Party, less Rafael Carmona, all assumed various roles in the Partido Liberal Mexicano as it regathered in Los Angeles in 1907. In southern California and Arizona grassroots organization-blending agitation by Mexicans associated with the PLM, IWW, and Socialist Party moved forward between 1906 and 1907.⁹ All the while Anglo acceptance of Mexicans on equal terms remained elusive.

In keeping with its mission to educate as well as organize, in 1906 the socialist paper *Common Sense* ran a series of articles on political economy “to lay bare the fallacies taught in a textbook on political economy now in wide use in American schools.” Lesson 21, on “our peon population,” began in the language of turn-of-the-century social science by asserting that one does not have to travel to the packinghouses of Chicago to find the “inhumanity and essential criminality of the profit system. In fact we do not need to leave Los Angeles.” The author compared Mexican contract laborers from Michoacán, “where most of this class for labor has been secured,” imported to work on the tracks of both the steam and local electric railroad companies to the more common vision of industrial exploitation in Chicago. The analysis noted the structural position of Mexican laborers in the regional economy and presented them as victims of American capitalism like workers in a packinghouse. But their sympathetic treatment struck a distinctly racist tone when the author argued, “The American laborer hated him for lowering the American standard of wages and living to a Mexican standard.”¹⁰

In the minds of the article’s white socialist readership this surely conjured the more restrained structural critiques of Chinese immigration, but the difference rested in the authors’ attributing their perceived deficiencies of Mexican workers to the ills of capitalism. They were not determined by race. This left open the possibility that through education and organizing these “problems” could be overcome, and many white socialists created the space for this change to occur within their own organization. Mexicans and other nonwhites could achieve a salvation of sorts in the eyes of Anglo socialists through the adoption of socialist ideals.

Attaining this salvation remained elusive as Mexican organizing continued to brush against the persistent racism of the Anglo-led Socialist Party. Editors of *Common Sense* had indeed once chided their readers, “We feel rather ashamed for the ‘white’ Irish-Dutch-Anglo-Saxon combination of ‘superior’ beings that can’t show up at business meetings” to complement the Mexican Branch’s strong participation.¹¹ *Common Sense* also wrote about the “Cholo Lawyer,” referencing Lázaro Gutiérrez de Lara, addressing a crowd of twenty-

three in the socialist reading room.¹² This derogatory reference to the well-educated Gutiérrez de Lara resonated differently from the comment about “‘superior’ beings.” When the paper referred to Gutiérrez de Lara, it often took pains to emphasize his education as a way to distinguish him from Mexican laborers, downplaying his race through his education. Even as the socialists enthusiastically welcomed the Mexican Branch into their organization, this acceptance was not on equal terms. Similarly, a few years later Emma Goldman’s anarchist magazine *Mother Earth* referenced Gutiérrez de Lara as “a cultured Mexican.”¹³ What many white leftists viewed as the ignorance of peon laborers often took on clear racial meanings, but most people in the anarchist, syndicalist, and socialist movements allowed for a greater degree of flexibility than that found in the broader society. In this case, through education and participation in the Socialist Party, Mexicans could overcome negative categorizations. Perhaps.

Although the Socialist Party had very few African American members and did not have an African American section like the Mexican Branch, George Washington Woodbey found an outwardly welcome home in the Socialist Party and gained a remarkable public voice in Los Angeles and San Diego. In spring 1907, *Common Sense* credited Woodbey for African American workers in Los Angeles “beginning to sit up and take notice.”¹⁴ Woodbey also participated in a broad conversation over leftist tactics. After Emma Goldman visited in 1907 he criticized her lecture on direct action at a public gathering at the lot at 5th and Los Angeles Streets. In this speech he laid out his vision of struggle as distinct from Goldman’s. The preacher argued for a combination of “direct and political action,” setting his brand of socialism apart from her anarchism.¹⁵

Woodbey supported his position by arguing that Abraham Lincoln’s election resulted in the end of slavery, and that Civil War “only opened the way for political action in connection with the constitutional amendments and reconstruction.” This position did not grow from any sort of provincialism on the part of Woodbey. He showed his worldly knowledge with further examples of leftist political action: craft-union men belonged to the Socialist Party in Germany and “the advice to refrain from violence and use caution must have come from the unions themselves who thought it wise to wait and get possession of the guns by political action.” He also spoke out against anti-immigration sentiment within the Socialist Party and in the country at large. But in the end Woodbey’s emphasis on electoral politics wedded his proposed direction of struggle to citizens of the United States with voting rights, a similar focus as the Anglo-dominated Socialist Party.¹⁶

Woodbey engaged national politics in the same period that he critiqued Emma Goldman. He gave two speeches in response to Senator Benjamin “Pitchfork” Tillman of South Carolina. He spoke both in Burbank Hall and out of doors, again at Fifth and Los Angeles Streets. Woodbey argued that the senator erred in his belligerent racism because he “ignores the economic phase of the question. The labor question is at the bottom of the race question. ... The negro is an exploited workingman first and a negro afterwards.” Woodbey continued his line of reasoning by holding that “the negro, once despised as a chattel slave, is now despised as a wage slave along with the white, yellow and brown wage slaves.” He went on to say that “the black capitalist is no better than the white capitalist,”

which asked African Americans to question putting racial solidarity over class solidarity and what would constitute racial uplift.¹⁷ He shared his insistence on valorizing class-based organizing, believing that race was secondary to class exploitation with the vast majority of the Left when they considered race at all. Woodbey's views on race and class, in turn, reinforced this view for many white socialists in Los Angeles.

