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Article

Marta Vergara, Popular-Front Pan-American Feminism and the Transnational Struggle for Working Women's Rights in the 1930s

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In December 1935, the newly formed Popular-Front feminist organisation, the *Movimiento pro Emancipación de la Mujer Chilena* (MEMCh, or 'Movement for the Emancipation of Chilean Women'), convened a large public meeting in Santiago before the first regional conference of the International Labor Organization (ILO), in order to voice their demands for working women. MEMCh co-founder Marta Vergara concluded the meeting with a strong message of support from a somewhat surprising source: the Washington DC-based Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW), an inter-governmental organisation created in 1928 as part of the Pan American Union, and led by the US National Woman's Party (NWP). Speaking as the Commission's Chilean delegate, Vergara cited the

IACW triumph at the most recent 1933 Pan-American Conference in Montevideo, where four countries – Uruguay, Cuba, Ecuador and Paraguay – had endorsed the Commission's Equal Rights Treaty prohibiting any juridical distinctions based on sex. Vergara contrasted this western-hemisphere-wide defence of women's equality with the growth of fascism in Europe that was stripping women of their rights, and urged those at the ILO Conference to pass no resolutions that would put women and men on unequal footing in the economic struggle.¹

Vergara's strong words of unity with the IACW belied her ambivalent history with the US-led organisation, and particularly with its president, NWP member Doris Stevens. Vergara, along with many other Latin American feminists, had long felt that Stevens's unilateral command over the IACW reflected a deeper problem of US hegemony. They further objected to Stevens's narrow focus on equal civil and political rights for women. Vergara wanted a broader agenda that also prioritised social and economic welfare for women and international multilateralism.

But by the time Vergara spoke at the MEMCh meeting in Santiago in December 1935, she had new faith in the IACW. Her commitments had not altered as much as the world had changed. The preceding years saw the historical conjuncture of the Great Depression, the inauguration of a Good Neighbor Policy promoting hemispheric peace, the rise of fascism in Europe and the subsequent ascent of the Popular Front in Latin America. Now, international attention in the Americas focused on state-led economic development, innovative social policies and workers' rights. Some in Latin America who objected to the long history of US military intervention and imperialism in the Americas found in Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 1933 Good Neighbor Policy and pledge of non-intervention a hopeful salve on the blot of US hegemony. A common enemy in fascism also began to blunt anti-US-imperialist politics.² The struggle against fascism spread in the Americas alongside the growth of the Popular Front movement initiated in 1935 by the Communist International to advocate anti-fascist alliances with democratic and bourgeois groups.³

The Popular Front also had a feminist counterpart. Alarmed by the way fascism systematically stripped away women's rights, leftist feminists in Europe and the Americas began to couple demands for women's equal economic rights alongside anti-fascism. Their focus on working women's rights paved the way for collaborations between leftist individuals and groups in Latin America formerly opposed to the US-led liberal feminist IACW, into a broad alliance around democracy and women's equal economic opportunities. Within this context, the IACW 'Equal Rights' treaties gained purchase as compatible with anti-fascism and world peace.

In the process, a new Pan-American feminism emerged – one not solely defined by 'equal civil and political rights', but one that feminists like Marta Vergara would help shape to include social and economic welfare. I call this ideology a 'Popular-Front Pan-American feminism', defined as an internationalist feminism that combined social democratic labour concerns with 'equal rights' demands, in the context of an anti-fascist inter-American solidarity. It was rooted in the Popular Front feminism alive in Mexico, Argentina, Panama, Chile and elsewhere.⁴ Unlike other forms of leftist feminism, it maintained faith in a budding system of international law. Although Popular-Front Pan-American feminists by no means viewed international juridical solutions as the only strategy, they believed that, combined with local movements of social solidarity, such approaches could be important levers in redressing women's social, economic and political wrongs. Self-described '*feministas*', they viewed the IACW and the Pan-American conferences as vital spaces for such ideologies to flourish.⁵

The example of a Latin American-led transnational Popular-Front Pan-American feminism championed by Marta Vergara has been overlooked in a literature on transnational feminism that typically views a one-way, often imperialist, exportation of ideas from Britain or the United States to the 'South'. Such scholarship on international feminism in the interwar years also often focuses on the exportation of US or British feminist conflicts, such as the debate between the NWP, with its Equal Rights agenda, and US or Western European labour feminists.⁶ As Eileen Boris notes, this emphasis usually 'reaffirm[s] ... the dichotomy between equal rights, tied to a gender-first ideology and protective legislation, associated with a class-based defence of women industrial workers'.⁷ The dichotomy between gender-first and class-first positions, however, did not easily translate to Latin American contexts, where protective legislation for women was generally not the norm and where women's political rights had largely not been secured. Rather than a bone of contention, 'equal rights' was, for many Latin American feminists like Vergara, a rallying cry during the Popular Front period, not only for equal political and civil rights, but for an anti-fascist eschewal of protective legislation for female workers *and* for state-sponsored maternity legislation as a social 'right'. Their views bear out historian Asunción Lavrin's insight about feminism in Chile, Uruguay and Argentina more broadly, that it contained 'no sharp cleavage or confrontational antagonism between these two interpretations [of socialist versus liberal feminism] ... In fact, what was distinctive about Southern Cone feminism was its flexibility'.⁸ Moving from the national to the transnational frame not only highlights the more supple meaning that 'feminism' held in Latin America than in the United States at this time, but also reveals the deep influence that Latin American '*feminismo*' had in shaping women's rights internationally.

