



Caribbean Studies

ISSN: 0008-6533

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Instituto de Estudios del Caribe

Puerto Rico

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AGRICULTURAL STRIKE OF 1905  
Caribbean Studies, vol. 43, núm. 2, julio-diciembre, 2015, pp. 33-81  
Instituto de Estudios del Caribe  
San Juan, Puerto Rico

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# IMAGINING RESISTANCE: ORGANIZING THE PUERTO RICAN SOUTHERN AGRICULTURAL STRIKE OF 1905

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*Jorell A. Meléndez-Badillo*

## ABSTRACT

In the months of March, April, and May of 1905, agricultural workers in the Southern district of Puerto Rico organized a strike that counted with the participation of more than 20,000 individuals that demanded the abolition of child labor, a raise in salaries, and a nine-hour workday. Instead of analyzing the events that took place during the strike, I pay attention to the projects and individuals that created its condition. It was after months of grassroots organizing by anonymous workers and labor unions that the leadership of the *Federación Libre de Trabajadores* (FLT), the most important labor organization in Puerto Rico, decided to take part in the strike effort. My research looks at the role played by night schools and *mítines* (public meetings) in the process of imagining and organizing the strike. This is done through the lens of the *Unión Obrera Federada Local 9874* (UOF), a labor organization never previously tapped by historians. By tracing their activities documented in the labor press I demonstrate how the strike was neither spontaneous nor linear, and how the FLT was not a monolithic institution as it depended on the work of local unions and affiliated members.

**Keywords:** Puerto Rican labor movement, working classes, grassroots projects, *Federación Libre de Trabajadores*, strikes, unions

## RESUMEN

En los meses de marzo, abril y mayo de 1905, más de 20,000 trabajadores agrícolas del sur de Puerto Rico organizaron una huelga en aras de eliminar el trabajo infantil, conseguir un aumento en sus salarios y establecer una jornada laboral de 9 horas diarias. En vez de analizar los sucesos que tuvieron lugar durante la huelga, este artículo se enfoca en los proyectos, procesos e individuos que crearon las condiciones para tal evento. La Federación Libre de Trabajadores (FLT) —el sindicato más importante de Puerto Rico durante la época— decidió tomar parte en los esfuerzos huelgarios luego de que varios trabajadores anónimos y uniones locales llevaran meses organizando acciones de base. Esta investigación estudia el rol que tenían las escuelas nocturnas y los *mítines* públicos en el proceso de imaginar y organizar la huelga. Esto se hace a través del estudio de una unión hasta el momento

ignorada por los historiadores, la Unión Obrera Federada Local 9874. Trazando sus acciones, tal como fueron documentadas en la prensa obrera, se aspira a presentar cómo la huelga no fue un proceso lineal o espontáneo, como también demostrar que la FLT no era una organización monolítica ya que dependía del trabajo de uniones locales y sus miembros afiliados.

**Palabras clave:** movimiento obrero puertorriqueño, clases trabajadoras, proyectos de base, Federación Libre de Trabajadores, huelgas, uniones

### RÉSUMÉ

Pendant les mois de mars, avril et mai 1905, plus de 20 000 ouvriers agricoles du sud de Porto Rico ont organisé une grève en vue d'éliminer le travail des enfants, d'obtenir une augmentation de salaire et d'instaurer la journée de travail de 9 heures. Au lieu d'analyser les événements qui ont eu lieu pendant la grève, cet article se concentre sur les projets, les processus et les individus qui ont été à l'origine de la création de ces conditions historiques. *La Federación Libre de Trabajadores* (FLT) (La Fédération Libre des Ouvriers) — le syndicat le plus important de Porto Rico de l'époque — a décidé de se joindre aux mouvements de grève suite à l'organisation d'actions prises pendant des mois par des ouvriers anonymes et des unions locales. Cette recherche étudie le rôle des écoles nocturnes et des réunions publiques dans le processus de mise au point et d'organisation de la grève. Cette recherche a pu être réalisée grâce à l'étude d'une union jusqu'à maintenant ignorée par les historiens, *La Unión Obrera Federada Local 9874* (l'Union Ouvrière Fédérée Locale 9874). A travers cet article, on entend tracer le portrait des actions menées telles qu'elles ont été documentées dans la presse ouvrière, présenter la grève comme un processus non linéal ou spontané et aussi démontrer que la FLT n'était pas une organisation monolithique puisqu'elle dépendait du travail d'unions locales et de ses membres affiliés.

**Mots-clés :** mouvement ouvrier portoricain, classes ouvrières, projets de base, Fédération Libre des Ouvriers, grèves, unions

Received: 11 August 2014 Revision received: 19 February 2015 Accepted: 23 February 2015

As the roosters announced the beginning of a new dawn in the mountains of Yauco, laborers from sugarcane fields started preparing for their daily obligations before the first rays of sun would hit the fields. Still tired from the previous day's labor, they headed towards their workplace as the darkness of night slowly faded away. Most women stayed behind doing domestic labor, such as taking care of small children, doing house chores, and preparing food for their husbands.<sup>1</sup> Other families worked together in the sugarcane fields. After

ten, eleven or twelve hours of harsh work under the blistering sun, laborers headed back to their humble huts made out of wood and straw. Often men would bathe, shave, and eat dinner upon their return home but went out the door in the evening. Although most of them would engage in a multiplicity of social events that ranged from going to the corner bar, flirting, or getting together with friends, by March 1905 things were different. Labor unions organized evening activities that defied these workers' daily routine.<sup>2</sup>

Each night public plazas were taken over by labor organizers who addressed crowds that ranged anywhere from 20 to 5,000 people, talking about the possibility of improving workers' miserable existence through labor organizing. Women joined male workers in these activities and claimed integration into a social space that had been denied to them because of their gender. Newspapers were read out loud in street corners; "Justice or Strike: No More Exploitation," "If the Bosses Do Not Yield: Strike," "All Workers: To the Strike," were some of the headlines published in the highly influential labor newspaper *Unión Obrera*. The latter was printed in Mayagüez.<sup>3</sup>

Local unions affiliated to the most powerful labor organization in Puerto Rico, the *Federación Libre de Trabajadores* (Federation of Free Workers, hereafter referred to as FLT), organized daily night schools for the mostly illiterate workers that were unionized under its banner.<sup>4</sup> All of these projects and activities, described in the labor press as "noble and altruist," laid the groundwork for a strike in Puerto Rico's Southern district that took place in the months March, April, and May of 1905.<sup>5</sup> More than 20,000 sugarcane workers participated, demanding a raise in their daily salaries to 75 cents for men and women, the abolition of child labor, and a nine-hour workday.<sup>6</sup> The strike allowed the labor movement to present itself a new social force in the polity that was forming in Puerto Rico during the first decades of the century.

Puerto Rico's labor movement was highly stratified into skilled and unskilled sectors of largely illiterate rural workers. The sugar industry's division of labor made union organizing an uphill battle for labor organizers. This division consisted of sugar growers—such as *colonos* who owned some land but did not own grinding facilities or landless cane workers that were employed by the *colonos*—and sugar mills, who directly hired workers in their lands. Besides these obstacles and difficulties, workers created a wide array of grassroots, working-class organizations, ranging from night schools for workers, to newspapers, to public assemblies and *mítines*. Because of the magnitude of the 1905 Southern strike, all of these working class institutions and projects merged together and were mobilized in the organization of the strike even before the direct involvement of the FLT.

This article analyzes the many ways in which Puerto Rican workers and the FLT constructed the Southern strike of 1905. Instead of focusing on events that took place during the strike, I pay attention to the projects that created its condition. The strike was not spontaneous but required the tireless effort of various workers and labor organizations. It was after months of grassroots organizing by workers and local unions that the leadership of the FLT arrived in the Southern district and officially declared the strike. By paying attention to the activities of a local union from Yauco by the name of *Unión Obrera Federada Local 9874* (Federated Labor Union Local 9874, hereafter referred to as UOF), I explore the role of night schools, the newspaper *Unión Obrera*, and *mítines* (public meetings) in the strike's development. By focusing on the role of the UOF during the strike preparations as a case study allows me to demonstrate that the FLT was not a monolithic institution as it depended on the work of local unions and affiliated members.<sup>7</sup>

All of the pedagogical projects created by local unions and the FLT garnered the active participation of labor leaders, rank-and-file workers, and skilled laborers from different parts of the island. The unofficial preparations of the strike can be traced back to the month of January when local unions created propaganda committees to assemble support for a possible strike. By mid-March, the FLT had set up what they called *Comités de Arbitraje* (strike committees). These *comités* would oversee the organization of the strike and served as intermediaries between workers and landowners in the Southern towns and neighborhoods of Ponce, Juana Díaz, Capitanejo, Coto, Guayanilla, Yauco, Peñuelas, Río-Cañas, Amuelas, Guánica, Guayabal, and Playa de Ponce.<sup>8</sup>

The organization of the strike required the tireless effort and support from male workers of various trades as well as women and children. Women were beginning to participate in labor organizations, creating *Uniones de Damas* (Ladies' Unions) throughout the island, but they would not play a key role in the organized labor movement until a few years after the strike. By attending *mítines*, raising their voices, and collecting money, women used the strike as a way to demand integration through active participation.

Skilled workers, such as typographers, carpenters, and tobacco workers were brought from the larger cities of San Juan and Caguas to lead the *Comités de Arbitraje* (hereafter referred to as *comités*). Key labor leaders such as Santiago Iglesias Pantín, Eduardo Conde, José Ferrer y Ferrer, Julio Aybar, and Eugenio Sánchez López constantly toured the area and tried to organize unions while the strike preparations were taking place. Most, if not all, of the island-wide leaders assigned to the *comités* can be considered what Antonio Gramsci called, "organic intellectuals."<sup>9</sup> These working-class intellectuals published books, wrote

essays, edited labor newspapers, or became part of political parties at some point in their lives. Some of them—including Julio Aybar, Esteban Padilla, José M. Torres, and Santiago Iglesias Pantín—were organizers paid by the AFL.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, local leaders served as volunteer organizers and, hence, did not receive a salary, forcing some of them to dedicate part of their time to a trade in order to generate an income, as was, for example, the case of the members and organizers of the UOF.<sup>11</sup>

Although the first recorded sugar strike took place in 1891, the idea that workers from agricultural and unskilled sectors would get together and organize a massive strike that counted with the participation of thousands of individuals was unimaginable in 1905. For the majority of these rank-and-file workers and local labor leaders the strike of 1905 was the first time they directly participated in any labor-related struggle.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the importance of the strike transcended the sugarcane industry in which it developed as leaders of the island's labor movement saw it as a beacon of hope. Unions representing different trades such as barbers, sailors, dockworkers, and shoemakers published and distributed manifestos in solidarity with the striking sugarcane workers.<sup>13</sup>

The strike allowed local workers and labor leaders to develop, debate, and experiment with notions of citizenship, representation, and progress. In their own words, the strike gave them “classist” redemption, as it would help them acquire economic and legal rights that had been denied to them, such as decent living wages, legal representation, and shorter workdays. By constantly comparing their situation to that of workers in the United States and other countries, they saw the strike as a way to actively demand inclusion into the protections they believed that the United States and other “civilized” countries offered citizen workers.

The study of the Puerto Rican labor movement is a fairly recent historiographical phenomenon. In the 1970s, a new generation of historians and social scientists known as the *Nueva Historia* (New History) lifted the veil on labor studies in Puerto Rico as the field shifted from grand narratives towards new paradigms that paid attention to economic and social processes.<sup>14</sup> In the following decades, philosophical currents that critiqued excessively materialist discourses and instead focused on new dimensions of cultural production, such as notions of space, gender, and race shaped the scholarship. This article is informed by the vast literature labor historians have developed since then. I aspire to balance the social history that guided the first scholarly works on labor in Puerto Rico with more recent (re)interpretations, which reflect the cultural and transnational turn in labor history.<sup>15</sup>

Pioneering works by Ángel G. Quintero Rivera and Gervasio L. García set the tone and groundwork for understanding the development of the labor movement from an artisan world in the nineteenth century



"Taking Time on a Sugar Plantation, Porto Rico." (1900). Library of Congress <<https://www.loc.gov/item/90710852/>>.

with no formal labor unions to the rapid proletarianization of the urban and agricultural labor force during the first years of the U.S. occupation of Puerto Rico.<sup>16</sup> Quintero has written various books and articles analyzing the Southern district of the island, specifically the city of Ponce. He shed light on political, economic, and social dynamics that developed in the area of Ponce at the *fin-de-siècle*.<sup>17</sup> Quintero and García's works were challenged and expanded by other historians and social scientists such as Blanca Silvestrini in her studies on the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, the FLT, and the role of women in these organizations; Rubén Dávila Santiago and Ricardo Campos with their study on workers' cultural production; César Andreu Iglesias with his important revisionist essays and his work on Bernardo Vega's memoirs, which laid the groundwork for diasporic labor studies.