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A Change in Tone? Arguments over Japanese Exclusion

The "Gentlemen's Agreement" between the United States and Japan limiting Japanese immigration made 1907 a watershed year for racial politics. This increased the importance of the growing institutional presence of multiracial leftist organizations in Los Angeles shaped by socialist internationalism. Many whites looked to internationalism, one of many alternatives to nationalism, to see racial difference in their own community through the principle of international solidarity. Yet the internationalism of most socialists also strengthened the nation as the operating entity of international solidarity. Combined, this terrain continued to be fertile ground for racism and nationalism among socialists.

Public interest in the winter of 1907 toward Japanese immigration increased pending the "Gentleman's Agreement," and the Socialist Party in California agreed to hold a referendum of its members to determine socialists' support. This generated an extended public debate within the party and showed in striking terms the interplay between the international ideal, nation-based thinking, and the racism of many white socialists. The January 12, 1907, issue of *Common Sense* ran as its masthead an excerpt of August Bebel's address to the jury in his 1872 trial: "The capitalist does not ask if the workingman whom he exploits speaks German or Swedish, English or French, or if he has a white, or black or yellow skin. Against this 'international' exploitation of the workingman there is only one remedy: 'The international fraternization of the exploited.'"¹⁸ This quote framed two articles on Japanese immigration.

Cloudesley Johns, a prominent Los Angeles socialist, believed it "necessary for the triumph of the world movement for the emancipation of the working class that there should be international class solidarity. ... That is an assertion, and no Socialist will deny its truth." Johns continued a line of reasoning shared by many socialists that acknowledged the high ideal of internationalism but compromised as a local expedient. He argued that aside from a shared class, workers have "modes of conduct and thought which create friction between the different blood." He supported his argument by connecting Japanese immigrants on the West Coast to the American Civil War, noting that "several million men of an alien race, which previously had existed in the condition of domestic animals, were made the political equals of their late masters." He then treated the "race" question as being on equal terms as the opposition of the capitalist and worker, finding that "almost every effective step in the direction of a solution has been through the cultivating of the feeling of independence in the blacks, tending to make them withdraw from close contact with the whites." He attributed this factor as being causal in what he viewed as the slow growth of socialism in

the South. He based his final analysis on the simple thought that there were “only so many ‘good’ jobs offered the workers; the number is less than the number of white workers on the Coast. Ergo, each Jap that secures a ‘good’ job here deprives a worker of our own race of such a job.” He never questioned the assumption that race should constitute a worker’s first line of solidarity and warned that with unchecked Japanese immigration California would have a “race” problem like that of the South.¹⁹

Kasper Bauer responded to Johns with a strident “Defense of Internationalism.” He claimed that the state convention holding the referendum “destroyed, in the minds of many of our younger comrades, a goodly portion of their sense of the fitness of things.” He pointed to an earlier moment of globalization than his own to explain Asian immigration: “When European capitalism broke down Oriental seclusion and established the world-market, it followed the law of its existence: it compelled not only the mingling of commodities but of men also.” Further, he argued, “It would be futile for anyone to make a ‘race problem’ out of the capitalist necessity to exploit foreign markets, just as it is fundamentally wrong to construe our civil war into an attempt to solve a race problem.” He concluded with a challenge to his comrades, asking them: “Are we going to help to develop the instinct and run it deeper and deeper into the mire of race, and finally national prejudice, or are we going to stand firmly by Socialist truths and do our duty in developing the intelligence of the worker?”²⁰ Bauer separated race and nation through internationalism while criticizing socialists’ anti-immigration positions as joining race to nation. He argued against racist nationalism and restrictive immigration policies as a protective measure for the white working class on the West Coast. He saw the alternative as socialist internationalism.