Taking a transnational lens also unearths the important gendered dimensions of inter-Americanism. While some historians of the Popular Front in Latin America have begun to identify the political shifts that, alongside Franklin D. Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy and New Deal, fostered new international collaborations across the Americas and the United States, most studies overlook the key role that transnational debates around women's rights played in forging the broader definition of 'democracy' that emerged.⁹ This article reveals that feminists, especially those from Latin America, played a more pivotal part than previously acknowledged, in establishing a wide definition of inter-American democracy that privileged women's rights as well as social and economic welfare and multilateralism. Sometimes working at cross-purposes with official 'Good Neighbor' policies, the notion of democracy these feminists helped mould held particular significance in shaping the 'human rights' agenda immediately following the Second World War.

This article traces the development of Popular-Front Pan-American feminism through the evolution of Marta Vergara's international feminist activism and her sometimes ambivalent alliance and friendship with IACW leader, Doris Stevens, from 1931 to 1937. Her relationship with Stevens, both collaborative and conflictual, provides a vital window into Pan-American feminism, a movement that depended as much on interpersonal relationships as on ideology. Historians Donna Guy and Leila Rupp have both drawn attention to the importance of affective relationships in international social movements, revealing how friendships between women of different countries became constitutive components of internationalist feminist politics.¹⁰ Examining a somewhat unexpected friendship between a Popular-Front feminist from Chile and a National Woman's Party member from the United States reveals Pan-American feminism to be an embodied process. Despite Vergara and Stevens's differences and the sometimes unequal power dynamics that structured their friendship, the two women relied on each other for vital personal as well as organisational support. In the process, Vergara influenced a broad,

significant shift in the inter-American feminism they shared. Informed by an ideal of social democracy that balanced the needs of the individual with those of the community, Vergara widened 'equal rights' to include not only civil and political rights for women, but social and economic rights as well, thus changing and making more relevant the international women's rights agenda at the heart of Pan-American feminism.

Marta Vergara's feminist evolution

Marta Vergara's path to feminism was somewhat circuitous. Born in Valparaíso, Chile, in 1898 into a middle-class family, Vergara found literary aspirations more appealing than feminist ambitions and had, by the late 1920s, established a name for herself as a journalist. When General Carlos Ibáñez del Campo assumed a military dictatorship over Chile in 1927, Vergara fled to Europe where she worked as a correspondent for *El Mercurio*, Chile's largest newspaper. It was through literary contacts that she landed the opportunity to represent Chile at the upcoming Hague Codification Conference.¹¹

With this experience, as she wrote in her memoirs, 'my life changed'.¹² Soon after travelling to the Hague, she met NWP president Alice Paul and member Doris Stevens who introduced her to the Inter-American Commission of Women, which was at that time pushing the Hague Codification Conference to consider their Equal Nationality Treaty for married women's equal nationality rights.¹³ As Vergara explains, this engagement awoke her to feminism. Her role as a delegate was significant, especially since Chile was one of the few countries that made no distinction between women's and men's nationality rights.¹⁴ Vergara became a pivotal advocate in the debates on nationality in the League of Nations for the next two years, working closely with Alice Paul, who lived in Geneva in those years, as well as with Doris Stevens.¹⁵ Stevens served as Vergara's mentor, and they communicated in French since Stevens was not fluent in Spanish, nor Vergara in English.

Vergara's memoirs, written thirty years later, describe Doris Stevens with a mix of admiration and gentle mockery. Vergara found Stevens slightly intimidating on their first meeting, calling her 'a very unusual lady ... to whom very little happened that she did not want'. She recalls that Stevens spoke to her 'patiently, as to a child', viewing Vergara as 'in kindergarten of the feminist school'.¹⁶

Doris Stevens, born in 1892 in Omaha, Nebraska, was only six years older than Vergara, but wore her feminist learning heavily. A visible member of the Congressional Union for women's suffrage, later renamed the National Woman's Party, Stevens became well known in the United States for publishing a 1920 account of her and other US suffragists' imprisonment for picketing the White House.¹⁷ She also became well known on the international stage when the Pan American Union appointed her chairwoman of the newly formed IACW, a product of the collaboration between Cuban and US NWP feminists at the 1928 Pan American Conference in Havana. Although initially promoted as an arm of inter-American friendship and understanding, the IACW was steered by Stevens and the NWP, which was focused on reviving their Equal Rights Amendment in the United States. The ERA, a bold constitutional guarantee of equal rights under the law regardless of sex, had been languishing in the US Congress since its introduction in 1923. It had also been invoking the ire of many social reformers, including those in the League of Women Voters, National Women's Trade Union League and US Women's Bureau, who feared losing hard-won protective legislation for working women. Stevens and

Paul fashioned the IACW as an international outlet for their ERA campaign, authoring an Equal Nationality Treaty and an Equal Rights Treaty for the body to promote in the Pan American Union and League of Nations.