More recent (re)interpretations that paid attention to constructions



of race and gender have been done by Eileen Findlay, Bianca M. Medina Báez, and Ileana Rodríguez-Silva.<sup>18</sup> I also grounded my analysis on Félix Córdova Iturregui's book *Ante la frontera del infierno*. Córdova pays attention to the three major strikes that the FLT organized in 1905 including my case study, the Southern agricultural strike. I expand his study by paying attention to elements that were overlooked in his work, such as the role played by local unions, mid-level organizers, and different cultural and pedagogical projects established during the preparation of the strike.<sup>19</sup>

To explore these elements I focus my attention to a fairly cohesive yet limited body of primary sources produced by the workers themselves: a book created during the strike and articles published in *Unión Obrera*. The book *16 de abril: Crímenes policíacos* was edited by the FLT and in its pages various labor leaders demanded action and explanations from the Puerto Rican government as they recounted how the police brutally suppressed two major public rallies in the town of Ponce on April 16, 1905. Since *Unión Obrera* was an open forum for workers from many trades, educational backgrounds, and geographical regions to express their ideas and to publish news they considered important, this weekly four-page paper allowed me to trace not only how the strike developed but also how workers informed and constructed their own ideas simultaneously.

By 1898 Puerto Rico was in a colonial crossroads, as the Caribbean became a theatre of war between the United States and Spain in what became known as the Spanish-Cuban-Philippine-American War. For the common Puerto Rican, the occupation of the island by the United States on July 25, 1898, propelled a series of changes in every aspect of life. Local currency was devalued, a military government was set up, and social imaginaries clashed as the Spanish flag was brought down and the United States flag took its place. Different notions of white supremacy, American exceptionalism, and social darwinism that were among the most influential ideologies in U.S. culture in the early years of the twentieth century challenged four centuries of Spanish colonization and mentality overnight.

Entangled in this complex situation and product of artisan organizing experiments and agitation since 1872, workers founded their first labor organization, the *Federación Regional de Trabajadores* (Regional Federation of Workers, hereafter referred to as FRT), on October 20, 1898.<sup>20</sup> Because of internal political struggles related to the organization's affiliation with established political parties, a dissident group formed a new labor organization in June 1899, the *Federación Libre de Trabajadores* (FLT).<sup>21</sup> At their origins both organizations had an openly socialist rhetoric. Indeed, the FLT was in touch "with the radical [U.S.] Socialist Labor and Socialist Parties."<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, through contacts



made by the San Juan-based labor organizer Santiago Iglesias Pantín in New York, the young FLT became affiliated with the powerful, yet conservative, American Federation of Labor (hereafter referred to as AFL).<sup>23</sup>

The contradictions became thicker as Samuel Gompers, president of the AFL, pushed for the Americanization of the island's labor movement and the FLT created alliances with the *Partido Unión* (Union Party). The party was divided among people who favored the autonomy of Puerto Rico and another group that rooted for the island's independence. The FLT landed six of its members into the House of Delegates through the



Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor, arrives to the Theater in Ponce, 1904. Centro de Documentación Obrera (CDOSIP), Biblioteca Águedo Mojica, Universidad de Puerto Rico en Humacao. Fondo: Santiago Iglesias Pantín, Legajo 6, Carpeta 1.

*Partido Unión* in the local elections of 1904.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, the FLT was struggling against the FRT for control and influence over the labor movement, thus finding it difficult to construct a coherent political identity.<sup>25</sup>

The FLT saw the growing restiveness of agricultural workers as an opportunity to present itself as a strong labor organization and to increase its enrollment. In 1905, for example, the FLT had a total of 72 unions and 8,700 members. A year later, in 1906, its numbers went down to 35 unions and 6,300 members. The majority of the FLT's rank-and-file members were skilled urban workers. In 1904 the FLT had 2,832 agricultural workers as members, which, according to Gervasio García

and Ángel Quintero, composed only 1.3% of all the island's agricultural workers. The situation worsened after the 1905 strike for in 1907 the FLT only had 223 affiliated agricultural workers, which comprised only 0.1% of the island's total.<sup>26</sup>

Although thousands of workers were mobilized during the strike, afterwards, the FLT failed in organizing agricultural workers. This may have been a result of the complex relations of production that emerged in the sugar industry. The historical development of the sugar industry and the U.S. occupation of 1898, along with the direct control of the insular government by U.S. administrators, accelerated an uneven process of agricultural proletarianization and industrialization. Humberto García Muñiz has noted, "Puerto Rico relied on seasonal internal migration from the highlands to the lowlands at least since 1888." That meant that "the crop calendar of sugarcane, coffee and tobacco fostered the creation of a labor market based on internal migration."<sup>27</sup>

In the early 1900s, a new land-and-factory system rapidly developed, built on the slave-and-*agregado* plantation of the preceding century.<sup>28</sup> The introduction of U.S. capital created a series of sugar monopolies owned by North American corporations, colloquially known as "Trusts," which hegemonized production through a system of hierarchical managerial relations. That is, U.S. corporations absorbed and managed pre-existing *centrales* (sugar factories) and plantations but the division of labor was kept in place. This meant that 76 percent of the cane lands were owned either by local *colonos* (landowners) or *centralistas* (small-to-medium *central* owners), and that "most agricultural workers in the cane fields were employed by native capitalists."<sup>29</sup> The native capitalists, in turn, responded to sugar monopolies. Thus, when workers talked about their bosses during the strike, they were referring to native capitalists and not necessarily U.S. corporations.

The majority of the workers in the sugarcane production were dispensable, as they were not needed all year round, creating a dire situation for some peasants that were forced to migrate back to the highlands after the end of harvest season. García Muñiz adds:

The disaggregation and seasonality of the industry, plus the basic division between field and factory workers, hindered organizing the sugar workers. Most field hands were itinerant and worked only six consecutive months. The few factory workers who had year-round jobs would have been vulnerable to pressure by planters.<sup>30</sup>

These complex relations created a heterogenous mass of unskilled workers that were both self-employed and sold what they produced in their land. Wage workers that did not own land and just sold their time and labor whenever they could. Most worked for local *colonos*, and

because there were so many of them, achieving a contract with so many employers was an uphill battle.<sup>31</sup> The harvest and grinding season started in January and lasted until the months of May or June. By July, sugar *haciendas* or *centrales* would buy any needed supply and make repairs as mills idled. The rest of the year was dedicated to planting, cultivating, and making any needed tune up for next year's harvest. The decision to declare a strike during the early months of 1905 was not a coincidence but a way to put pressure on the *colonos* and *centralistas* that expected, according to figures given by the FLT, "a liquid, clean, net, and juicy profit" of \$9,760,000 during the harvest season.<sup>32</sup>

Local unions in the Southern district started preparing the conditions for the strike in the month of January 1905 but it was not until first week of March that official FLT preparations started. The first FLT-approved declaration of strike was done on April 18, two days after the Police in Ponce violently suppressed two rallies that counted with the participation of more than 6,000 workers.<sup>33</sup> This event marked a turning point for the strike because the government, faced by political pressure from the landowners and the *centrales*, responded with extreme police violence to suppress the movement and the workers counteracted with increased militancy. After weeks of defiance and militancy, workers and the FLT called off the strike on May 1, 1905.<sup>34</sup> The success or failure of the strike is still a topic of debate for labor historians in Puerto Rico.

Labor strikes and militant actions in the agricultural sector were not uncommon. "In May 1891, with the end of the crop season fast approaching, the first recorded sugar strike in Puerto Rico took place at Hacienda Bello Sitio in Río Piedras in the northern district, where agricultural workers struck for higher wages."<sup>35</sup> Other strikes took place throughout the island in the crop season of 1894-95, April and October 1898, as well as in early 1899.<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, the strikes of 1905 had no historical precedent in the history of organized labor in Puerto Rico. It was the first time the island had been shaken by such massive coordinated struggles led by a labor organization.<sup>37</sup>

The Southern agricultural strike was preceded by a smaller strike led by the FLT and sugarcane workers in the Northern district during the months of January and February 1905. The Northern strike gave the FLT enough experience to coordinate the struggles in the Southern district this article focuses on.<sup>38</sup> These strikes were neither spontaneous nor single-handedly organized by the FLT's leadership. The Southern strike, for instance, depended on much groundwork and pedagogical projects created by mid-level FLT volunteer organizers that had been organizing agricultural workers of the Southern district months prior to the strike's official declaration.

Members of the FLT had approved a resolution in favor of the

organization of rural and agricultural workers in their Second National Congress that took place in the city of Ponce in 1903.<sup>39</sup> Later, in a General Assembly held in January 20, 1905, the general secretary of the FLT branch in Mayagüez, Jesús María Balsac, presented a report stressing the necessity of expanding their organizing efforts to the countryside because of the long shifts, poor working conditions, and low wages faced by the agricultural workers.<sup>40</sup> Although the FLT was not a monolithic institution, as there were diverging opinions inside of it, all of its different factions approved and supported the strike.<sup>41</sup>

By 1904, the *Unión Obrera Federada Local 9874* (UOF)—a local union in the town of Yauco, also affiliated to the FLT—was a stronghold for the labor movement in the Southern district.<sup>42</sup> The UOF had a charter from the AFL and more than 250 affiliated workers.<sup>43</sup> Months before the first declaration of strike, the UOF had organized a propaganda commission that was in charge of coordinating a series of activities aimed at creating class consciousness, organizing workers from different trades, and preparing the conditions for a strike during harvest season. The UOF was just one of various unions in the Southern district that did the grassroots work needed to create the conditions for the strike.<sup>44</sup>

The general secretary of the UOF was a mid-level FLT labor leader by the name of Leonardo Pacheco. He worked as a carpenter in the *Central Guánica* until April 25, 1903 when his left hand was devoured by one of the machines used in the *Central's* woodshop. His five fingers were chopped, losing three of them completely. Legal action was taken against the *Central* but Pacheco's efforts were in vain as no compensation was paid on the grounds that it had been his own fault. This accident did not stop Pacheco from becoming a cherished local leader in the town of Yauco. He was portrayed in the labor press as an altruist and a martyr. Two years after his accident, in 1905, he was the president of the spiritualist center *Luz y Unión* (Light and Union), first lieutenant of the local Fire Department, and the General Secretary of the UOF.<sup>45</sup> After the strike he continued his role as a militant member of the FLT in the Southern district. In June of 1906 he wrote in the section "What our Organizers are Doing" of the *American Federationist*, the AFL's printed organ:

Organized labor is making progress [in Yauco], but some of the employers are trying to boycott the laborers with the intention of destroying the unions, thus depriving the workers of means of gaining a subsistence [sic]. As a result of strike some improvements have been secured. Wages have increased from 12 to 15 per cent since we organized. Several injunctions have been secured by employers, but without any effect whatever. 2 unions of agricultural laborers and 1 of domestic workers have formed. Several new unions are about to organize.<sup>46</sup>

One of the most important tools for agitation and propaganda

used by the UOF during the strike were *mítines*. These public gatherings colloquially called *mítines*—which is an Anglicism from the word “meeting”—adapted to the crowd, environment, and space in which they developed. *Mítines* generally took place in open spaces, such as empty lots, town plazas, or street corners. In the countryside they were organized in crossroads, in the patios of the peasant’s humble huts or in wastelands. Stages, when available, were made out of old wood planks on top of wooden barrels. If the *mitin* took place during the daytime, workers set up the *tribunas* (platforms) in the local *Plazas del Mercado* (farmers’ market) and labor leaders shouted their speeches during the hustle and bustle of people selling goods, food from their crops, and domestic animals. While the orator gave his or her speech, other workers handed out pamphlets, leaflets or newspapers. People interrupted speeches with applause or by contradicting, challenging, and cursing at the speakers. Conversations, debates, and insults filled these spaces with vibrant life. If the orator was from out of town and was touring the area, workers collected a few cents among the attendees to cover his travelling expenses. Most of the time speakers ended up sleeping in the benches of the local FLT venue.<sup>47</sup>

In these *mítines* workers gathered in a public space in order to listen, interpret, and discuss ideas about the strike, their class, and society. The number of people that participated ranged anywhere from a few dozen to the thousands and it was precisely because of these impressive numbers that the police constantly monitored them. These spaces in which *mítines* took place became points of encounter among laborers who were from different trades and that occupied different positions in what Pierre Bourdieu calls, “the social space.” That is, distances are, according to Bourdieu, “predictive of encounters, affinities, sympathies, or even desire...[so people] have little chance of meeting...physically [and] if they do meet on some occasion, accidentally, they will not get together, not really understand each other, will not appeal to one another.”<sup>48</sup> Therefore, these *mítines*, rallies, and *tribunas* aimed to close that gap by bringing workers together because “proximity in social space predisposes to closer relations: people who are inscribed in a confined sector of the space will be both closer and more disposed to get closer (in their properties and in their dispositions, their tastes), as well as being easier to bring together, to mobilize.”<sup>49</sup>

As early as January 29, 1905, the UOF’s propaganda commission organized a *mitin* in the *barrio* (working-class neighborhood) Jócana in Yauco. The event took place in the house of a local worker by the name of Eduardo Torres. Setting up assemblies, *mítines*, and *tribunas* in private houses was something common during this period. Leonardo Pacheco opened the meeting and talked about the advantages of joining the AFL.