The debate continued, and one of the newly formed Social Science Club’s first public discussions also addressed Japanese exclusion. *Common Sense* reported that the “exclusionists were in hopeless minority” but they “had able defenders” in John Murray and John Kenneth Turner.²¹ It is important to remember that Murray was a tireless supporter of the Japanese Mexican Labor Association in Oxnard, and he and Turner would soon become the most active Anglo socialist supporters of the Partido Liberal Mexicano. Both men supported the PLM, before siding with Francisco Madero in 1911, and continued involvement in the Mexican cause generally for years thereafter. Turner went as far as gathering arms for the Baja rebellion in 1910 and early 1911. What at first glance seems like a contradiction on the part of Turner evidences his view of the relative racial positioning of Mexicans against Japanese. In the case of Murray, bettering the condition of “American” workers remained his first priority, of which his conceptualization did not include Asians. Perhaps Murray viewed curtailing Japanese immigration as necessary to reduce “surplus” labor and increase the bargaining power of workers already on the West Coast. Tellingly, however, not once did the group debate the question of European immigration.

Craft labor in Los Angeles continued to rely on Asian laborers as its “indispensable enemy.” Los Angeles’s union weekly, the *Citizen*, held that “American manhood requires American ideals. Reduce the common man to the level of the Chinaman or Japanese, and teach him to be content with their standards of living, and the debasement of American

manhood must follow.”²² With their racism well established, the extent to which the *Citizen* justified its anti-immigration positions is striking. Once, the paper compared its own opposition to Japanese immigration to a “certain episode” in Japan’s imperial expansion when “Japanese manufacturers imported cheap Chinese coolly labor under contract.” The paper reported that the “Japanese workers promptly protested,” which resulted in the expulsion of the Chinese workers.²³

However, the *Citizen* enthusiastically reported that Rafael Carmona spoke on “behalf of the Mexican laborers and for the Mexican workingmen’s paper [*Regeneración*] published in Los Angeles.” It held that “Mr. Carmona is a very enthusiastic and persistent worker and is having good success. He is well educated and also knows how the Mexicans live and what they need.”²⁴ Further evidence of the divergent views toward African Americans, Japanese, and Mexicans in the Los Angeles AFL.

Many socialists and anarchists wrote against anti-Asian agitation within their movement and in society as a whole. The San Francisco-based paper the *Emancipator* described its politics: “This Paper has no right to call itself an organ of ‘The Industrial Workers of the World,’ but it stands as an advocate of industrial unionism.”²⁵ For all intents and purposes, though, it was an anarchist newspaper and regularly carried articles by prominent anarchists, including Ludovico Caminita, an Italian in Paterson, New Jersey, during its short life between 1906 and 1907. Caminita later moved to Los Angeles to organize with the PLM in 1910 and 1911. In May 1907 the *Emancipator* ran an article showing the potential of interracial support: “We Denounce the Mexican Czarism” as it condemned the rule of Porfirio Díaz and declared, “The cause of the victims of the Dictator of Mexico is our cause.”²⁶ While it dedicated a large part of this four-page issue to Mexico, it also reprinted a translation from the Japanese socialist paper *Kakumei* (*Revolution*) from Berkeley.

The editor of the *Emancipator* expressed his pleasure in printing the article as a way to show “our sentiments of fraternity to our Japanese brothers.” In the article, Kiichi Kaneko, a Japanese socialist who immigrated in 1899 and assisted his wife Josephine Conger-Kaneko in editing the *Socialist Women*, considered the relationship between white socialists and Japanese immigrants.²⁷ He recalled, “Some time ago I was asked by a Japanese friend in Tokio to express what I think of the American Socialist’s attitude toward the Japanese situation in San Francisco.” Kaneko continued, “I am not, of course, to represent here the Japanese people and their interests at large. The reason is that I, as an individual, gave up my old country a long time ago, and I do not care any longer to be a subject of any particular nation. In other words, I am a plain Socialist.” After presenting an internationalist ideal as the highest goal of socialism, he critiqued his white comrades for not living up to it: “So far as I know, not a single Socialist paper in this country spoke out plainly on this Japanese question without showing race prejudice.” Further, he declared: “Their socialism is American socialism, and not scientific socialism. It is national socialism, but not international socialism.”²⁸ Kaneko clearly articulated the limitation of internationalism tied to nations with racial orders among whites on the West Coast.

In the article, he also responded to criticism of excessive Japanese patriotism by white socialists, arguing that “Japanese are more radical, more revolutionary, and less patriotic than are American comrades,” evidenced by a letter of solidarity that Japanese socialists sent to their Russian comrades during the height of the Russo-Japanese War. Kiichi Kaneko concluded his article with hope that “all American Socialists will give up ‘America’ just as I did ‘Japan,’ and come to real, international, scientific socialism, and shake hands with all people of all climates without any prejudice and distinction.” The editor of the *Emancipator* then added his thoughts on the subject. He railed against the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League, calling its leaders “thugs, crooks and grafters” before ending with the following declaration: “Before the socialists of the world, without distinction of races, colors or nationalities, we affirm that the International Solidarity among the workers and thinkers of the world is the ‘sine qua non’ of Socialism.”²⁹