Doris Stevens believed that 'equal rights', as defined by these treaties, constituted the only goal for feminism. While some individual members of the Woman's Party did uphold multiple commitments – to social and racial justice, peace or anti-imperialism – the Party itself deemed such concerns side issues, and in the United States, 'feminism' came to be defined more narrowly around equal civil and political rights for women, as the NWP defined it.¹⁸ Stevens either did not fully comprehend or, perhaps, care that the primary benefactors of such 'equal rights' legislation would be women like herself and those who populated the Woman's Party – middle-class to affluent, usually educated, white women. While the politics of US-Latin American relations had some bearing on her strategy (Stevens would utilise geopolitics to play Latin American diplomats off each other), it had little relevance to her goals or to her understanding of the diverse experiences and aspirations of Latin American women. Her hubris was enhanced by the hierarchical structure of the Woman's Party, which emphasised leader-follower relationships. Stevens believed that, as a veteran of a successful US suffrage movement, she was a natural leader for women in the western hemisphere.¹⁹

By the time they met, Vergara was aware of the differences in her and Stevens's feminist politics. Vergara had been studying the *Communist Manifesto* and the works of Lenin and Trotsky, and international events were moving her towards the left. The great-power leadership of the League of Nations disenchanted Vergara, since she believed it supported the economic and political hegemony of capitalist countries, marginalised Latin American nations and did nothing in the face of the spread of fascism in Europe or Japan's aggressions against China. She found the Soviet Union's demands for an overthrow of capitalism and universal disarmament the most compelling answers to the world's troubling problems.²⁰

Socialist thought infused Vergara's feminist politics, which combined a demand for individual women's rights with collectivism and social solidarity. Her notion of feminism held the 'family' as the 'fundamental unit of ... social and political organization', in contrast to that of Stevens and Paul, which held the individual as the fundamental political unit and did not incorporate social and economic analysis.²¹ As Vergara wryly wrote in her memoirs, Alice Paul 'believed seriously in justice of capitalist society, in free enterprise, and in possibilities for everyone'. In Paul's view, Vergara explained, the 'United States was not and never had been an imperialist country, and if an infantry of Marines ever landed in places beyond the Rio Grande, it was for the good of the country thus protected'.²² Such views instructed Paul and Stevens's 'concentrated' focus on 'equal rights' for women, to the exclusion of 'other social injustices'.²³

Despite these ideological differences, Vergara's memoirs reveal frank admiration for Paul and Stevens's promotion of international 'equal rights'. She called them 'pioneers' of feminism in the United States.²⁴ Stevens and Paul, in turn, viewed Vergara as central to their strategy of rallying Latin American feminist support for the IACW. After the ousting of Ibáñez from power in Chile, Vergara returned home in 1932 and prepared to organise women for the IACW in promotion of women's equal civil and political rights.

Though Vergara now became the Chilean chair of the IACW, her desire to foster 'equal rights' activism at home dissipated as she allied herself more with the Communist Party. If, as Vergara would later

explain to Doris Stevens, her socialist consciousness had been stirred in Europe, it became inflamed upon her return to Chile, 'totally paralyzed' by economic crisis.²⁵ Political tumult and grinding poverty characterised the years following Ibáñez's ousting. Struggling with massive problems in public housing, health and social welfare, Chile became a laboratory of broad-based socialist and Communist thought and organising, into which Vergara threw herself.²⁶ In 1933, through a friend's introduction, Vergara met Marcos Chamudes, a Communist Party official with whom she became romantically involved. Although Vergara did not join the Communist Party officially until 1936, she became a heartfelt Communist sympathiser.

Thus, when Stevens asked Vergara to join her in Montevideo for the 1933 Pan-American Conference, a crucial event for the promotion of the Equal Rights Treaties, Vergara refused. In a letter relinquishing ties with the IACW, Vergara also marked her ideological split from the IACW with a linguistic break. For the first time in their epistolary communication, Vergara wrote to Stevens in Spanish rather than in French. She would never write to Stevens in French again. Allying herself with the Chilean Communist Party, Vergara explained that US economic imperialism was 'the highest stage of bourgeois capitalism', against which she and others in the Americas were mobilising a 'global resurgence, and in particular, an American resurgence'.²⁷

Secondly, Vergara explained, the goals the IACW supported – equal civil and political rights for women – were meaningless to the working women with whom she now collaborated. The working woman, she explained, 'does not oppose her civil and political rights – quite the contrary – but she understands that ... she is going to win little with them if she is also still a slave of the economic system'. Women's political rights would have to come in 'second place' to the class fight.²⁸ In another letter, Vergara made plaintive appeals to Stevens to recognise their irreconcilable differences, while also underscoring her feelings of friendship and continuing personal admiration for Stevens:

Now you can understand, Doris ... you and I are in different camps. The aspiration towards a socialist society is not a new one for me. What is more or less new is my actual ... work towards obtaining it ... Thus, Doris, I will continue working for equality, but on the road towards a society without classes. And since this is not your point of view ... we become enemies. And this, despite all the personal sympathy I have for you.²⁹