Afterwards, five other workers took the *tribuna*, including the owner of the house. The meeting was considered a success as the UOF gathered 45 signatures from workers in the crowd that wanted to join the union. As signatures were collected the crowd cheered for the AFL and the martyrs of labor.<sup>50</sup>

The following week, the UOF's leadership traveled to the town of Guánica where they held a public meeting with local workers. Leonardo Pacheco as well as workers by the names of Palomo, Tillet, and Estoquio Medina took over the *tribuna*. When the latter was giving his speech, Guánica's mayor, Mattei Lluveras, and police lieutenant Iturrondo interrupted Medina's presentation. Both the mayor and the lieutenant wanted Medina to clarify some of his words they considered threatening or inappropriate.<sup>51</sup> According to a worker that was in the crowd and documented the event in the newspaper *Unión Obrera*, Medina complied and proceeded to explain what he meant "with a colorful language and, because of the interruption, he did so with more energy."<sup>52</sup> This event is insightful because it shows how informal these *mítines* were, as members of the public constantly interrupted speakers. It also demonstrates how the state, the government, and the police were already monitoring the workers' *mítines* even before the strike was publically announced.

The state's opinion towards labor *mítines* and *tribunas* can be appreciated in the words of the island's governor, Arthur Yager, in 1917. Although his declarations took place twelve years after the strike, the government still looked at *mítines* with distrust and contempt:

Only one kind of public meeting has been curtailed or interfered with during this period, *but that kind of assembly is in no sense a constitutional right*, namely the so-called 'manifestations' or parades along the roads. These are peculiar and intensive methods employed in this country, not of supporting a strike, but rather of creating strike conditions where none exist. A crowd is gathered *in a town in a district where a strike is desired or has been declared by the Federation [FLT]*. In the crowd are some strikers, but in addition many loafers and idlers and some criminals, and preceded by an automobile containing speakers and with red flags and banners and horns they parade noisily along the roads through the cane fields and announce the strike to the workers in the fields bordering the roads and invite them to cease work. [...] In general our experience shows that these parades lead to violence and disorder, to intimidation of those who wish to continue work and frequently to clashes between [...] the so-called strikers and the police.<sup>53</sup>

Despite police and government pressure, the UOF kept organizing *mítines* around the Southern district. On Sunday February 19, 1905, a commission of speakers arrived in the town of Guayanilla to briefly meet with local labor leaders. Afterwards, they traveled to that municipality's



beach in order to hold a larger public *mitin*. Leonardo Pacheco took the stage and urged workers to join the FLT. Carlos Arroyo, an agitator from San Germán, a neighboring town in the Western district of the island, followed with a speech that informed attendees about labor struggles that were developing in Puerto Rico as well as in other countries around the world. Four more speakers took part in the activity that ended with the collection of signatures from workers that wanted to join their union.<sup>54</sup>

On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, the UOF's propaganda commission organized various *mítines* in the area of Yauco. They advocated the creation of a union that exclusively represented the interests of agricultural workers. They also called for the organization of a strike before the end of harvest season. The FLT's leadership started paying attention to the events taking place in the Southern district and decided to mobilize all their efforts to the area.<sup>55</sup> The strike was becoming a reality.

During the first weeks of March the FLT administered a survey among sugarcane workers in the Southern district. "How many hours should you work? If the plantation owners do not heed your petitions, are you willing to go on strike? Do you want the *Federación Libre* as your representative?" Those were some of the questions printed in the survey as the FLT started its preparations for the strike.<sup>56</sup> After the sugarcane strike in the Northern town of Arecibo ended in the first days of February, the FLT adopted the phrase "*no puede ser de otra manera*" (it cannot be any other way). That is, the only way to solve the problem was through militant labor action.<sup>57</sup>

Ponce, the biggest city in the Southern region, became the obvious choice for the strike's General Headquarters because it was, as Ángel Quintero Rivera has called it, Puerto Rico's "alternate capital."<sup>58</sup> The economic and social changes produced by the entrance of U.S. agricultural capitalism in the region after 1898 made Ponce a vibrant place where, as Francisco Scarano has pointed out, productive forces and cosmopolitan features of early twentieth-century modernity—expressed in its architecture and urban spaces—, along with liberal-reformist politics of the elite and labor activism clashed, thus making the city fertile ground for the FLT's strike project.<sup>59</sup>

Eduardo Conde, a former merchant seaman from the *Compañía Transatlántica Española* (Spanish Transatlantic Company), house painter, "reader" in cigar factories, and newspaper correspondent,<sup>60</sup> presented the importance and magnitude of the strike preparations to his readers in *Unión Obrera* by arguing that "all social classes sympathize with the movement and if the workers in Ponce respond to our voice (as they have been doing up to date) we can assure that this district will be the fortress, and maybe even the General Headquarter, of the Puerto Rican labor movement."<sup>61</sup> Santiago Iglesias Pantín, president of the



FLT and appointed as the AFL's general organizer for Puerto Rico and Cuba by Samuel Gompers, secured five thousand dollars from the AFL in support of the striking processes taking place on the island."<sup>62</sup>

The strike's organizational plan was presented to the workers through the pages of *Unión Obrera*: the FLT called for a two-week strike and assured that with the support of "peasants and labor 'leaders' from the unions affiliated to the *Federaciones Libres* [FLT] from throughout the island," they were going to win the strike.<sup>63</sup> The FLT also published the workers' demands, which included, but were not limited to: 1) a minimum daily salary of 75 cents for women and men eighteen years of age or older, 2) a minimum salary of 50 cents for male or female children from the ages of fourteen to eighteen, 3) equal pay for all the workers in the *centrales* or *haciendas*, and 4) complete abolition of child labor from ages fourteen or less.<sup>64</sup>

To cover the vast Southern region they not only established the strike's General Headquarters in Ponce but also created multiple sub-committees (*comités*) in different neighborhoods and municipalities. Each committee's main goal was to monitor, mediate, and establish lines of communication between workers and *colonos* or *centralistas*. Most, if not all, of the leaders that were in charge of these *comités* came from urban areas such as San Juan, Caguas, Mayagüez, Arecibo and Ponce. The FLT created *comités* in the towns and neighborhoods of Ponce, Arús, Capitanejo, Juana Díaz, Coto, Machuelo, Tallaboa, Guayanilla, Yauco, Peñuelas, Río Cañas, Amuelas, Guánica, Guayabal, Playa Ponce, and Santa Isabel.<sup>65</sup>

By April 9, all of the island-wide labor leaders arrived in Ponce ready to work in their assigned *comités*.<sup>66</sup> Besides negotiating with the *colonos* and *centralistas*, it was also these committees' duty to expand the arm of the FLT throughout the Southern coastal region by creating unions, organizing *mítines*, rallies, and, in general, to monitor any strike-related activity. Some sugarcane workers wanted immediate action and rejected the FLT's opinion, declaring themselves on strike without the FLT's consent. During the second week of April the workers of the sugar-central *Fortuna* and the *Boca Chica*, *Caño Verde*, and *Serrano colonias* went on strike without consulting the FLT.<sup>67</sup>

Although the scarcity of sources does not allow a deeper inquiry into these wildcat strike actions—strike actions taken by workers without the authorization of the union, in this case the FLT—, they nonetheless reflect the complexities of the strike organizing effort.<sup>68</sup> In order to declare themselves on strike, a union or group of workers needed to gather in a local assembly to ratify a strike vote. Once approved by the majority of the workers, they informed the FLT's General Headquarters about their decision. Before pushing forward any strike-related action

they needed to get confirmation and approval of the FLT. Yet, workers challenged such centralized structures through their own actions and agency.

In the town of Arroyo, for example, sugarcane workers conducted a spontaneous *mitin* to protest their bosses for not paying their week's salary and immediately declared themselves on strike. Some members of the FLT warned them against these actions and told them to wait for instructions from the strike's main office in Ponce, something that sugarcane workers rejected.<sup>69</sup> The FLT wanted a centralized approach so to be able to monitor and control every aspect of the strike but it could not do anything at the time about the increasing militancy of the workers. A few days after these cases, "the strike extended to 50 square kilometers and to 14,000 agricultural laborers of all kinds."<sup>70</sup> According to the FLT, the strike officially started on April 18, 1905 but these wildcat actions preceded that date and demonstrate how it was not a linear and neatly progressive process. The FLT was dealing with heterogeneous demands and actions from the rank-and-file workers involved in the process.<sup>71</sup>

Also, there were crucial differences between the privileged position of a labor organizer who had the power to dictate how the movement would develop and rank-and-file workers who were supposed to follow the FLT's orders. Strict hierarchical systems of classification were created in the labor leaders' discourses and their opinions about the striking workers. In a letter to Samuel Gompers, Santiago Iglesias Pantín commented, "With great difficulties and dangers, our organizers have succeeded in the *barrios* [poor neighborhoods] where these peasants live, providing them a basic knowledge of the principles of labor organization through conferences."<sup>72</sup> This paternalistic notion positioned the peasant or unskilled worker in a lower stratum than the labor leader and casted him as in need of enlightenment and guidance in order to succeed in the labor struggle.

Eduardo Conde made this clear when he argued, "...we the workers with some instruction and connoisseurs of our human and working dignity are not going to allow our labor brothers to die as animals." According to this perception, it was then the intellectual's burden to guide the ignorant masses. Conde continued by saying that if the movement failed, "out of fear or [because] other causes make *them* weak" workers would, would at least, gain experience. Since any failure would be the ignorant laborers' fault, they at least would finally "understand what we have predicated thousands of times, what we have repeated a thousand times" that organizing through the FLT is needed to succeed.<sup>73</sup>

Workers saw education as a crucial element in their organization. They embraced education as a way to gain mobility among the many hierarchies they were embedded in. In his 1899 official report to William

McKinley, Henry K. Carroll painted a grim picture for education in Puerto Rico. The school population by November 1, 1898 was of 125,695; only 25,588 were registered, and the average attendance was of 18,789. While no concrete number of illiteracy was given, it was acknowledged that it was a high percentage of the island and, "The greatest amount of illiteracy is, of course, in the rural districts, where the population is hard to reach with school facilities."<sup>74</sup> Eugenio Sánchez López, an important labor organizer and intellectual from the tobacco sector, argued in 1905:

Education is a thing unknown to the Porto Rican peasant's family. Father, mother, wife, children and every relative have to abandon education to engage in the daily work of many hours in order to fill the necessities of their own home. Then there is just one dilemma for those who want to avail themselves of the opportunity of education viz: to devote their time to school training or to leave their homes without a piece of bread on which they may feed themselves.<sup>75</sup>

The notion presented by Sánchez López in 1905 to the mostly international readers of *The Porto Rico Workingmen's Journal* was not new. Similar ideas were developed in the last decades of the nineteenth century as workers created alternative pedagogical projects in order to get access to that education they have been deprived from. As early as 1899 the newspaper *El Obrero* mentioned the *Sociedad Protectora de la Inteligencia del Obrero* (Society for the Protection of the Worker's Intelligence), which aspired to the "intellectual lifting of the working class to make it strong and respectable as well as a guarantee for its future."<sup>76</sup> This project advocated for the creation of a series of schools in the Southern region of the island that would teach workers letters and arts "as our circumstances allow."<sup>77</sup> It received donations that ranged anywhere from a few cents to three dollars from women and men in the towns of Ponce, Arroyo, Yauco, Guánica, Sabana Grande, and Guayama.