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Race, Chinese, and the PLM

When PLM leaders finished writing down their vision for change in Mexico in 1906, they ended up with a fifty-two-point *Programa y Manifesta*. The document reflected the organizational position of the PLM at the time; even though its members were anarchists and socialists, they outlined a reformist agenda for Mexico. The *Programa* included two planks, fifteen and sixteen, under the heading *Extranjeros* (Foreigners). These two planks did not receive special emphasis among a host of constitutional and land-reform measures put forth by the PLM at the height of its liberal public presentation. Plank 15 read: “Prescription that by the sole fact of acquiring landed property foreigners lose their former nationality and become Mexican citizens.”³⁰ In the extended *Exposición* published at the same time, the PLM justified its stance as follows: “It is unnecessary to declare in the program that under equal conditions preference has to be given to the Mexican over the foreigner, because that is already consigned in our constitution. As an efficacious means to avoid foreign preponderance and to guarantee the integrity of our territory, nothing seems to be more convenient than the naturalization as Mexican citizens of such foreigners as acquire landed property.”³¹ This plank had a degree of progressiveness, providing citizenship and legal participation in Mexican society to immigrants who purchased land, but it still maintained a strong focus on Mexico as a nation, seeking to limit the potential of foreign influence and outside loyalty.

Plank 16 of their program sought simply to “Prohibit Chinese Immigration.” They also justified this position in the *Exposición*: “The prohibition of Chinese immigration is before all a measure of protection for the workingmen of other nationalities, and principally of Mexico. The Chinaman, generally disposed to work at the lowest wages, submissive, small in aspirations, is a great obstacle for the prosperity of the other workingmen. His competency is lamentable and must be avoided in Mexico. Generally speaking, the Chinese immigration to Mexico does not produce the least bit of benefit.”³² The PLM framed its opposition to Chinese immigration in terms of economic protectionism while

simultaneously positioning Chinese immigrants at the bottom of a racial and national hierarchy. Taken together, these two planks aimed directly at two interconnected processes in Porfirian Mexico that distinguish the anti-Chinese position of the PLM, which fit within broader Mexican *antichinismo*, from the dominant strains of anti-Chinese hostility in the United States. Immigrant numbers in Mexico grew through the late nineteenth century, facilitated in part by open immigration laws. The Porfirian administration saw immigration as a way to “undermine indigenous resistance” and to feed its national colonization project.³³ Chinese immigrants became the primary human face of these policies as “*motores de sangre*” (engines of blood).³⁴ Jason Chang argued that “the Porfirian administration introduced Chinese men as racialized instruments of policy in order to expand and deepen the power of the state through the expansion of infrastructure projects.”³⁵ By the outbreak of the revolution in 1910, Mexicans indelibly associated Chinese with “Porfirian national colonization and assumed to involve support for its underlying ideologies of Indian racism and widespread dispossession.”³⁶

The PLM’s *Programa y Manifiesta* reflected these broader processes and sought to combat the long history of land dispossession of Mexicans and of foreign, largely U.S.–based, investment-driven economic development under Porfirio Díaz.³⁷ Taking aim at foreign land ownership and immigration was taking aim at the Porfiriato. Through its existence, the PLM most consistently advanced the belief that access to land provided the foundation for a world changed in their vision: *Tierra y Libertad*. This core PLM belief, often connected to indigenous resistance, varied from that of other anarchists who were more focused on urban and industrial workers. These differences contributed to the discord among anarchists after the failure of the Baja raids in 1911. The *Programa* shared in the broader sweep of *antichinismo* in Mexico, which created a different premise for the PLM’s anti-Chinese position from that of whites on the West Coast of the United States.

Little is known of the internal debate surrounding the formulation of the PLM’s platform, but fragments of dissent remain in the historical record. The Club Liberal Justicia in Los Angeles published the *Programa y Manifiesta* in *El Mosquito* in August 1906 but did not reprint it in full. Most significantly it skipped over the plank seeking to end Chinese immigration. The group did not provide an explanation to its readers for the omission. The following year *Common Sense* published an English translation of the *Programa*, including the anti-Chinese plank.³⁸

The internal dynamics regarding planks 15 and 16 took an interesting turn when the PLM managed to begin publishing *Regeneración* again in 1910.³⁹ The first new issue (November 26, 1910) reprinted the *Programa* in Spanish without the anti-Chinese plank. A translation on *Regeneración*’s English page, edited by Alfred Sanftleben, included the anti-Chinese plank. A month later an English translation of the longer explanative document, the *Exposición*, ran over three issues and again included the anti-Chinese plank.⁴⁰ *Regeneración* did not print an explanation for the discrepancy, but its inclusion in English certainly made the Mexican rebels more palatable to Anglo socialists and trade unionists by giving them

another shared enemy, Chinese. The English page also reflected Alfred Sanftleben's editorial hand more so than the that of the junta.