As Vergara explained in her memoirs, decades later, the personal distress she felt upon her break with Stevens was real. Her memoirs provide an additional and intriguing account of why she did not join Stevens in Montevideo. Here, she describes turning her back on the Commission as 'difficult ... almost dramatic ... [W]hat the feminists wanted was as valuable to me as before'. But it was Chamudes and other Chilean CP officials who would not allow her to go to the Pan American Conference.³⁰ Their disapprobation held in spite of Vergara's insistence that she 'could work with feminists and attack imperialism' and that the IACW was merely 'a sort of illegitimate child which [the Pan American Union] had come to recognise in spite of itself' rather than an official branch of US hegemonic Pan-Americanism.³¹

Thus, Vergara was earnest when she told Stevens she did not believe 'equal rights' would help working women, but she also was torn about breaking with the IACW. Over the next few years, Vergara would

feel frustrated by the Chilean CP organisers' neglect of women's issues, particularly when she witnessed Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy actively 'debas[ing] [women] and strip[ping] them of their rights'.³² On the heels of his 1933 solidification of power in Germany, Hitler launched an aggressive campaign to remove women from all public positions, citing 'motherhood' as the number one aim of women's education.³³ Mussolini enacted similar policies.³⁴ Vergara wrote in her memoirs that 'the special contempt fascism held for women' was making her 'more and more inclined towards a women's organisation, organised by the Communists'.³⁵

This concept was given form in Paris in 1934, when over a thousand Communists, socialist reformers and women's rights activists gathered for the *Comité Mondial des Femmes contre la Guerre et le Fascisme* (the 'World Congress of Women against War and Fascism'). One of the earliest international meetings to rally women against fascism, this group prefigured the official creation of the Popular Front in 1935, when the Communist Party formally endorsed an alliance between Communist and socialist parties in an anti-fascist struggle.

The Congress revealed a distinctly feminist Popular-Front politics, concerned with working women's equal rights; social welfare legislation that addressed the needs of mothers and children and support for democracy and peace. Specifically, the Congress demanded women's 'complete civil and political emancipation'; 'equality of rights'; equal right to work; equal pay for equal work and equal access to all social services male workers received relating to unemployment insurance and family subsidies. Delegates also called for state-sponsored maternity legislation.³⁶ In this context, the IACW Equal Rights Treaties gained new relevance. During the 1933 Montevideo Conference that Vergara had missed, Stevens and her allies had managed to pass the IACW Equal Nationality Treaty and also gain four signatures for the Equal Rights Treaty. On the heels of this victory, the *Comité* endorsed the Equal Rights Treaty as 'particularly heartening at this time when the forces of reaction are taking away from women in Europe a large part of their freedom'.³⁷

The growing model of Popular-Front feminism abroad and the rise of Popular-Front ideologies in Chile, specifically, allowed Vergara to rekindle openly her 'equal rights' feminist concerns and to fuse them with her social justice commitments. As Vergara recalled in her memoirs, 'the Chilean Communist Party believed ... that the country's revolution would be bourgeois-democratic in nature', thus paving the way for her to reconnect to feminist organising: 'Why then exclude bourgeois women? Why not help them obtain the benefits enumerated in the platform?'³⁸ In May 1935, she co-founded the cross-class *Movimiento pro Emancipación de las Mujeres Chilenas* with lawyer Elena Caffarena. MEMCh soon gained support from the growing Popular-Front coalition, constituted by Radical, Socialist and Communist Parties, that would ultimately control the executive branch of Chile from 1938 to 1947.³⁹ MEMCh's manifesto called for women's 'economic, juridical, biological, and political emancipation' and coupled liberal feminist reforms for the vote, equal civil rights and equal pay for equal work with demands for state-sponsored maternity legislation, legal abortion and birth control access.⁴⁰ Significantly, they connected women's equal economic rights with anti-fascism: 'Let us fight against fascism, because it tends to deprive women of her most elementary rights, considering her only qualified to engage in domestic work'.⁴¹

The Popular Front also enabled Vergara to rekindle her connections with the IACW, which she believed would give legitimacy to the budding MEMCh. Thus, when Doris Stevens wrote to Vergara in November 1935 and beseeched her again to represent the IACW, Vergara agreed.⁴² Stevens wanted

Vergara to be the IACW mouthpiece at the first regional conference of the International Labor Organization, taking place in Santiago in January 1936. The ILO, which had been established in Geneva after the First World War to examine and propose international solutions to labour problems, had traditionally supported protective legislation for working women.⁴³ Stevens asked Vergara to take a stand against ILO protective legislation policies, including their 1919 Maternity Convention, which stipulated benefits for women during a period of maternity leave.⁴⁴ Like others in the US NWP, Stevens believed that any asymmetrical provision bearing on sex, including maternity legislation, could violate equality. Such legislation, they held, took away a woman's choice, harmed her ability to compete with men and placed the burden of the pregnancy on the employer. 'The state of pregnancy', Stevens wrote to Vergara, was a 'special case' that 'should be so treated if and when it arises ... In upholding ... equality we are not obliged to advocate a particular method by which the special situation should be handled'. But, she explained, if and when the topic came up at the conference, Vergara should advocate a method by which the state would pay for maternity leave, and demonstrate that 'it can be done without penalizing women'.⁴⁵