Four years later, in 1893, the newspaper *Revista Obrera* published the editor's account of a visit to a school ran by the *Sociedad Amigos Verdaderos* (True Friends Society). The article talked about how much the kids had learned in math, grammar, reading, and geography. It then goes on to mention the participation and support of workers such as José Zayas, Mariano Martínez, and José Elías Levis Bernard.<sup>78</sup> The latter became one of the most celebrated labor intellectuals in P.R., later becoming the Vice-President of the Association of Writers and Artists of Puerto Rico.<sup>79</sup>

By 1905 the labor movement was drawing on influences from these pedagogical experiments as well as multiple Social Studies Centers and workers' libraries established around the island. Social Studies Centers served as cultural centers where workers gathered to listen to poetry, organize literary soirees, had reading clubs, and took classes.<sup>80</sup> As a response to the strike-related propaganda taking place in the town of

Yauco, the UOF organized a series of night schools along the Southern district in mid-March, 1905. One of them was created in the facilities of the UOF's venue in Yauco.

The administration of this school was under the direction of Manuel A. Negrón, who was part of the UOF's leadership. Classes started in the evening after workers had finished their daily obligations and were offered six days a week, Monday to Saturday. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, José M. Jutziz taught an hour-long class in reading and penmanship at 7:00 p.m. At eight o'clock, Manuel A. Negrón took over and taught Geometry until nine in the evening. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, Victoriano de León gave courses on industrial arts from seven to nine in the evening. These classes were free of charge and open to members of the union. They offered workers civic education through participatory action and the basic tools for them to pass that knowledge along to other laborers.<sup>81</sup>

These schools became contact zones where workers educated themselves through the process of attending to these spaces, socializing, and, in the words of Jacques Rancière, stealing leisure time from their nights.<sup>82</sup> One can only imagine the conversations that took place among the laborers who entered those classrooms while thinking that they were "fulfilling an imposed mission as loyal defenders of the class they belong with honor," as an anonymous writer described them in *Unión Obrera*.<sup>83</sup> Although these projects were anchored in traditional education models they also served to propagate the ideals of the FLT and the AFL. On Saturdays, for example, Leonardo Pachecho—General Secretary of the UOF—would read and explain the constitution of the AFL as well as its by-laws and rules for an hour at 8:00 p.m.<sup>84</sup> Severino Cirino Osorio, a national FLT leader, argued that it was necessary for "workers to study the methods of the AFL and the Federación Libre of Porto Rico, and to enroot the benefits that they give to the workers...so they can combat all those charlatans of the bourgeoisie that only discuss ignorance."<sup>85</sup>

Schools created by the UOF were an important element in workers' intellectual formation and the FLT's consolidation. Not only were unions helping workers secure economic rights through labor action and contract negotiation with their bosses but they were also fulfilling some of these workers' social necessities. Taking an active stance against illiteracy, these union-ran schools were seen as redemptory projects. Their importance lay in the fact that they served as meeting spaces where the FLT distributed their propaganda while workers educated themselves and created bonds of solidarity through a cooperative educational model.

Another crucial element in the development of the labor movement and its strikes was the labor press. Newspapers allowed information to travel locally, nationally, and transnationally. The same way that night

schools were the product of decades of pedagogical experiments, the labor press drew from many projects that can be traced back to 1874 with the publication of the first labor newspaper called *El Artesano*, based in Ponce. Besides the commercial press produced on the island—*La Democracia* being the most influential because of its circulation, number of pages, and demographically wide public—before the U.S. occupation of Puerto Rico in 1898, skilled workers and artisans had published various journals and newspapers. Among them we find: *El Herald del Trabajo*, *El Trabajo*, *El Obrero*, *Revista Obrera*, *El Eco Proletario*, *Justicia*, *El Clamor Obrero*, *El Criterio Libre*, and *Ensayo Obrero*.<sup>86</sup> These one to four page newspapers were usually published weekly and contained poems, stories, news, and a page of ads that was used to generate an income to sustain the papers.

The press was a medium that served as fertile ground for workers to experiment with the formulation of their own narratives and discourses on the margins of mainstream intellectuality.<sup>87</sup> Newspapers were produced by a multiplicity of *imprentas* (printing houses) established all around the island since the 1890s.<sup>88</sup> There is information in the newspaper *La Miseria* about several underground *imprentas* that produced newspapers, leaflets, and pamphlets through clandestine means. They used some workers' apartments and private homes and were armed with only the most rustic and necessary tools to print.<sup>89</sup>

During the Southern agricultural strike of 1905, the newspaper *Unión Obrera* became the FLT's principal means of agitation and distribution of information. Based in the town of Mayagüez in the Western district, it was published on Sundays and gave updates on events related to the strike. It also announced *mítines*, assemblies, and published messages and manifestos in solidarity with the striking workers. Eduardo Conde presented the effectiveness of *Unión Obrera* in an article describing a meeting he presided with Santiago Iglesias and José Storer. When he arrived in Ponce in mid-March 1905, "a great assembly of workers took place in this town's beach and workers had learned about it because of the comrades who care enough to subscribe to *Unión Obrera*, the only combative newspaper that defends the working class."<sup>90</sup>

In the pages of *Unión Obrera* workers did not, in the words of Walter Benjamin, "play the spectator but intervened actively."<sup>91</sup> That is, although *Unión Obrera* served as a means of communicating and distributing information about the strike that was taking place, when there were no coordinated labor strikes, such as the one in 1905, it was a forum for workers to publish poems, ideas, and debates that were of their interest. *Unión Obrera* was established in Ponce in 1901 before moving to Mayagüez the following year and eventually becoming a daily publication that lasted until 1935.<sup>92</sup> It depended on the news supplied by a network

of correspondents who not only produced information but also played a direct role in the development of the strike, as was the case of Julio Aybar, Santiago Iglesias, Eduardo Conde, and Ramón Romero Rosa.

While night schools, *tribunas*, and the printed word merged together in the complexities of everyday life and the FLT continued to coordinate the strike, the UOF maintained its militancy. Each edition of *Unión Obrera* published during the strike documented multiple *mítines* organized by the UOF. These *mítines* took place in barrios throughout the Southern district. By March, 1905, the UOF was not alone for it counted with the participation of island-wide leaders, not only local mid-level organizers as had been the case in the preceding months.

On March 22, José Storer, Santiago Iglesias, and Eduardo Conde arrived in Yauco for a public meeting. A commission of workers greeted them in the train station—a means of transportation not every worker could afford—and guided them to the local FLT venue to meet with local labor leaders. The *mitin* took place at seven in the evening in the house that served as the FLT's venue in Yauco. After the meeting ended, the leaders left for the strike's main offices in Ponce. The next week, on March 26, Conde, Iglesias, and Storer traveled to Santa Isabel for another public meeting. These *mítines* were part of a propaganda tour organized by the FLT to promote the strike. By this point in the strike, island-wide leaders traveled in the FLT's car in order to get to their destinations faster.<sup>93</sup>

On April 2, 1905 as the FLT worked hard promoting the strike around the Southern district, three different *mítines* were organized by the UOF in Yauco. These took place simultaneously in *Caño de Guánica*, *Barrio Algarrobas*, and *Barrio Magos*. Out of the three, *Unión Obrera* only documented the latter. It took place in the house of a worker by the name of Benito Villó. The press also talks about a peculiarity of this meeting; "a beautiful nucleus of ladies decided to support the movement of labor redemption."<sup>94</sup> This is important because in 1905 the sexual division of labor informed most social relations in Puerto Rico, including those inside of the labor movement. Women's role in the family structure and the peasant economy was of great value. They were in charge of unpaid labor that included cleaning, ironing, sweeping, cooking, raising farm animals, and using medicinal plants to cure illnesses.<sup>95</sup> Yet, during the strike they did not limit themselves to home labor. Women actively participated in outside activities along with men.

Although women were not part of what Ramos Mattei calls "the rural proletariat labour force," they took part in the strike in order to claim a voice and space that had been denied to them.<sup>96</sup> According to an official U.S. report made by Commissioner Carrol in 1898: "Women are rarely seen at work in the fields. Sometimes they assist at the mill in

putting cane in the carrier which takes it to the cylinders.”<sup>97</sup> Although it is not until 1904 that the records of the FLT document eight *Unión de Damas* (Ladies’ Unions), Blanca Silvestrini has shown that in 1899, women workers in *La Colectiva* tobacco factory in San Juan stopped production for a few days. They took time from work to improve their workspace. The press argued that the women in this factory were known for making *petacas* (causing trouble).<sup>98</sup>

During the 1905 strike, the FLT organized a series of *comisiones* (committees) in charge of collecting money and provisions for the striking workers. They were mostly composed of *señoritas* (young ladies) and were active during the day. Women went knocking door to door, gave impromptu speeches on street corners in solidarity with the men, and went into corner stores asking for donations. Other activities included attending *mítines*, raising their voices during the *tribunas* to challenge the arguments being made by male speakers, as well as creating a network of support that provided food and clean clothing for workers imprisoned during the strike.<sup>99</sup>

These actions can be seen as part of a wider range of female labor leaders such as Luisa Capetillo, who wrote multiple books on feminism and anarchism, edited newspapers, and sometimes clashed with labor leaders advocating women’s rights; Dominica González, who talked at a labor meeting organized by the newspaper *Ensayo Obrero* in 1898; Paca Escabí, who attacked U.S. colonialism, spoke at *mítines*, and wrote on labor issues; as well as militant women such as Juana Colón, Concepción (Concha) Torres, Genara Pagán, Franca Armino, among others.<sup>100</sup>

The strike created a space for women to demand participation and laid the groundwork for their future militancy. After the strike ended, the FLT recognized a *Unión de Damas* (Ladies’ Union) in the Southern district during the strike.<sup>101</sup> Two years after, in 1907, “the FLT had established unions of women tobacco strippers, coffee processors, domestic servants, and laundresses throughout the island.”<sup>102</sup> Nonetheless, as Blanca Silvestrini pointed out, even with all the examples of women’s labor militancy in this time period, their decision-making role inside of the FLT was very limited.<sup>103</sup>

Children were another social group that played an active role in the development of the strike. Children acquired their first, and sometimes only, education in their homes. Since their early ages they became embedded in a gender division of labor as girls would stay in the domestic sphere where they learned to cook, clean, sew, as well as to look for wood and water from the nearest river. Boys took care of animals, brought water, and, at the age of seven or eight started generating an income by working in the cane fields. In the fields, boys from the ages of seven to ten were in charge of taking care of animals, supplying water



and food for workers, and collecting crops. Since they had no access to formal education, much of their learning was done through observation, conversations with adults, and practice.<sup>104</sup>

During the strike, groups of children from the ages of seven to ten years old organized autonomous committees to collect funds. The money was given back to the FLT's strike committees to cover propaganda expenses.<sup>105</sup> Friendship and getting together with their peers was a vital experience for the development of these children. Participating in the strike was part of their everyday life but was also seen as part of their adult development. That is, while they were playing games and enjoying themselves, children were taking part in the bigger project of the strike and, in a sense, were becoming workers like the adults they observed and learned from. The active participation of women and children are clear examples of threads of solidarity that were interwoven with the struggle workers were developing.

On Sunday April 9, 1905, Julio Aybar, based in Mayagüez and editor in chief of the newspaper *Unión Obrera*, and his secretary, Antonio Olavarria, toured the area of Yauco to gather support for the strike. Immediately after arriving they went into *mítines* with local workers from the UOF. After officially establishing a strike committee in the town of Yauco, they organized two rallies. The first took place in the *Barrio Algarrobas* and another in the *Barrio Las Magas*. After the latter, 135 agricultural workers got together and created a new labor union. Aybar and Olavarria ended their first day in Yauco speaking from a *tribuna* in front of more than 2,000 workers.<sup>106</sup>

The next morning Aybar and Olavarria toured the area, organized unions, and promoted the strike. They tried to schedule *mítines* with some local landowners but were ignored. After speaking in front of a crowd from the balcony of the FLT venue in Yauco, the local police lieutenant threatened Julio Aybar with arresting him if he proceeded with the organization of public *mítines* or rallies. The lieutenant warned Aybar that he would monitor all of FLT's activities and that any other meeting or rally would be broken up "with clubs." The next day the police did not allow workers to gather publically or to organize any rallies. Angered, Aybar told the police lieutenant that constitutional warranties had not been suspended in Puerto Rico.<sup>107</sup> That morning the strike committee sent various telegrams to the governor, finally receiving a favorable answer at two in the afternoon. A few minutes after receiving the governor's telegram, labor leaders and organizers took the streets and called for an improvised rally. More than 3,000 workers gathered in front of the FLT's venue to listen to Aybar from the *tribuna*.<sup>108</sup> The following days—until the official strike declaration on April 18, 1905—the FLT held daily rallies or *mítines* that were attended by thousands of workers.