The different content in Spanish and English is also a window into the PLM's complicated position trying to organize for revolution in Mexico and also to appeal for support in the United States. The PLM reached out to a broad range of Americans, from craft labor to anarchists, which shaped much of its public rhetoric. For the PLM leaders who looked to socialism for guidance, such as Antonio Villarreal, Lázaro Gutiérrez de Lara, and Juan and Manuel Sarabia, their thinking on both planks probably connected to their view of Mexico as backward economically and needing to progress along a fixed industrial development path.⁴¹ After splitting with the socialist members during the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution and the Baja raids, those who remained in the PLM publicly identified as anarchists and their commitment to internationalism and antistatism grew stronger.

The explicitly anarchist manifesto the PLM printed after the failure of the Baja raids in 1911 did not mention Chinese. The document held, "The Partido Liberal Mexicano recognizes that every human being, by the simple fact of coming to life, has the right to enjoy each and every one of the advantages that modern civilization offers, because these advantages are the product of the effort and sacrifice of the working class in all ages."⁴² Although the PLM never publicly retracted the earlier anti-Chinese plank, the differences between the 1906 and 1911 documents illustrated the evolution of the PLM's political presentation. The timing of this change is crucial. Jason Chang wrote that as Mexico "burst into revolt in 1910, anti-Chinese politics became intertwined with the articulation of a state-sponsored brand of racial nationalism centered on an abstract racial figure, the mestizo."⁴³ That is, as anti-Chinese politics moved to the front and center of a racialized political discourse during the Mexican Revolution, the PLM articulated a distinct vision of revolutionary interracial antistatism.

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The PLM in Los Angeles

In August 1907 Thomas Furlong, along with two employees of his private detective firm and two Los Angeles police detectives, arrested Ricardo Flores Magón, Antonio Villarreal, and Librado Rivera in a house on East Pico Street without a warrant. The men put up a tremendous fight, fearing they would be spirited across the border to a certain death. The *Los Angeles Times* celebrated the capture of the men and noted that detectives "tracked [them] from one end of the Western Hemisphere to the other, with the fate and welfare of a great nation hanging in their capture." The article continued, "For three years the officers have searched for the men. From the jungles of Southern Mexico to the frozen acres of Hudson Bay." Mexico's ambassador to the United States, Enrique Creel, underscored the importance attached to this event when he traveled to Los Angeles upon hearing the news.⁴⁴

The kidnapping of Western Federation of Miners (WFM) leaders William Haywood, Charles Moyer, and George Pettibone remained fresh in the minds of the labor and radical

movement in the United States at the time of the PLM leaders' capture. The fate of the WFM men captivated the Left after officials in Colorado and Idaho colluded in their arrest and illegally transported them across state lines in 1906. Nationally, the socialist, labor, and anarchist press carried a steady stream of articles, and the local movement in Los Angeles organized a number of rallies throughout the year and a half that the WFM men sat in jail awaiting trial. Haywood was the first tried and the first acquitted in 1907. Pettibone's trial came next; the jury returned the same not-guilty verdict. The state declined to try Moyer after these two embarrassing failures.⁴⁵

The risk that the American officials would permit Mexican agents to take the men across the border drew obvious parallels. *Common Sense* noted that "local labor in the political and economic field seems to realize the threatening danger in a case equal in importance to the Moyer-Haywood-Pettibone case, which made through precedent kidnapping legal and refusal of habeas corpus between state and state, while the present incident might create the same precedent of legalizing the kidnapping of champions of labor between nation and nation, making labor's bondage truly international by outlawing and disfranchising the toilers."⁴⁶ This declaration placed the Mexicans' cause on equal ground with that of the Anglo labor leaders, and local leftists now had something close to home to fight for. After the men lingered for eleven months in the Los Angeles County Jail, *Common Sense* saw the case of the Mexican rebels as "an excellent inter-nation parallel to the inter-state Moyer-Haywood affair."⁴⁷ The paper also connected the arrest of the Mexican rebels to events in Mexico when it declared its opposition to the "introduction of Mexican justice and Colorado mine-owners' methods for Cananea purposes into this state of ours."⁴⁸

The broad-based community support for the PLM immediately became apparent after the men's arrests, and it continued to build as they sat in jail. The Socialist Party organized a meeting in Burbank Hall on September 1 to publicize the case. A. R. Holston, one of the socialist attorneys representing the men, spoke, as did Lázaro Gutiérrez de Lara, followed by comrades Newerf, Sanftleben, Lauff, and Rafael Carmona. A "short talk in Spanish to a strong delegation of Mexican labor at the meeting was interpreted to the American comrades by our foreign correspondent," Alfred Sanftleben. *Common Sense* reported that on the same afternoon as the meeting in Burbank Hall "our Mexican Brethren of toil held an open-air meeting at the Plaza."⁴⁹