In the United States, despite some advocacy of and experiments with state-sponsored material aid, including the short-lived 1921 Sheppard-Towner Act and the 1935 Aid to Families with Dependent Children programme of the Social Security Act, maternity legislation did not exist. Mainstream US discussions of maternity legislation typically framed it not as a 'right' or as compatible with insurance benefits, but rather in the more stigmatising category of 'public assistance'. Conversations also reflected the deep ambivalence that even progressive US social reformers and policymakers had about wage-earning motherhood.⁴⁶

Elsewhere in the Americas, however, budding labour legislation and welfare states were incorporating more explicit provision for maternity legislation. Brazil's revised 1934 constitution, for instance, adopted the 1919 ILO Maternity Convention and included maternity legislation as a social welfare benefit, alongside old age pensions, unemployment insurance, health and accident insurance and death benefits, while not forsaking a commitment to 'equal rights' for women in their new labour codes.⁴⁷ In 1934, Chile also ratified the 1919 ILO Maternity Convention.

The 1936 ILO Conference threw into relief the difference between Latin American and US attention to maternity legislation. Later, US delegate and Women's Bureau member Frieda Miller remarked on the emphasis of Chilean delegates on maternity legislation in a confidential report to the US Labor Department, calling it 'striking evidence of difference of viewpoint and interest from that which would have animated any like committee in the United States ... [where] provision for the family is mainly outside the field that we consider suitable for labor legislation'. She pondered about 'this great difference in focus of interest', wondering if in Latin America 'their concept of the position of women in the social and economic scheme of things is different from ours'.⁴⁸

Indeed, Latin American feminists like Marta Vergara and MEMCh not only supported the inclusion of provision of the family in labour legislation, they did so in a way that was pointedly not 'maternalist'; they increasingly discussed maternity legislation as a 'right' for women rather than as a protective measure. Thus, Vergara responded to Stevens that she would happily represent the IACW, as MEMCh already planned a robust campaign at the ILO, but she clearly stated that MEMCh would promote equal rights as well as maternity legislation.⁴⁹ Chile's labour code, in keeping with the 1919 ILO convention, stipulated a maternity allowance for pregnant women, Vergara explained, but asked

employers to pay 50 per cent, which they usually sidestepped. As a result, women often worked until the last day of their pregnancy. She and MEMCh wanted the state to pay for the entirety of maternity benefits. Further, they sought maternity legislation not only for employees in the industrial trades and commerce, those usually considered under ILO codes, but also for domestic, hospital and agricultural workers.⁵⁰

Though uneasy about having an IACW representative argue aggressively for maternity legislation, Stevens did not quibble with Vergara, whose support for the IACW Equal Rights agenda she desperately needed. While outside the United States, in both Europe and Latin America, the threat fascism posed to women's rights helped build consensus against protective labour legislation for working women (often with the exception of maternity legislation), within the United States the Great Depression stoked both the perceived need for protective labour legislation and the controversy around the NWP 'equal rights' agenda.⁵¹ Stevens had encountered fierce opposition to the IACW Equal Rights Treaty from the US State Department and from women reformers at the 1933 Montevideo Conference who feared it would be an international extension of the NWP ERA.

Ultimately, due to the untiring efforts of MEMCh leaders and their collaboration with Chilean labour delegates, the 1936 ILO conference affirmed values of equal minimum wages, equal hours of work and work of 'equal responsibility' for men and women and also endorsed MEMCh's proposals for state-sponsored maternity legislation. The emphasis on maternity legislation would influence the agenda of the next inter-American ILO conference in 1939 in Havana. Nonetheless, Vergara remained disheartened by the 'definite gap' she saw 'between the conditions of women presented by laws and reality'. She wrote to Stevens, 'I know that the mission of the Commission is officially ... juridical, but in order not to separate ourselves from reality, we ought to do other work indirectly'. Vergara suggested collaboration with women workers, to 'hear from their own lips what they want and to what they are opposed'.⁵² There is no evidence of a response to this request from Stevens.

Despite Stevens's rebuff of Vergara's class commitments, Vergara continued collaborating with Stevens, viewing the IACW as a shield against fascism. Several months after the ILO conference, the Chilean government proposed an unequal minimum wage for men and women, which MEMCh called 'fascist', and Vergara immediately appealed to the IACW to join them in pressuring their government. Stevens sent cables to the Chilean legislature and urged Commission delegates in other countries to do the same, while also sending Vergara words of support.⁵³

Popular-Front Pan-American feminism at the Buenos Aires Peace Conferences

The two women's collaboration around the social rights agenda that Marta Vergara championed would reach a peak at the 1936 Pan-American peace conferences in Buenos Aires (see Figure 1). Soon after the ILO Conference, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced an Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Peace to take place in Buenos Aires. The growth of fascism and its threat of encroachment into the minds, hearts and markets of Latin America, dramatically influenced the development of his Good Neighbor Policy. The goals of the conference were Pan-American neutrality in the face of the coming war in Europe, as well as enhanced trade and social welfare legislation in the

Americas. As a counterpart, to immediately precede this official conference, the Socialist Party of Argentina planned its own 'Popular Peace Conference' or 'People's Peace Conference'. Led by the Argentine socialist feminist Alicia Moreau de Justo, this conference sought to challenge, as well as influence, the Conference on the Maintenance of Peace following it through a discussion of reduction of armaments, free exchange of people and ideas, anti-imperialism and anti-fascism. While 'women's rights' were not on the agenda of either conference, despite Stevens's and Vergara's lobbying for its inclusion in the official one, Stevens decided to attend both conferences and push women's rights onto the agendas.⁵⁴ Recognising Vergara's special influence among leftists in Latin America, Stevens urged Vergara to join her.⁵⁵



Figure 1.