On Sunday, April 16, more than 1,000 people gathered for a rally in *Barrio Capitanejo*. Not feeling comfortable with the presence of the Insular Police, the leaders of the FLT decided to call off the event. As workers walked towards another meeting that was taking place in *Barrio Arús*, police officers attacked and arrested a worker by the name of Juan Caliente for carrying a small stick with him. This event ended with many more arrests that set the tone for another rally later that day. That afternoon, more than 6,000 workers gathered in the *Plaza Las Delicias*, the main public space in the center of Ponce. They were there to listen to a group of labor leaders at a public meeting. As Eugenio Sánchez López took the podium and started his speech, Detective Gutiérrez from the insular police attacked one of the workers in the crowd with a club. Immediately, the police started shooting their guns as Captain Felipe Silén and Lieutenant Ramón Guanil led a group of thirty police officers that physically attacked and arrested people indiscriminately.<sup>109</sup> More than forty workers were injured and various labor leaders arrested.<sup>110</sup>

In both events that took place in April 16, 1905, the U.S. flag was used by workers in their rallies, along with the red socialist flag, and became an important symbol. One of the main accusations made by police officers after the events of April 16, 1905, was that the U.S. flag had been *ultrajada* (insulted) by the workers. Conversely, workers argued that it had been Lieutenant Ramón Guanil who had violently taken the flag from a laborer's hands and allowed his horse to step on it as he rode away.<sup>111</sup> The American Flag, colloquially called by workers the "National Flag," was seen "as symbol of Liberty for the North American people."<sup>112</sup> Thus, they thought they were "sheltered by the liberties guaranteed by every piece of land in which the American Flag waves."<sup>113</sup> This analogy did not respond to reality as Puerto Ricans were not considered American citizens until the Jones Act of 1917, and even then they were not fully protected by the U.S. constitution.<sup>114</sup>

The events of April 16, 1905, shifted the discursive nature of the strike. Condemnations of the events served as a way for workers to negotiate their representation with the island's government. The next day workers in Yauco sent a letter to the American governor Beekman Winthrop with the signatures of more than 800 laborers. They demanded legal action against the Insular Police because they wanted the "compliance of justice for the civilized people."<sup>115</sup> Another letter demanding the same type of action was sent to the governor signed by more than 1,600 workers.<sup>116</sup> The high number of signatures demonstrates the highly effective organizing ability of the strike's leaders and the buy-in and eagerness of the workers. Ramón Romero Rosa, a FLT affiliate and member of the House of Delegates, and Eduardo Conde paid a visit to the governor after receiving telegrams from the town of Arecibo where



*Unión Obrera* newspaper, April 23, 1905. Puerto Rican Labor Press, Babbidge Library at the University of Connecticut.

the police threatened workers with dissolving their rallies with bullets.

Citing the first amendment of the constitution of the United States, Conde and Romero Rosa asked the governor to sign a document in which he assured that the “right of *libre pensamiento* (free thinking)

for the working citizen of Puerto Rico” would be protected. When the governor declined, Conde and Romero Rosa told him they would contact Washington directly through Santiago Iglesias Pantín and Samuel Gompers.<sup>117</sup> The events of April 16 created a debate between the local government, the FLT and the AFL through the local and international press. The government and the sugar plantations counteracted by imposing, for the first time on the island, a legal injunction against some of the most important labor leaders of the strike and the FLT, enjoining them of making any public expression related to the strike.<sup>118</sup>

Since early 1905 the members of the FLT had been organizing their Third National Congress to take place in the town of Mayagüez on May 1<sup>st</sup>. It had to be cancelled during the last weeks of April because “all the leaders were working on the [Southern] strike.”<sup>119</sup> May 1<sup>st</sup> had a symbolic connotation and was used by workers around the world as a way to remember the 1886’s “Chicago Martyrs” of labor.<sup>120</sup> The strike finally ended on that same day and *Unión Obrera* reported, “We celebrate the universal May 1<sup>st</sup> at the same time that we reinstate the legality of labor unions in Ponce, taking workers out of the consternation they were submerged in.”<sup>121</sup>

Through the 328 telegrams sent from national and international comrades in solidarity with the strikers, to the four manifestos written and published, along with the 25,000 leaflets handed out, and the 464 *mítines* that the FLT pushed forward, workers created a precedent for future struggles in the island. The strike was the largest and most complex labor organizing effort the island had ever seen up to 1905. The FLT organized 8 agricultural unions, with more than 1,500 workers, as well as unions of shoemakers, carpenters, and bakers.<sup>122</sup> Before the 1905 strike ended, the FLT was planning another strike to take place in 1906’s harvest season.<sup>123</sup> Also, the following year, some FLT members organized the *Partido Obrero Socialista* (Sociality Labor Party), which became a stronghold in the Northern town of Arecibo.<sup>124</sup> After the strike ended, the FLT struggled to construct an institutional identity that would allow the labor organization to negotiate with colonial officials and become a real political power in the island.

Workers earned a raise in their salaries and some of their demands were met, but the process had a deeper symbolic aspect. The impact and success of the 1905 Southern strike is still debated among historians. Some, like Gervasio García, Ángel Quintero, and Humberto García Muñiz, have argued that despite the determination and tenacity of the FLT, the strike was a failure as the labor union was unable to organize agricultural workers afterwards. Félix Córdova Iturregui and Ileana Rodríguez-Silva offer more nuanced analyses. Córdova argues that it could be considered a victory because workers did earn a raise in their

salaries, yet it can also be seen as a defeat as the FLT was not recognized neither by the sugar nor the sugar mills. Meanwhile, Rodríguez-Silva argues, “The urgency of the strike was the only force that was finally able to unify the labor movement.”<sup>125</sup>

The case of the Southern agricultural strike allows us to appreciate the complexities of the labor movement in its early years. Rafael Bernabe and César Ayala point out, “despite the pledges of Americanism, the early history of the FLT was a tale of violent confrontations. It was only a result of insistent mobilization that the labor was able to secure effective recognition of the right to assemble and strike.”<sup>126</sup> My study shows that the strike preparations also gave labor leaders, the FLT, and workers, the needed tools to create their own working class institutions, which, in turn, created classist discourses and narratives. I also demonstrated how the strike was neither spontaneous nor organized by the FLT single-handedly. Instead, it depended on much groundwork by local workers and labor unions. This, in turn, problematizes simple narratives of the labor movement as it demonstrates the complexities of experiencing, adapting, and practicing resistance in diverse ways.

But, what did the strike actually mean to the workers? Did it become a romanticized myth that was perpetuated throughout the next three decades? What role, if any, did it play in the political juncture of Puerto Rico in the twentieth-century? How did the strike allow workers to create notions of citizenship, progress, and being modern? I have not had the space in this paper to answer these questions. There is still much to learn from the events that unraveled in the first months of 1905. Through my research I can tentatively conclude that through the processes that developed during the strike—like the multiple educational projects, such as schools, newspapers, and *mítines*—workers forged a new space in which they could put their ideas into practice.

An editorial published in *Unión Obrera* after the strike ended proudly announced: “In Yauco, because of the strike, more than 20 orators have emerged to constantly promote our ideas of union as a way of regenerating our class and change the tortuous road it is on.”<sup>127</sup> Yet, experiencing the strike surely left an impact in the lives of everyone that took part in it. Women challenged misogynistic relations by demanding integration through active participation. The results can be appreciated immediately as they formed an *Unión de Damas* in the Southern area. Thus creating a precedent for the role of women inside the organized labor movement. Children gained experience by submerging themselves in a space in which they were seen as political beings and not merely innocent beings.

The strike also allowed the FLT to start constructing a political identity that permitted them to negotiate with the Puerto Rican government.



Not only did the FLT have some political leverage by having some of its members elected in the House of Delegates but also the massive number of people they mobilized during the strike was something the government could not ignore. Pressure through mobilization, letters, and telegrams from workers, FLT leaders, and Samuel Gompers from the AFL, were a constant reminder of the power the labor movement was developing in its early years. In sum, the strike laid the labor movement's foundation for years to come.

### Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Blanca G. Silvestrini, Mark Overmyer-Velázquez and Mark Healey for their constant support. Also, many thanks to Aurora Santiago-Ortiz, Michael Dintenfass, Cornelia Dayton, Janet K. Watson, Juan José Baldrich, Montse Feu, Aldo Lauria-Santiago, Gabrielle Westcott, Evelyn Solá, and the two anonymous reviewers. All of their comments, suggestions, and good spirits were key elements in getting this article together. Nonetheless, any mistake, error, or fault in the text is solely the author's responsibility.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> For an excellent analysis on gender relations during the first years of the organized labor movement in Puerto Rico, see Eileen Findlay, *Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870-1920* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), Chapter 5.
- <sup>2</sup> For a glimpse at the everyday life of workers in the sugar cane fields, see Sidney W. Mintz, *Taso: Trabajador de la caña* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 2001). A more recent study is Margarita Vargas Canales, *Del batey al papel mojado: Campesinos cañeros y vida cotidiana en Puerto Rico* (México: UNAM, Centro de Investigaciones sobre América Latina y el Caribe, 2011); Eugenio Sánchez López, "The Agricultural Work," *Porto Rico Workingmen's Journal* Vol. I, No. 2 (February 1905), 1-3. From now on, all of the sources that are originally in Spanish will be translated by the author.
- <sup>3</sup> Original citations: "Justicia o Huelga: No más explotación;" "Si los patronos no ceden a ¡La Huelga!;" "Obreros todos a la huelga." See *Unión Obrera*, March 26, 1905, 2; April 9, 1905, 2; April 30, 1905, 3.
- <sup>4</sup> Corresponsal, "Yauco obrero," *Unión Obrera*, March 19, 1905, 2.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

- <sup>6</sup> "A los trabajadores de Mayagüez," *Unión Obrera*, April 30, 1905, 3.
- <sup>7</sup> For a brief outlook on the role and bureaucratic structure of local unions under the FLT and the AFL by the president of the FLT, see Santiago Iglesias Pantín, *¿Quiénes somos? Organizaciones obreras* (San Juan: Puerto Rico Progress Publishing, Co., 1911), 25-38.
- <sup>8</sup> Eduardo Conde, "Huelga en Ponce," *Unión Obrera*, March 26, 1905, 2.
- <sup>9</sup> According to Antonio Gramsci, the notion of "intellectuals" as a distinct social category independent of class was a myth, "'organic' intellectuals [are] the thinking and organizing element of a particular fundamental social class. These organic intellectuals are distinguished less by their profession, which may be any job characteristic of their class, than by their function in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong." See, Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 2008), 3-23.
- <sup>10</sup> Carlos Sanabria, "The Puerto Rican Organized Workers' Movement and the American Federation of Labor, 1901 to 1934" (Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 2000), 186, Appendix 2.
- <sup>11</sup> For a list of organizers that reported to the *American Federationist Journal*, see Carlos Sanabria, "The Puerto Rican Organized Workers' Movement...", 190, Appendix 4. Santiago Iglesias offers useful information about the role of these volunteer organizers in local unions and the FLT in: Santiago Iglesias, *¿Quiénes somos?*, 25-26.
- <sup>12</sup> Francisco Lluch Negroni, *Álbum histórico de Yauco, Puerto Rico* (Valencia: Editorial Guerri, 1960), 145.
- <sup>13</sup> See Unión de Tipógrafos, Núm. 422, "Manifiesto al pueblo trabajador en general y a sus simpatizantes," *Unión Obrera*, April 9, 1905, 2. *Unión de Barberos de Mayagüez*, "A la huelga: Manifiesto de la Unión de Barberos de Mayagüez," *Ibid*, April 16, 1905, 3. Jesús M. Balsac and Abraham Peña, "Justicia o huelga: No más explotación," *Ibid*, April 30, 1905, 3.
- <sup>14</sup> The *Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Puertorriqueña* (Center for the Study of Puerto Rican Reality) or C.E.R.E.P., was instrumental in the development of the *Nueva Historia* with Gervasio García and Ángel Quintero Rivera among its founders. See, Fernando Picó, "Historiografía puertorriqueña del siglo XX," in *Historia de Puerto Rico*, ed. Luis González Vales and María Dolores Luque, vol. 4 *Historia de las Antillas* (Madrid: Ediciones Doce Calles, 2012), 539-544.