Supporters of the PLM raised legal defense money, used their media to spread word of the injustice, and held protests and meetings. One thousand people, roughly half Mexican, attended another in the series of mass meetings that November. Plainclothes detectives and uniformed officers also joined the gathering. A band opened the event by playing the "national hymn of Mexico." The rousing evening included performances by a "Mexican string band" and "fifteen or twenty Mexican children on the stage," which "lent picturesqueness to the scene." After a speaker addressed the crowded hall in Spanish, John Murray read several letters of support, including one from "the aged" abolitionist and

suffragist Caroline M. Severance. A. R. Holston then spoke forcefully about “the despotism that is driving the workers of the world into one camp regardless of color, race or creed.”⁵⁰

A consortium of members of the PLM, Socialist Party, Socialist Labor Party, and IWW Local 12 formed the Mexican Defense Funds Committee in Los Angeles in 1908 “in order to centralize all actions, concentrate all efforts and simplify all procedures” in organizing the legal defense of the imprisoned men. In January 1908, George Pettibone traveled to Los Angeles, hoping that the climate would help him recuperate from the toll that imprisonment in Idaho exacted on his body. While in the city, he stopped by the jail with the famed attorney Clarence Darrow to visit and offer his support to the imprisoned PLM leaders. The prisoners remained in Los Angeles County Jail until the authorities extradited them to Arizona in March 1909.⁵¹

Coalition Building and Internationalism

The growth of the socialist and anarchist movements in Los Angeles undergirded its ability to support the jailed Mexican rebels and created a broad-based community of solidarity. The local movement reflected immigration patterns to Los Angeles, and each increasingly diversified. The immigration process itself and then experiencing racial and ethnic diversity in Los Angeles greatly expanded the complexion and outlook of movements. When people gathered in Los Angeles’s streets and meeting halls, their knowledge of the world and the international movement infused their gatherings.

...

The affinities of anarchists continued to fuel the strongest interracial solidarities. In July 1910, *Mother Earth* informed its readers about “our energetic comrade” T. Takahashi’s newspaper the *Proletarian*, published in Chicago in Japanese and English. The article in the most prominent English-language anarchist magazine in the country stated that Takahashi “strives to acquaint his readers with the modern ideas of Anarchism and to free them from jingoism.” *Mother Earth* printed an excerpt of an article from the *Proletarian* that read: “Recent conditions prevailing among the Japanese workers on the western coast are deplorable. A vast throng flocked in front of an employment agency seeking a job even in mid-summer. The active anti-Japanese movement for the last three years has been effective enough to drive them out of certain districts and concerns. The movement employs a cowardly and sneaking method, even using means of violence. Japanese are attacked in day time openly on the streets of the western metropolis and no one interferes.” The article closed with “Let us unite! Not only in words, for unless our unity develops into action, the emancipation of wage slaves cannot be accomplished. Salvation lies in the unity of workmen regardless of race or color!”⁵²

One of the clearest examples of solidarity between anarchists in the United States and Japan came through the international effort to save the life of Kōtoku Shūsui and his comrades from execution by the Japanese state. Crucially, the linkages between the

movements came through personal connections. Kōtoku met Leopold Fleischmann while the war correspondent was in Japan covering the Russo-Japanese War. Fleischmann then put Kōtoku in touch with anarchists in California. This blossomed into Kōtoku traveling on the West Coast of the United States for roughly six months in 1905 and 1906.⁵³

The most interesting aspect of his visit is that he managed to negotiate any divisions between American or European immigrant radicals and the Japanese community. Kōtoku wrote articles for *Nichibei Shimbun* (*Japanese American News*), gave speeches, attended study groups, and helped form the Shakai Kakumeito (Social Revolutionary Party). He met with “the atheist Kidder, with the socialist Eitel, with the Swedish anarchist Widen, with the American anarchist Pyburn, with the socialist organizer George Williams, with Anthony of the IWW, and with a series of others, and, of course with Albert Johnson.”⁵⁴ In Oakland he met with members of the newly formed IWW local.

The *People's Paper* reprinted an article in 1911 from the *Socialist Woman*, edited by Josephine Conger-Kaneko, that summarized Kōtoku's agitation for its Anglo readership. It read in part that Kōtoku felt “the futility of political action in their native country where the universal franchise is unknown, he became a ‘direct actionist,’ something akin to the I. W. W.'s in this country” after his visit to the United States.⁵⁵

Kōtoku used his time to study the American situation:

The street-corner speeches of the local white men's socialist party have also again and again been broken up by the police. Of course, the police do not have the authority to prohibit these speeches. But they always find all sorts of pretexts for their obstruction. Needless to say, speech and press for atheism or anarchism are always subjected to the most severe shackling. One comrade, a white, told me in his indignation: “America is a land of liberty for the rich and the religionists. The way the workers are persecuted and oppressed here makes America not the tiniest bit different from Russia or Japan. Just look, look at the scars over shoulders! That's from the beating the police gave me.” How can liberty exist, how can popular rights exist in a place where the capitalist class exists, where the landlord class exists!⁵⁶