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Members of the Confederación Femenina Argentina greet Marta Vergara and Doris Stevens (far right) with flowers upon their arrival in Buenos Aires in November 1936. Photograph from Doris Stevens Papers, 1884–1983; MC 546, folder PD.77f. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Vergara agreed to meet Stevens in Buenos Aires to support 'equal rights', but she also believed that the IACW should advocate anti-fascism and peace more explicitly: 'Today before the danger of a world

conflagration we must re-initiate with new vigor the fight against war'.⁵⁶ Stevens, however, dismissed Vergara's request, explaining that, despite fascism's threat to peace, they needed to prioritise their one goal, for 'women's rights', rather than 'peace'.⁵⁷

Although Stevens had no desire to join the Popular Front cause for anti-fascism and workers' rights, she deliberately sought out Vergara's Popular-Front credibility, urging Vergara that 'the Movimiento [MEMCh] and not the Commission should take leadership in piloting the [equal rights] resolutions through [both conferences]'.⁵⁸ Stevens would utilise her alliance with Vergara not only to convince like-minded Latin American diplomats to support a women's 'equal rights' agenda but also to defend herself from the US State Department which was becoming more vigilant in quashing NWP activism at Pan American conferences.

Stevens and Vergara's collaborations began as soon as they arrived in Buenos Aires. Getting herself appointed on the 'Third Commission' that would discuss the 'free exchange of peoples and ideas', at the Popular Peace Conference, Vergara inserted a statement in support of women's equal rights into the conference resolutions.⁵⁹ The debates that erupted over this inclusion pushed Stevens towards at least a verbal alliance with the leftist feminism she believed appealed to the Latin American attendees. When Stevens and Vergara suggested re-wording the final draft of the 'Third Commission' resolution to endorse the Equal Rights Treaty more explicitly, US social reformer Josephine Schain interjected and argued against this plan.⁶⁰ A representative of Carrie Chapman Catt's organisation, the Cause and Cure of War, Schain had long opposed the National Woman's Party and was there to denounce the Equal Rights Treaty if it was raised.⁶¹ She explained that the treaty was too vague and 'that it most certainly would do away with protective legislation for women so badly needed in South America'.⁶²

The notes of Stevens's secretary revealed that when Schain mentioned 'protective legislation' for working women, 'there were whispers of fascism among delegates. Restriction had no standing at this conference which has devoted hours of debate against restrictions of all kinds ... which many ... delegates here have suffered under ... dictatorships'.⁶³ Stevens then took the floor and, in her first speech in Spanish, furthered the connections between 'protection of women' and fascism. In defence of the Equal Rights Treaty, she explained that 'Schain represented the extreme right wing of Feminism in the United States'.⁶⁴ As Stevens acknowledged in a letter to her husband Jonathan Mitchell, '... that was kind of mean in that left audience but there was nothing else to do'.⁶⁵ In the United States, of course, the political register was actually reversed – Schain was more progressive on many social matters than the self-proclaimed 'libertarian' and New Deal-despising Doris Stevens. But Stevens's characterisation was likely to have resonated with those at the conference.

Stevens also made clear that the Equal Rights Treaty would be compatible with maternity legislation. Marking the first time she ever did so, she publicly cast the 'equal rights' feminism of the IACW as consistent with social democratic goals and as centrally concerned with working women and mothers. In her speech, she upheld the recent constitution of Brazil as a model of social democracy and framed Latin America as more progressive than the United States. The Brazilian constitution's assurance of equal rights in work, hours and wages for men and women, Stevens explained, still provided maternity legislation for women workers. Vergara gave a speech following Stevens's, in support of the Equal Rights resolution but also advancing other points of the 'Third Committee' report about which she was passionate – the free exchange of ideas and pacifist networks in the Americas.⁶⁶

Stevens's public advocacy for state-sponsored maternity legislation represented a strategic, rather

than sincere, move, but Stevens and Vergara's collaboration succeeded. Not one vote was raised in favour of revising the text, and the conference passed the Equal Rights resolution as drafted, recommending western hemisphere-wide adherence to the Equal Rights Treaty.⁶⁷

Despite this victory, the Popular Peace Conference had little sway on Roosevelt's official Buenos Aires conference, and Stevens depended upon Vergara to facilitate connections with a number of Argentine feminists who became influential IACW supporters during the conference. While Stevens already knew members of more elite Argentine women's groups, Vergara recalled proudly in her memoirs, '[I] put [Stevens] in touch with the best group of women that could be found in Argentina'.⁶⁸ Specifically, Vergara introduced Stevens to the *Unión Argentina de Mujeres* (UAM), led by the famous writer Victoria Ocampo, Ana Rosa Schlipper de Martínez Geurrero, Susana Largaia and Communist sympathiser María Rosa Oliver.⁶⁹ Formed in 1936 in reaction against a proposed law that would have taken away hard-won Civil Code reforms for married women and reduced their status to that of minors, the UAM collaborated with other progressive women's groups in Argentina in a broad, anti-fascist struggle for female suffrage, economic equality and state-sponsored maternity legislation.⁷⁰ Thus, when their fellow leftist ally Marta Vergara introduced them to Doris Stevens, the UAM was eager to engage in collaborations on behalf of the Equal Rights Treaty.