- <sup>15</sup> For summaries of older studies, see María de los Ángeles Castro Arroyo, "De Salvador Brau a la 'novísima historia: un replanteamiento y una crítica,'" *Op. Cit., Boletín del Centro de Investigaciones Históricas*, no. 4 (1988): 9-25; Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, "New Currents in Puerto Rican History: Legacy, Continuity, and Challenges on the 'Nueva Historia,'" *Latin American Research Review* 32, no. 3 (1997), 193-208.
- <sup>16</sup> By Gervasio L. García and Ángel G. Quintero Rivera, see *Desafío y solidaridad: Breve historia del movimiento obrero puertorriqueño* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1982); "Breve resumen de historia del movimiento obrero," *Claridad Suplemento En Rojo* (May 1-7, 1981): 2-5; "Historia del movimiento obrero puertorriqueño," in *Historia del movimiento obrero en América Latina*, ed. Pablo González Casanova (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1984), 358-412;
- <sup>17</sup> From Ángel G. Quintero Rivera, see *Ponce: La capital alterna: Sociología de la sociedad civil y la cultura urbana en la historia de la relación entre clase, "raza" y nación en Puerto Rico* (Ponce: Ponceños de Verdad, Centro de Investigaciones Sociales de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2003); *Patricios y plebeyos: Burgueses, hacendados, artesanos y obreros: Las relaciones de clase en el Puerto Rico de cambio de siglo* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1988); *Conflictos de clase y política en Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1978).
- <sup>18</sup> Among some of the most seminal and influential we find: Blanca Silvestrini, *Los trabajadores puertorriqueños y el Partido Socialista* (Río Piedras: Editorial Universitaria, 1978); Fernando Picó, *Al filo del poder: Subalternos y dominantes en Puerto Rico, 1793-1910* (Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1993); Juan José Baldrich, *Sembraron la no-siembra: Los cosecheros de tabaco puertorriqueños frente a las corporaciones tabacaleras, 1920-1934* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1988); Francisco Scarano, *Sugar and Slavery: The Plantation Economy of Ponce, 1800-1850* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984); Erik J. Pérez Velazco, ed., *100 años de sindicalismo puertorriqueño: Memorias del Congreso Internacional del Centenario del Sindicalismo organizado en Puerto Rico, 1898-1998* (Humacao: Centro de Documentación Obrera Santiago Iglesias Pantín, 2007); Miles Galvin, *The Organized Labor Movement in Puerto Rico* (London: Associated University Presses, 1979); César Andreu Iglesias, ed., *Memorias de Bernardo Vega: Contribución a la historia de la comunidad puertorriqueña en Nueva York* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1994); Juan Angel Silén, *Apuntes para la historia del movimiento obrero* (San Juan: Ediciones Gaviota, 2001); Rubén

- Dávila Santiago, *El derribo de las murallas: Orígenes intelectuales del socialismo en Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: Editorial Cultural, 1988); Sidney Mintz, *Taso: Trabajador de la caña* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1988); Eileen Findlay, *Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870-1920* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999); Ileana M. Rodríguez, *Silencing Race: Disentangling Blackness, Colonialism, and National Identities in Puerto Rico* (New York: Palgrave, 2012); Bianca M. Medina Báez, *Juana Colón y la lucha de la mujer obrera* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 2013); and Carlos Sanabria, "The Puerto Rican Organized Workers' Movement and the American Federation of Labor, 1901 to 1934."
- <sup>19</sup> Córdova Iturregui, Félix. *Ante la frontera del infierno: El impacto social de las huelgas azucareras y portuarias de 1905*. (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 2007).
- <sup>20</sup> Blanca Silvestrini, *Violencia y criminalidad en Puerto Rico, 1898-1973: Apuntes para un estudio de historia social* (Río Piedras, P.R.: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1980), 39; For examples of organizing prior to 1898, see Gervasio L. García and Ángel G. Quintero Rivera, *Desafío y solidaridad*, 13-34.
- <sup>21</sup> Gervasio García and Ángel G. Quintero, *Desafío y solidaridad*, 35.
- <sup>22</sup> César J. Ayala and Rafael Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History since 1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 62; it is important to mention that in 1897 workers in Puerto Rico were also in contact with the founder of the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, Pablo Iglesias. See, José Ferrer y Ferrer, *Los ideales del siglo XX* (San Juan: Tip. La Correspondencia de Puerto Rico, 1932), 29.
- <sup>23</sup> César J. Ayala and Rafael Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 62. The AFL's political orientation during this era has been considered "pure and simple" tradeunionism that focused on economic gains and renounced any political action. There has been some recent debates around the topic as some authors, such as Dorothy Sue Cobble, claim the AFL to be a progressive, and even radical, heterogeneous organization while others, such as Julie Greene, dismiss this by pointing out that it would be irresponsible to call it radical because of its imperialist, racist, and economicist orientation. See Dorothy Sue Cobble, *et al.*, "Up for Debate: The Fall and Rise of Samuel Gompers," *Labor* 10, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 61-116.

- 24 Blanca Silvestrini, *Los trabajadores puertorriqueños*, 21. For an analysis of Samuel Gompers and the Puerto Rican labor movement, see Carlos Sanabria, "Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor in Puerto Rico," *Centro Journal* Vol. XVII, No. 1 (Spring 2005), 141-161.
- 25 Ileana Rodríguez-Silva argues, "The issues highlighted in the battles between the FRT and FLT included disagreements about strategy, partisan politics, personal antagonisms, challenges to patriarchal social relations, and questions about the relationship between Puerto Rican workers and their U.S. counterparts in the American Federation of Labor." See Ileana Rodríguez-Silva, *Silencing Race*, 167. These conflicts sometimes ended in bloody confrontations. Some workers were attacked by armed groups known as *las turbas republicanas*. They supported the Republican Party to which the FRT was affiliated. *Las turbas republicanas* were clandestine groups that were created to defend the Republican Party and used looting and physical attacks on various FLT members as part of their tactics. For a full history of the *turbas*, see Negrón Portillo, Mariano. *Las turbas republicanas, 1900-1904* (Río Piedras, P.R.: Ediciones Huracán, 1990).
- 26 Gervasio García and Ángel Quintero, *Desafío y solidaridad: Breve historia del movimiento obrero puertorriqueño* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1997), 45-49.
- 27 Humberto García Muñiz, *Sugar and Power in the Caribbean: The South Porto Rico Sugar Company in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, 1900-1921* (Río Piedras: Editorial de Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2010), 394.
- 28 Sidney Mintz, "The Cultural History of a Puerto Rican Sugar Cane Plantation: 1876-1949," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 33, no. 2 (May, 1953): 229. Some historians argue that the sugar Central developed in the nineteenth century although its growth and popularity developed later. See, Martínez Vergne, Teresita, *Capitalism in Colonial Puerto Rico: Central San Vicente in the Late Nineteenth Century*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992. Ramos Mattei, Andrés. *La sociedad del azúcar en Puerto Rico: 1870-1910* (Río Piedras: Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1988. Ramos Mattei, Andrés. *La hacienda azucarera: Su crecimiento y crisis en Puerto Rico (Siglo XIX)*. San Juan: CEREP, 1981.
- 29 César J. Ayala, *The American Sugar Kingdom: The Plantation Economy of the Spanish Caribbean* (Chapel Hill: The University of North

- Carolina Press, 1999), 122, 141.
- <sup>30</sup> Humberto García Muñiz, *Sugar and Power in the Caribbean*, 400.
- <sup>31</sup> I would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for clarifying this point.
- <sup>32</sup> Federación Libre de Ponce, *16 de abril: Crímenes policiacos* (Ponce: Establecimiento tipográfico de M. López, 1905), 4.
- <sup>33</sup> Federación Libre de Ponce, *16 de abril de 1905*, 29.
- <sup>34</sup> N.a., "Ponce obrero," *Unión Obrera*, May 7, 1905, 1.
- <sup>35</sup> See, Humberto García Muñiz, *Sugar and Power in the Caribbean*, 395-397.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>37</sup> In the 1890s there had been some national mobilizations but these efforts were neither organized by a labor institution nor working class oriented. In the first years of the organized labor movement we find sporadic strikes throughout the country but they could not compare to the struggles of 1905 in terms of the number of workers who were mobilized. See Gervasio L. García and Ángel G. Quintero, *Desafío y solidaridad: Breve historia del movimiento obrero puertorriqueño* (Río Piedras, P.R.: Ediciones Huracán, 1997), 27; Blanca Silvestrini, *Violencia y criminalidad en Puerto Rico*, 39-41; Juan Ángel Silén, *Apuntes para la historia del movimiento obrero* (San Juan, P.R.: Ediciones Gaviota, 2001), 29.
- <sup>38</sup> See Félix Córdova Iturregui, *Ante la frontera del infierno: El impacto social de las huelgas azucareras y portuarias de 1905* (Río Piedras, P.R.: Ediciones Huracán, 2007), Chapter 1.
- <sup>39</sup> Felix Córdova Iturregui, *Ante la frontera del infierno*, 65.
- <sup>40</sup> Igualdad Iglesias de Pagán, *Obrerismo en Puerto Rico: Época de Santiago Iglesias Pantín* (Palencia de Castilla: Ediciones Juan Ponce de León, 1973), 348; Jesús Ma. Balsac, "Informe," *Unión Obrera*, January 22, 1905, 2; Jesús Ma. Balsac, *Apuntes históricos* (Mayagüez, P.R.: Imprenta Montalvo, 1906), 37-43.
- <sup>41</sup> Rubén Dávila Santiago identified three spheres that coexisted dialectically. The administrative sphere that kept contacts with the AFL, negotiated with authorities and held a mostly reformist orientation. The second sphere was composed of intellectuals, who did not necessarily agree with those in the first sphere. The third one was composed of workers from the base. See Rubén Dávila Santiago,

- “El pensamiento social obrero a comienzos del siglo XX en Puerto Rico,” *Revista de Historia de la Asociación Histórica Puertorriqueña*, Year 1, No. 2 (July-December, 1985), 164.
- <sup>42</sup> Rubén Dávila Santiago, *Teatro obrero en Puerto Rico, 1900-1920* (Río Piedras: Editorial Edil, 1985), 91.
- <sup>43</sup> Eduardo Conde, “Los braceros de Yauco aprueban la huelga,” *Unión Obrera*, April 3, 1905, 2.
- <sup>44</sup> Because of lack of sources it is impossible to know exactly how many unions like the UOF were active in this time period. I trace the UOF’s activities by following their activities in the newspaper *Unión Obrera*.
- <sup>45</sup> For some biographical information, see Cerlis E., “Leonardo Pacheco,” *Unión Obrera*, February 26, 1905, 2.
- <sup>46</sup> By 1912 Pacheco had escalated the FLT’s bureaucratic ladder and landed a position as the Executive Council’s 4th Vice President. It is important to note that a President, a General Secretary, a Treasurer, and seven Vice-Presidents composed the Executive Council of the FLT. Each Vice-President was in charge of a different judicial district of the island. Hence, vice presidents composed the executive and administrative body of the FLT at an island-wide level. See, *Centro de Documentación Obrera Santiago Iglesias Pantín* (Center for Labor Documentation Santiago Iglesias Pantín, hereafter as CDOSIP), “Letter from the FLT’s Executive Council to Governor George R. Colton,” Fund: Santiago Iglesias Pantín, Box 12, Folder 22. We also find another official document from 1915 in which he still holds the same position, see CDOSIP, “Letter from the FLT’s Executive Council to Hon. Frank P. Walsh, Chairman of the Commission on Industrial Relations,” Fund: Santiago Iglesias Pantín, Box 14, Folder 2. Also, see, Santiago Iglesias Pantín, *¿Quiénes somos?*, 25-26.
- <sup>47</sup> Francisco Lluch Negroni, *Álbum histórico de Yauco, Puerto Rico* (Valencia: Editorial Guerri, 1960), 146.
- <sup>48</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, “Physical Space, Social Space, and Habitus,” *Raport*, 10 (1996), n.p.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>50</sup> Un Unionado, “Propaganda obrera en Yauco,” *Unión Obrera*, February 5, 1905, 2. The article does not explain who they were referring to with the term “martyrs of labor.” Nonetheless, May Day and the Haymarket Martyrs were well known in the island at the time. See,

Jorell Meléndez Badillo, "Orígenes del 1ro de Mayo en Puerto Rico," *Claridad: El periódico de la nación puertorriqueña*, Number 3,082, Year LII (April 26 – May, 2012): 26-29.