Upon returning to Japan, Kōtoku resumed agitating in his home country, which eventually led to his arrest and a death sentence along with his partner Kanno Sugako and ten other comrades. The radical press around the world and in the United States published an array of appeals. Hutchins Hapgood, Leonard Abbott, Emma Goldman, Hippolyte Havel, Sadakichi Hartmann, Alexander Berkman, and Dr. Ben L. Reitman signed one of the most widely published, which appeared in many publications including the *Industrial Worker* and funneled donations through *Mother Earth*.⁵⁷

Leftists in Los Angeles supported their Japanese comrades with equal enthusiasm. In January 1911 the Socialist Proletariat Club of Los Angeles organized a “Monster Protest” in support that the German Socialist Maennerchor (Men's Choir) opened in song. At the

protest meeting a number of local socialists, IWW members, and anarchists spoke out against the looming executions. The IWW attorney Fred Moore spoke in English along with Charles Sprading. Fernando Velarde traveled from Phoenix, Arizona, to express solidarity on behalf of the PLM in Spanish. Leopold Fleischmann concluded the evening telling of “his acquaintance with the Japanese Socialists” and reading from his personal correspondence with Kōtoku.⁵⁸ Expressions of solidarity reached beyond North America. In Ancona, Italy, an anarchist group, called the *circoloanarchico* “Kutoki,” formed.⁵⁹ Ultimately, the efforts failed to spare their lives. Upon Denjiro Kōtoku’s death, Emma Goldman remembered him as “a man of brilliant mind, an able writer, and the translator of some of the works of Karl Marx, Leo Tolstoy, and Peter Kropotkin.”⁶⁰

In 1910 an article in the IWW newspaper the *Industrial Worker* asked, “Who Is the Foreigner?” D. Bond declared that there are two nations in the world and asked readers, “Do you belong to the nation that lives by working, or to the nation that lives by owning?” The article continued: “‘Workingmen of all countries, unite.’ That means unite in your own nation. The Chinaman, Jap, Mexican, Italian, Hungarian or Negro who [*sic*] workers, belongs to my nation. He belongs to your nation if you are doing needful work. On the other hand, Rockefeller, Morgan, Carnegie, Taft, Nicholas, Edward, Diaz, Alfonso, do not belong to your nation, no matter where they are born or where they live; no matter where you were born or where you live. No matter what their race; no matter what your race.” He continued, noting that President Taft “consulted with the arch-fiend Diaz how best to work the workers on both sides [of] the imaginary line.”⁶¹ The acceptance of this outlook and its incorporation into movement practice varied across ideology and institutional structures of the left in Los Angeles. The racist structures organized and enforced in law and popular action continued to affect race relations in Los Angeles. The critiques of Chinese labor from the nineteenth century remained the most accessible frame of reference for Anglo labor and socialists when they sought to understand nonwhite laborers. Leftists formulated the most successful challenges to this racism through the language of internationalism. Socialists, anarchists, and Wobblies sought internationalist or antinationalist ideals to frame their acceptance of non-Anglo workers. This continued for years to come as racism persisted on the Left and throughout society.

Notes

¹ *Mother Earth*, July 1907.

² *Mother Earth*, Nov. 1907; Emma Goldman, *Living My Life* (New York: Dover, 1970), 400–402.

³ *Common Sense*, March 23, 1907.

⁴ Gloria Ricci Lothrop, *Chi Siamo: The Italians of Los Angeles* (Pasadena, CA: Tabula Rasa, 1981), 13; Gloria Ricci Lothrop, “The Italians of Los Angeles,” *Californians* 5, no. 3 (1987):

28–43; William D. Estrada, *Los Angeles Plaza: Sacred and Contested Space* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 95.

⁵ Charles Bufe and Mitchell Cowen Verter, eds., *Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magón Reader* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005), 347.

⁶ George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 5–6. Original emphasis.

⁷ *Common Sense*, January 12, 1907.

⁸ *Common Sense*, February 20, 1909.

⁹ Ethel Duffy Turner, *Ricardo Flores Magón y El Partido Liberal Mexicano* (Morelia, Michoacán: Editorial Erandi del Gobierno del Estado Morelia, Michoacán, 1960), 138; Devra Ann Weber, “Wobblies of the Partido Liberal Mexicano: Reenvisioning Internationalist and Transnational Movements through Mexican Lenses,” *Pacific Historical Review* 85, no. 2 (2016): 188–226.

¹⁰ *Common Sense*, June 30, 1906.

¹¹ *Common Sense*, May 4, 1907.

¹² *Common Sense*, March 23, 1907.

¹³ *Mother Earth*, November 1909.

¹⁴ *Common Sense*, May 25, 1907.

¹⁵ *Common Sense*, June 15, 1907.

¹⁶ *Common Sense*, June 15, 1907; Philip S. Foner, *Black Socialist Preacher: The Teachings of Reverend George Washington Woodbey and His Disciple, Reverend G. W. Slater, Jr.* (San Francisco: Synthesis, 1983), 23, 243.