As anti-fascists, some of these Argentine feminists were pleased with the resolutions of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his administration, which went farther than before in assuring non-intervention of the United States in the Americas, and in articulating a common vision for social democracy as a stronghold against fascism. Along with continental neutrality in the face of war, Roosevelt emphasised social justice and economic welfare, specifically pledging to support higher standards of living 'for all our people' in the Americas.⁷¹ This vision corresponded to his New Deal policies, the popularity of which had recently won his re-election in the United States, as well as with welfare policies throughout the Americas that established new rights to social security, work, unionisation, rest and leisure time, food, clothing, housing, health care and education.

Stevens, Vergara and their newfound Argentine feminist allies mobilised around the goal of adding 'equality for women' to this list of social democratic goals. Early in the conference, Stevens divided the list of diplomats in attendance with Vergara and UAM leader Susana Largaia. The three rallied broad support among the Latin American diplomats for including women's rights in the conference's resolutions as part of a broader social justice agenda, with Stevens again positioning herself in support of maternity leave for women.⁷² Her explicit endorsement of Brazil's constitution in forwarding both 'equal rights' and social democratic welfare helped influence Oswaldo Aranha, head of the Brazilian delegation at Buenos Aires, to agree to introduce the topic of women's rights at the 'Sixth Commission' on Intellectual Cooperation and Moral Disarmament.⁷³

When the US delegation made known their opposition to consideration of women's rights on the grounds that nations should decide such matters for themselves, Stevens and Vergara jointly drafted a statement that called on the need for the Americas to establish international standards in women's rights. Vergara translated the statement into Spanish and circulated it for signatures.⁷⁴ Endorsed by the Commission's representatives from Cuba and Mexico, as well as by a number of women's groups of various political affiliations, the declaration read:

This Conference sets itself up ... [as a] model ... for Europe to follow. Women all over

Europe at the present time who are suffering under regimes hostile to the full development of the talents of women, look with hope to this Conference for a model of how to treat all women as well as how to treat other bases of friction within and between States. The women of South and Central America insist that this matter has ceased to be of purely national concern.⁷⁵

An international standard for women's rights, they indicated, would serve as a strong measure of democracy and peace against a rise of fascism. Stevens also sent a statement to the *New York Times* explaining that their plea 'pointed to the vast number of dictatorships which throttle all domestic efforts to strengthen democracy, not only in Europe, but unhappily on this Continent'.⁷⁶

Although the wording of the resolution that Brazil ultimately proposed was a weaker version of what Stevens sought – 'To recommend to the governments of the American Republics the adoption of the most adequate legislation in order to recognize fully the rights and duties of citizenship' – she believed that this resolution was the best that could be achieved.⁷⁷ Over sixty Argentine women's organisations, spearheaded by UAM and the Argentine Association for Women's Suffrage, petitioned the conference for its signature. While some of them utilised maternalist arguments that women, as mothers, were naturally peace makers, many more argued again that fascism's deleterious effects on women demanded consideration of women's equal rights in any peace resolutions.⁷⁸ Stevens also rallied a number of supporters of the Equal Rights Treaty in the United States and internationally to send cables to the conference and the State Department. In the end, the women's rights resolution passed, even gaining the endorsement of the US delegation.

Despite Vergara and Stevens's outward show of collaboration at the Buenos Aires conference, and their common belief in an international and anti-fascist Equal Rights feminism that had helped make this resolution possible, significant cracks had emerged in their 'united front'. While Vergara had been enthusiastic about promoting not only women's rights, but also pacifism and the free exchange of ideas at the People's Conference, she was much less enthusiastic about taking part in Roosevelt's official Pan American conference. She refused Stevens's request to meet with Chilean Minister of Foreign Relations Miguel Cruchaga, an anti-Communist. Stevens wrote to her friend Fanny Bunand-Sévastos of her recent discovery that Vergara had officially joined the Communist party and held divided loyalties: 'Marta is whole-heartedly a communist now and it is hard to keep her attention on the position of women ... A good deal of her time in B.A. was spent conferring with her party colleagues, many of whom were there for the People's Conference'.⁷⁹

Vergara, on the other hand, saw through Stevens's attempts to ally herself with leftists at the Popular Peace Conference. Of Stevens's speech in Spanish there, Vergara wrote in her memoirs, 'It is possible that [Stevens] remembered some years of her youth in the then-glorious bohemian Greenwich Village [a time when Stevens was affiliated with quasi-socialist politics], but really now her presence in the Congress was like that of a member of the Salvation Army in a bar'.⁸⁰ Nonetheless, when she and Stevens said goodbye in Buenos Aires, Vergara recalled, 'Doris, hard Doris, implacable Doris, said goodbye to me with tears in her eyes. Perhaps she felt how much I liked her and admired her, although we were in different camps'.⁸¹