- <sup>51</sup> According to Rafael Alonso Torres, this was not uncommon, as workers needed the consent of government official or the insular police to make public demonstrations. Any government official or police officer could interrupt orators and make them change their wording or the tone they were using. Cited in Kenneth Lugo del Toro, *Nacimiento y auge de la Confederación General de Trabajadores, 1940-1945* (San Juan: Universidad Interamericana, 2013), 20.
- <sup>52</sup> Hereafter all citations in Spanish are reproduced with grammatical errors as they were printed. Original citation: "...rectificación q. hizo en language florido y con más energia al verse interrumpido." In José Manuel Ortiz, "Propaganda obrera en Yauco," *Unión Obrera*, February 12, 1905, 2.
- <sup>53</sup> Letter from Governor Arthur Yager to President Wilson, July 30th, 1918. Cited in Julio Ramos, ed., *Amor y anarquía: Los escritos de Luisa Capetillo* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1992), 37. Emphasis added.
- <sup>54</sup> Un Corresponsal, "Propaganda obrera en Yauco," *Unión Obrera*, February 26, 1905, 2.
- <sup>55</sup> Eduardo Conde, "Huelga en Ponce," *Unión Obrera*, March 26, 1905, 2.
- <sup>56</sup> Original full citation: "¿Cuántas haciendas hay en su jurisdicción? ¿Cuántos trabajadores se emplean en ellas? ¿Cuántas horas trabajan? ¿Cuanto ganan de jornal diario? ¿Con comida, ó sin ella? ¿Que jornal diario debieran ganar los peones como minimum? ¿Cuántas horas debieran trabajar? ¿En caso de que los dueños de las haciendas no atiendan á nuestras peticiones, estais dispuestos para ir á la huelga? ¿Queréis como representantes á la Federación Libre?" In Eduardo Conde, "Huelga en Ponce," *Unión Obrera*, March 26, 1905, 2.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* Although we agree with Félix Córdova Iturregui when he argues that the Northern strike prepared the experience of the Southern strike, we should take into consideration that only labor leaders had enough resources to travel from one side of the island to the other. Thus, we have to add that it was the FLT as an institution, and the propaganda it produced, that was able to breach the spatial and temporal gap between strikes. See Félix Córdova Iturregui, *Ante la*

*frontera del infierno*, 63.

- <sup>58</sup> Ángel G. Quintero Rivera, *Ponce: La Capital Alterna* (Ponce: Pon-  
ceños de Verdad, 2003).
- <sup>59</sup> Original citation: “*La Capital Alterna* revela, [...] las conexiones  
vitales entre ese triple encausamiento de fuerzas productivas y los  
rasgos modernos plasmados en el Ponce hecho ciudad: las trazas  
cosmopolitas en la arquitectura y el diseño en los espacios urbanos,  
el espíritu liberal-reformista de una porción de la elite y el activismo  
obrero primordial de los artesanos.” In Francisco A. Scarano, “Pró-  
logo: Una imprescindible historia alterna,” in Ángel G. Quintero  
Rivera, *Ponce: La capital alterna*, 18. Emphasis in original.
- <sup>60</sup> Carlos Sanabria, ed. *Ricardo Campos: In Memory* (San Juan: Escuela  
Manuel Francisco Rojas, 2013), 28.
- <sup>61</sup> Original citation: “Todas las clases sociales simpatizan con el movi-  
miento y si los trabajadores de Ponce, responde á nuestra voz (como  
lo vienen haciendo en la actualidad) puede asegurarse que este Dis-  
trito, será un baluarte y quizás el Cuartel General, del movimiento  
obrero en Pto. Rico.” In Eduardo Conde, “Ponce obrero,” *Unión  
Obrera*, March 19, 1905, 3.
- <sup>62</sup> Félix Córdova Iturregui, *Ante la frontera del infierno*, 17; Miles  
Galvin, *The Organized Labor Movement in Puerto Rico* (London:  
Associated University Presses, 1979), 60.
- <sup>63</sup> “Eduardo Conde, “Huelga en Ponce,” *Unión Obrera*, March 26,  
1905, 2. By “sugar Trusts” they were referring to U.S.-owned cor-  
porations that were monopolizing the sugar industry in the island.  
See César Ayala and Rafael Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American  
Century*, 36-38.
- <sup>64</sup> Unión de Barberos de Mayagüez, “A la huelga: Manifiesto,” *Unión  
Obrera*, April 16, 1905, 3.
- <sup>65</sup> Eduardo Conde, “Ponce Obrero,” *Unión Obrera*, March 23, 1905, 3.
- <sup>66</sup> N.a., “Huelga en Ponce,” *Unión Obrera*, March 26, 1905, 2.
- <sup>67</sup> Julio Senges, “Movimiento obrero de Ponce,” *Unión Obrera*, April  
16, 1905, 2.
- <sup>68</sup> For an analysis about *wildcat strikes* and its spontaneous tradition  
from a nineteenth century perspective, see Perrot, Michelle. *Work-  
ers on Strike: France 1871-1890*. New Haven: Yale University Press,  
1987.



<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Federación Libre de Ponce, *16 de abril*, 31.

<sup>71</sup> For a glimpse of these wild-cat strikes from a member of the FLT that later became one of its harshest critics, see Andrés Rodríguez Vera, *Los fantoches del obrerismo* (San Juan: Tipografía Negrón Flores, 1915), 30-50.

<sup>72</sup> Original citation: "Con grandes dificultades y peligros, nuestros organizadores tienen éxito en los barrios donde viven estos campesinos proporcionándoles un conocimiento primario de los principios de la organización del trabajo por medio de conferencias." In Santiago Iglesias Pantín, *Luchas emancipadoras*, vol. 1, 339. Emphasis added.

<sup>73</sup> Original extended citation: "La Gran Central Guánica, el Trust del Azúcar que está elaborando millones y millones de dólares en esta zafra, tiene que comprender, tiene que saber, que nosotros los trabajadores un poco instruidos y conocedores de nuestra dignidad humana y obrera, no vamos a permitir de ninguna manera que nuestros hermanos trabajadores, mueran como animales [...] Si este hermoso movimiento fracasara, si esta huelga se pierde, los campesinos ganarán en experiencia, porque si el temor u otras causas les obligan a ser débiles, en otra ocasión, sabrán hacerse fuertes para la victoria. Entonces comprenderán lo que mil veces les hemos predicado...." In Eduardo Conde, "Huelga en Ponce," *Unión Obrera*, March 26, 1905, 2.

<sup>74</sup> Henry K. Carroll. *Report of Porto Rico, 1899*. (San Juan: Fundación Puertorriqueña de las Humanidades; Academia Puertorriqueña de la Historia; Oficina del Historiador de Puerto Rico; and the National Endowment for the Humanities, 2005), 32-33.

<sup>75</sup> Eugenio Sánchez López, "The Agricultural Work," *Porto Rico Workingmen's Journal* 1, no. 2 (February, 1905), 2.

<sup>76</sup> Original citation: "...un proyecto que ha de traer por consecuencia el levantamiento intelectual de la clase obrera, haciéndose fuerte y respetable a la vez que una garantía para el porvenir...." In N.a., "Sociedad protectora de la inteligencia del obrero," *El Obrero*, November 10, 1889, 2. This organization received various donations from different municipalities in the South of the island. It also created a network that used the newspaper as a means of communication. In the same edition we find letters from Sabana Grande and Guayama congratulating the progress of the association as well as a

list of donations made by different individuals.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> N.a., "Sociedad verdaderos amigos," *Revista Obrera*, November 19, 1893, 3.

<sup>79</sup> Archivo General de Puerto Rico, "Reglamento general de escritores y artistas en Puerto Rico," *Junghanns Collection*, Particular Collections 25, Box 79.

<sup>80</sup> For a more extensive analysis on the Social Studies Centers in the early years of the labor movement, see Dávila Santiago, Rubén. *El derribo de las murallas: Orígenes intelectuales del socialismo en Puerto Rico*. Río Piedras: Editorial Cultural, 1988; for the workers' cultural expressions, see Campos, Ricardo. "Notes on Working Class Cultural Expression in Puerto Rico." In *Ricardo Campos: In Memory, 1946-2012*. Edited by Carlos Sanabria. San Juan: Escuela Manuel Francisco Rojas, 2013.

<sup>81</sup> Corresponsal, "Yauco obrero," *Unión Obrera*, March 19, 1905, 2.

<sup>82</sup> On the notion of "stealing" time off nights, see Jacques Rancierre. *Proletarian Nights: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth-Century France*. (London and New York: Verso, 2012).

<sup>83</sup> Original citation: "...es de aplaudir sinceramente la misión impuesta por estos leales defensores de la clase á que con honor pertenecen." See, Corresponsal, "Yauco obrero," *Unión Obrera*, March 19, 1905, 2.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Original full citation: "Es necesario que todos los trabajadores estudien los métodos de la A.F. of L. y Federación Libre de los trabajadores de Puerto Rico y se compenentren de los beneficios prácticos que reporta al trabajador, para poder combatir á tantos charlatanes adúladores de la burguesía que no discuten nada más que ignorancias." See, Severo Cirino Osorio, "A dos amigos de Loisa," *Unión Obrera*, March 19, 1905, 2-3.

<sup>86</sup> From 1898 until the strike of 1905 we find, *El Porvenir Social* (1898-1899), *La Federación Obrera* (1899), *El Trabuco* (1900), *El Pan del Pobre* (1901), *La Miseria* (1901), *La Justicia* (1901), *Federación Libre* (1902), *Obrero Libre* (1902-1903), *Voz del Obrero* (1903-1919), *The Workingman's Journal* (1903-1911), and the most important, because of its circulation and longevity, *Unión Obrera*. See Jorell Meléndez Badillo, *Voces libertarias: Orígenes del anarquismo en Puerto Rico*

(Bloomington: Secret Sailor Books, 2013), 71.

- <sup>87</sup> For a more detailed history of the labor press in the island see Rafael Alonso Torres, *Cuarenta años de lucha proletaria* (San Juan: Imprenta Baldrich, 1939), 309; Lidio Cruz Monclova, "El movimiento de las ideas en el Puerto Rico del siglo XIX," *Boletín de la Academia Puertorriqueña de la Lengua* Vol 2, no. 3-4 (n.d.): 96-7.
- <sup>88</sup> For a list of these printing houses, see Jorell Meléndez Badillo, "Interpreting, De-constructing, and Deciphering Ideograms of Rebellion: An Approach to the History of Reading in Puerto Rico's Anarchist Groups at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century, 1899-1919," in *Without Borders or Limits: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Anarchist Studies*, eds., Jorell Meléndez Badillo and Nathan Jun (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 69.
- <sup>89</sup> N.a. "Actualidades," *La Miseria*, April 2, 1901, 1. It is significant, for example, that one of the reasons the anarchist newspaper *Voz Humana* went out of print was due to lack of funds in order to get their own printer. They published an open letter that was distributed locally and internationally, dated on December 2, 1906, explaining the reasons behind the newspaper's discontinuation while also making a call for solidarity: "Comrades, do not forget our laudable purpose and co-help us in acquiring Gutenberg's admirable invention that has been so beneficial to the innovations of thought in the multiple phases of human progress." See International Institute of Social History Archive, *Max Nettlau Papers*, Other Countries: Puerto Rico; 3409.
- <sup>90</sup> Original citation: "Al llegar á Ponce, se citó á una gran asamblea de los trabajadores de la Playa de esta ciudad y de la que ya han tenido cuenta los compañeros trabajadores que tienen el cuidado de estar suscritos á *Unión Obrera*, único periódico de combate que defiende á la clase obrera." In Eduardo Conde, "Ponce Obrero," *Unión Obrera*, March 19, 1905, 3.
- <sup>91</sup> Similarly to what Benjamin described in reference to the Soviet press of the 1920s, during the strike "the conventional distinction between author and public, which is upheld by the bourgeois press" began to disappear; "For the reader is at all times ready to become a writer, that is, a describer, but also a prescriber. As an expert—he gains access to authorship. Work itself has its turn to speak." In Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," in *Walter Benjamin: Reflections. Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed., Peter Demetz (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 223-225.