¹⁷ *Common Sense*, May 25, 1907.

¹⁸ *Common Sense*, January 12, 1907.

¹⁹ *Common Sense*, February 9, 1907.

²⁰ *Common Sense*, February 16, 1907.

²¹ *Common Sense*, February 1, 1908.

²² *Citizen*, June 19, 1908.

²³ *Citizen*, July 17, 1908. The article was credited to the *United Mine Worker*.

²⁴ *Citizen*, November 18, 1910.

²⁵ *Emancipator*, November 1906.

²⁶ *Emancipator*, May 1907.

²⁷ Tiffany K. Wayne, ed. *Women's Rights in the United States: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Issues, Events, and People*. 4 vols. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2014), 57.

²⁸ *Emancipator*, November 1906.

²⁹ *Emancipator*, November 1906; Sho Konishi, *Anarchist Modernity: Cooperatism and Japanese-Russian Intellectual Relations in Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

³⁰ *Regeneración*, July 6, 1906.

³¹ *Regeneración*, October 22, 1910. Plank 15: “Es inútil declarar en el Programa que debe dars preferencia al mexicana sobre el extranjero, en igualdad de circunstancias, pues esto está ya consignado en nuestra Constitución. Como medida eficaz para evitar la preponderancia extranjera y garantizar la integridad de nuestro territorio, nada parece tan conveniente como declarar ciudadanos mexicanos á los extranjeros que adquieran bienes raíces.”

³² *Regeneración*, October 22, 1910. Plank 16: “La prohibición de la inmigración china, es, ante todo, una medida de protección á los trabajadores de otras nacionalidades, principalmente á los mexicanos. El chino, dispuesto por lo general á trabajar con el más bajo salario, sumiso mezquino en aspiraciones, es un gran obstáculo para la prosperidad de otros trabajadores. Su competencia es funesta, y hay que enitarla en México. En general, la inmigración china no produce á México el menor beneficio.”

³³ Jason Oliver Chang, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico, 1880–1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017, Kindle e-book edition), loc. 718–19.

³⁴ Chang, *Chino*, loc. 778–80.

³⁵ Chang, *Chino*, loc. 706–07.

³⁶ Chang, *Chino*, loc. 1995–97.

³⁷ John Mason Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 6–7.

³⁸ *Common Sense*, October 12, 1907.

³⁹ *Regeneración*, September 3, 1910.

⁴⁰ *Regeneración*, October 8, 15, and 22, 1910. The translations continued sporadically until Alfred Sanftleben resigned. *Regeneración* printed his resignation letter on December 24, 1910.

⁴¹ Claudio Lomnitz, *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón* (New York: Zone, 2014), 256, 275–76.

⁴² *Regeneración*, September 23, 1911; Bufe and Verter, *Dreams of Freedom*, 139.

⁴³ Chang, *Chino*, loc. 219–20.

⁴⁴ “Nip Revolutionists in Los Angeles Den,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 24, 1907; Ward Albro, *Always a Rebel: Ricardo Flores Magón and the Mexican Revolution* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1992), 84.

⁴⁵ Paul Brissenden, *The I.W.W.: A Study of American Syndicalism* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1957), 170–75; Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the I.W.W.* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1969), 99–105; Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Volume 4: The Industrial Workers of the World, 1905–1917* (New York: International, 1965), 45–59.

⁴⁶ *Common Sense*, September 21, 1907.

⁴⁷ *Common Sense*, July 25, 1908. The other parallel was the case of Manuel Sarabia, who was arrested by Arizona Rangers without warrant and illegally deported to Mexico in June 1907. His supporters forced his return to the United States. See Albro, *Always a Rebel*, 81–84.

⁴⁸ *Common Sense*, September 21, 1907.

⁴⁹ *Common Sense*, September 21, 1907.

⁵⁰ *Common Sense*, November 16, 1907.

⁵¹ *Common Sense*, January 25, 1908.

⁵² *Mother Earth*, July 1910.

⁵³ *Man!*, December–January, 1936–37.

⁵⁴ George Elison, “Kōtoku Shūsui: The Change in Thought,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 22, nos. 3/4 (1967): 449.

⁵⁵ *People’s Paper*, February 17, 1911 (this issue named the periodical *Progressive Woman*).

⁵⁶ Kōtoku Denjirō, *Diary of a Voyage to America*, qtd. in Elison, “Kōtoku Shūsui,” 451.

⁵⁷ *Industrial Worker*, November 24, 1910.

⁵⁸ *People’s Paper*, February 3, 1911.

⁵⁹ Maurizio Antonioli, ed., *Dizionario Biografico Degli Anarchici Italiani*, vol. 2. (Pisa: Biblioteca Franco Serantini, 2003), 2:68.

⁶⁰ Goldman, *Living My Life*, 474.

⁶¹ *Industrial Worker*, January 15, 1910.

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