- <sup>92</sup> Ángel G. Quintero Rivera, *Ponce: La capital alterna*, 113, footnote 198.
- <sup>93</sup> See, Eduardo Conde, “Los braceros de Yauco aprueban la huelga,” *Unión Obrera*, April 3, 1905, 2; On March 26 the car these island-wide leaders were travelling had a flat tire after the meeting. That is why it was documented in the article. See, Mauricio Anés, “Gran Meeting,” *Unión Obrera*, April 9, 1905, 1.
- <sup>94</sup> Original citation: “La mujer también estaba representada en aquel acto por un núcleo de bellísimas damas como dispuestas á prestar su decidido apoyo al movimiento de redención obrera.” In Correspondence, “Yauco obrero,” *Unión Obrera*, April 9, 1905, 3.
- <sup>95</sup> Margarita Vargas Canales, *Del batey al papel mojado*, 41.
- <sup>96</sup> Cited in Humberto García Muñiz, *Sugar and Power in the Caribbean*, 398.
- <sup>97</sup> Cited in Humberto García Muñoz, *Sugar and Power in the Caribbean*, 398, footnote 7.
- <sup>98</sup> Blanca Silvestrini, “La mujer puertorriqueña y el movimiento obrero en la década del 1930,” in Edna Acosta-Belén, ed., *La mujer en la sociedad puertorriqueña* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1980), 73.
- <sup>99</sup> Federación Libre de Ponce, *16 de abril: Crímenes policíacos*, 20-21.
- <sup>100</sup> See, Norma Valle Ferrer, *Luisa Capetillo: Historia de una mujer proscrita* (Río Piedras: Editorial Cultural, 1990); Kirwin Shaffer, *Black Flag Boricuas: Anarchism, Antiauthoritarianism, and the Left in Puerto Rico, 1897-1921* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 110; Edna Acosta-Belén, ed. *The Puerto Rican Woman: Perspectives on Culture, History, and Society* (New York: Praeger, 1986), 9; Wilson Torres Rosario, *Juana Colón: Combatiente en el tabacal puertorriqueño* (Comerio: n.e., 2011). Bianca M. Medina Báez, *Juana Colón y la lucha de la mujer obrera* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 2013).
- <sup>101</sup> N.a., “Yauco obrero: Noticias de la huelga,” 1.
- <sup>102</sup> Eileen Finday, *Imposing Decency*, 144.
- <sup>103</sup> Blanca Silvestrini, “La mujer puertorriqueña...,” 75. On May 15, two weeks after the strike ended, a woman named Mariana Weber Dejardins published an article titled “Voz de aliento” (Voice of Encouragement) in *Unión Obrera*. In it she stressed that workers needed to follow the American Federation of Labor and, more importantly, labor leaders such as Eugenio Sánchez, Santiago

Iglesias, and Julio Aybar as they “guide us towards the light so we can escape darkness.” It was the first article published by a woman in *Unión Obrera* since the strike started and it did not address women particularly. Yet, Weber Dejardins used a language of comradeship that had been exclusive to men and made it her own, thus subverting the male-dominated narrative of *Unión Obrera* during the strike. Original citation: “...los amigos Santiago Iglesias, Eugenio Sanchez, Julio Aybar y otros os guían hacia la luz para que salgáis de las tinieblas.” In Mariana Weber Dejardins, “Voz de aliento,” *Unión Obrera*, May 15, 1905, 1. For another perspective on the topic, see Juan José Baldrich, “Gender and the Decomposition of the Cigar-Making Craft in Puerto Rico,” in *Puerto Rican Women’s History: New Perspectives*, Felix V. Matos Rodríguez and Linda C. Delgado, eds. (Armonk, New York: M.R. Sharpe, 1998), 105-125.

<sup>104</sup> Margarita Vargas Canales, *Del batey al papel mojado*, 74-75.

<sup>105</sup> For a recollection of these events, see N.a., “Noticias de la huelga,” *Unión Obrera*, May 15, 1905, 1.

<sup>106</sup> N.a., “Yauco obrero: Noticias de la huelga,” *Unión Obrera*, May 15, 1905, 1.

<sup>107</sup> Original citation: “A esta disposición imperial se le contesto que las garantías constitucionales no estaban suspendidas en Puerto Rico...” In N.a., “Yauco obrero: Noticias de la huelga,” 1.

<sup>108</sup> N.a., “Yauco obrero: Noticias de la huelga,” 1.

<sup>109</sup> The events of April 16, 1905 are detailed in, Federación Libre de Ponce, *16 de abril: Crímenes policíacos*. Ponce, P.R.: Imprenta M. López, 1905.

<sup>110</sup> Federación Libre de Trabajadores, *16 de abril*, 15-16.

<sup>111</sup> Federación Libre de Trabajadores, *16 de abril*, 8-9.

<sup>112</sup> Original citation: “No de Puerto-Rico repito, en donde ondea la Bandera Americana símbolo de Libertad para el pueblo Norteamericano...” In Federación Libre de Trabajadores, *16 de abril*, 11.

<sup>113</sup> Original citation: “Al amparo de las libertades garantizadas en todo pedazo de tierra en donde hondea la bandera americana...” In Federación Libre de Trabajadores, *16 de abril*, 6. Emphasis added.

<sup>114</sup> This issue was contended in the Puerto Rican legal sphere through the Insular Cases. Two of the most important cases were: *González v United States*, 192 U.S. 1 (1904), and *Balzac v Porto Rico*. 258 U.S.

- 298 (1922). Through these cases Puerto Rico was cataloged as an “unincorporated territory” of the United States. That is, it belonged to the United States but was not part of it. Interestingly enough, the Balzac that took part in the 1922 case was the FLT member from Mayagüez and one of the leaders of the 1905 strike. See, Duffy Burnett, Christina and Burke Marshall, eds. *Foreign in a Domestic Sense. Puerto Rico, American Expansion, and the Constitution*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001.
- <sup>115</sup> Original citation: “El pueblo legítimamente honrado de Yauco levanta su voz de protesta muy alto para que no quede ahogado en la impunidad un hecho que merece y reclama la más atenta y honrada atención de los encargados á impartir y vigilar el cumplimiento de la justicia á un pueblo civilizado.” In N.a., “Carta al gobernador,” *Unión Obrera*, April 23, 1905, 1.
- <sup>116</sup> N.a., “Protesta popular,” in *16 de abril*, 22-23.
- <sup>117</sup> Original citation: “El compañero Romero Rosa contestó: ‘Que garantice Ud el derecho á la libertad del pensamiento del ciudadano trabajador en Puerto Rico.’” In Eduardo Conde and Ramón Romero Rosa, “Sobre la huelga: Interview del gobernador con Romero Rosa y Conde,” *Unión Obrera*, April 23, 1905, 3.
- <sup>118</sup> The defendants were labor leaders, the FLT and all its members. For a copy of the injunction, see Santiago Iglesias Pantín, *Luchas emancipadoras*, Vol. I, 340-366.
- <sup>119</sup> N.a., “Congreso suspendido,” *Unión Obrera*, April 30, 1905, 2.
- <sup>120</sup> See, Jorell Meléndez, “Orígenes del primero de mayo en Puerto Rico,” *Claridad: El periódico de la nación puertorriqueña*, No. 3,082, Year LII, (May, 2011).
- <sup>121</sup> Original citation: “...terminó la jornada de huelga con el triunfo alcanzado y celebramos el 1ro de Mayo universal al mismo tiempo que restituimos á Ponce obrero á la vida del derecho, sacándolo de la consternación en que se hallaba.” In N.a., “Ponce obrero,” *Unión Obrera*, May 7, 1905, 1.
- <sup>122</sup> N.a., “Yauco obrero: Noticias de la huelga,” 1.
- <sup>123</sup> Jesús María Balsac, “Justicia o huelga,” *Unión Obrera*, April 30, 1905, 3.
- <sup>124</sup> Carlos Sanabria, “The Puerto Rican Organized Workers’ Movement and the American Federation of Labor, 1901 to 1934” (Ph.D. thesis, City University of New York, 2000), 125-126.



- <sup>125</sup> Gervasio L. García and Ángel G. Quintero Rivera, *Desafío y solidaridad*, 46; Humberto García Muñiz, *Sugar and Power in the Caribbean*, 399; Félix Córdova Iturregui, *Ante la frontera del infierno*, 112; Ileana Rodríguez-Silva, *Silencing Race*, 183.
- <sup>126</sup> César Ayala and Rafael Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, 63.
- <sup>127</sup> Original citation: “En Yauco, con motivo del movimiento de huelga, han salido como veinte oradores que propagarán constantemente el principio de unión como base de regenerar la clase y desviarla del camino tortuoso porque marcha.” In N.a., “Yauco obrero: Noticias de la huelga,” *Unión Obrera*, May 15, 1905, 1.

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### Appendix 1: Chronology of the Strike

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
<i>July 25, 1898</i>	Puerto Rico is militarily occupied by the United States as part of the Spanish-American-Cuban-Philippine War.
<i>October 20, 1898</i>	Foundation of the <i>Federación Regional de Trabajadores</i> (FRT).
<i>June 18, 1899</i>	Foundation of the <i>Federación Libre de Trabajadores</i> (FLT).
<i>October 25, 1903</i>	The FLT approves a resolution in favor of the organization of rural and agricultural workers in their Second National Congress in the town of Ponce.
<i>January, 1905</i>	Start of harvest season in the cane industry.
<i>January 20, 1905</i>	Jesús María Balsac presents a report about the necessity of expanding the FLT's organizing efforts into the country side in a General Assembly in the town of Mayagüez.
<i>January 29, 1905</i>	The <i>Unión Obrera Federada Local 9874</i> (UOF)'s propaganda commission starts organizing <i>mítines</i> in the Southern district.
<i>February 4, 1905</i>	The UOF organizes <i>mítines</i> in the municipality of Guánica. The mayor and police officials show up to the meeting.
<i>February 19, 1905</i>	The UOF travelled to Guayanilla and organized various <i>mítines</i> . Carlos Arroyo from San Germán in the Western district is among the speakers.
<i>March 2, 1905</i>	The UOF organizes various <i>mítines</i> around the Southern district and call for an agricultural labor union and a strike during the harvest season.
<i>First weeks of March, 1905</i>	The FLT distributes a survey to get the opinion of rank-and-file workers about the possibility of a strike.

<i>Date</i>	<b>Event</b>
<i>March 10, 1905</i>	The FLT starts the official preparations of the strike.
<i>Second week of March, 1905</i>	Santiago Iglesias, Eduardo Conde, José Storer and other labor leaders arrive in Ponce where the Main Offices of the strike were located.
<i>Mid-March, 1905</i>	The UOF established a series of schools in the Southern district.
<i>March 22, 1905</i>	Eduardo Conde, Santiago Iglesias, and José Storer arrived in Yauco for a meeting. This was part of a tour they were developing in order to propagate the strike.
<i>March 26, 1905</i>	Conde, Iglesias, and Storer travel to Santa Isabel to continue with their tour.
<i>April 2, 1905</i>	The UOF organized three different <i>mítines</i> throughout the Southern district.
<i>April 9, 1905</i>	All of the FLT's island-wide leaders arrived to their respective <i>comités</i> ; Julio Aybar and Antonio Olvarría arrive in Yauco and organize several <i>mítines</i> and labor unions.
<i>April 10, 1905</i>	Aybar clashes with a police lieutenant and sends various cable messages to the governor.
<i>Second week of April, 1905</i>	First documented wildcat strikes take place by workers in the sugar-central Fortuna and the Boca Chica, Caño Verde, and Serrano plantations.
<i>April 9 -18, 1905</i>	Daily <i>mítines</i> took place throughout the Southern district.
<i>April 16, 1905</i>	The insular police violently suppresses two large <i>mítines</i> and arrests various labor leaders and rank-and-file workers.
<i>April 17, 1905</i>	The FLT sends letters to the governor with the signature of thousands of workers.
<i>April 18, 1905</i>	Official declaration of the strike by the FLT.
<i>May 1, 1905</i>	The strike officially ends.



## Appendix 2: Glossary of Spanish terms used

All of them are italicized and translated in the text.

<i>Word in Spanish</i>	<i>Translation</i>
<i>Agregado</i>	Peasants that worked a piece of land owned by an <i>hacendado</i> in exchange for food and a piece of land.
<i>Central</i>	Industrialized sugar factory.
<i>Centralistas</i>	Small-to-medium <i>central</i> owners
<i>Colono</i>	Landowners
<i>Comisiones</i>	Commissions or committees
<i>Comités de Arbitraje</i>	Although it roughly translates to “Arbitrage committees,” we have used it in the article as “Strike committees”.
<i>Damas</i>	Ladies
<i>Federación Libre de Trabajadores</i>	Federation of Free Workingmen
<i>Federación Regional de Trabajadores</i>	Federation of Regional Workers
<i>Haciendas</i>	Sugar estate. This was the most common unit of agricultural production in the nineteenth century but lagged behind as the industrialized <i>central</i> took its place in the early twentieth century.
<i>Imprenta</i>	Printing houses
<i>Mitin (singular); Mítines (plural)</i>	Public political gatherings in which labor unions would propagate their ideas and recruit workers to join their unions.
<i>Partido Obrero Socialista</i>	Workers’ Socialist Party
<i>Partido Unión</i>	Union Party
<i>Petacas</i>	To cause trouble
<i>Señoritas</i>	Unmarried women; A term used in Spanish for young/teenage females.
<i>Tribuna</i>	Act of giving public political speeches. Although it roughly translates to “podium,” its meaning in Spanish is more nuanced as it is tied to political discourse and action.

<i>Word in Spanish</i>	<i>Translation</i>
<i>Trust</i>	Transnational sugar corporations that owned several local <i>centrales</i> .
<i>Ultrajada</i>	Insulted
<i>Unión Obrera Federada Local 9874</i>	Federated Labor Union Local 9874