Despite their contretemps, Vergara saw in Stevens and in the IACW a bastion of equality during a time

when few other groups were promoting women's rights. Although she did not believe juridical equality fully addressed the source of women's inequalities in society or addressed the problems working women faced, she also recognised its importance. In December 1936 after the Buenos Aires conference, *La Mujer Nueva*, the organ for MEMCh, announced that the Chilean government had reversed its plans to reduce working women's minimum wages to 20 per cent less than men's. They gave special credit to the support from UAM in Argentina and the IACW: 'The Inter-American Commission of Women, the prestigious organisation with headquarters in Washington, DC, that fights for the full recognition of women's political, civil and economic rights ... sent cables to the legislature asking for the removal of this inequality', *La Mujer Nueva* reported.⁸²

Vergara authored this article, and her inclusion of 'economic rights' here was significant. The Buenos Aires conference crystallised a shift in the remit of the Inter-American Commission of Women towards a more explicit class concern, which Vergara influenced. A few years after the Buenos Aires conference, in a departure from the 'Equal Rights' party line, Stevens again voiced her support for maternity legislation in a memo distributed to their Latin American affiliates titled 'Maternity Legislation Not Incompatible with Equal Rights'.⁸³ At the 1938 Lima Conference, the Commission confirmed this position by announcing it was undertaking a western-hemisphere-wide study of maternity legislation for working women.⁸⁴

Though this important shift regarding maternity legislation was a direct response to demands of Vergara and other leftist Popular-front feminists, it was in some ways, too little, too late to save Doris Stevens's leadership of the IACW. Stevens was far from ideologically allied with the Popular Front, and members of the US Women's Bureau, who had been baffled by her partnership at the 1936 Buenos Aires conference with leftist Latin American feminists capitalised on exposing Stevens's lack of true commitment to social democratic reform as a way to strip her of Latin American support.⁸⁵ This became one of their key tactics at the 1938 Eighth International Conference of American States in Lima where they allied with the US State Department to convince feminist representatives there from UAM and MEMCh that Stevens in fact represented a far-right agenda. Here they restructured the Commission itself, bringing it under the control of the governments in the Pan American Union, and ultimately replacing Doris Stevens with US Women's Bureau member Mary Winslow as the US delegate. Latin American feminist and UAM member Ana Rosa Schlieper de Martínez Guerrero and Minerva Berardino from the Dominican Republic became IACW presidents from 1939 to 1943, and from 1943 to 1949, respectively.⁸⁶

The broad vision of international women's rights that Vergara had forged – one that embraced women's civil and political equality as well as social and economic welfare – remained salient to the IACW throughout the years of the Second World War, when Vergara continued to be the Chilean delegate and an influential member of IACW. She had the opportunity to shape the organisation further when she and her partner Marcos Chamudes moved to the United States. After the two were ousted from the Communist Party in Chile following the Soviet Union's non-aggression pact with Germany in 1939 and resulting dislocations in the Chilean Popular Front, Vergara lived for some time in Washington, DC, becoming a full-time worker for IACW in the mid-1940s.⁸⁷ Vergara was responsible for the IACW's 1949 report that received support at the Ninth International Conference of American States in Bogotá, and that emphasised a commitment to 'raise the standard of living for female workers and to provide them the full enjoyment of political, civil, and economic security', including maternity

legislation.⁸⁸ It was this vision – for political, civil, economic and social rights – that also lay at the heart of the successful push by Latin American feminists, several of whom were leaders of the IACW, in advancing ‘women's rights’ into the category of international ‘human rights’ at the United Nations’ founding in San Francisco in 1945.⁸⁹

Vergara always saw this broad vision as being one that Doris Stevens had helped author. Despite their differences, Vergara had been dismayed by Stevens's ousting as president of the IACW, believing, as she wrote to Stevens, that their essential belief in ‘equal rights ... understood not to go against legislation protecting maternity ... [was] the thing in which you and I are in perfect agreement’.⁹⁰ Throughout the 1940s, Vergara sought out Stevens's advice on the IACW, writing to her frequently and visiting her at her Croton-on-Hudson, New York, home where Stevens now lived with her husband.⁹¹ Vergara did not share a close working relationship with Minerva Bernardino, the current president of the IACW, and decried the paltry economic and moral support given to the IACW from US women and institutions. In her memoirs, Vergara stated that ‘with the departure of Doris Stevens had gone the last feminist of importance’. She believed that the prominent women in the United States at the time who did foreground social concerns, such as ‘Frances Perkins ... Mary Anderson ... and Mary N. Winslow’, lacked true feminist credentials. As she put it, ‘all wanted to be considered distinguished human beings in this or that profession or work ... beyond the fact of being a woman’.⁹² In general, Vergara believed the Cold War and the spectre of McCarthyism dramatically limited the possibilities for inter-American feminist mobilisation that had been so vibrant in the 1930s.

Vergara did, however, credit the IACW with an accomplishment in the 1940s that ‘justified their existence’: the pressure they placed on the Chilean government was partially responsible for the 1949 law granting women suffrage in Chile.⁹³ She saw this advance on women's rights as Doris Stevens's legacy, and in 1962, after a long lapse in correspondence, Vergara resumed contact with Stevens. She asked her if she would be interested in receiving a copy of Vergara's recently-published memoirs, *Memorias de una mujer irreverente* [Memoirs of an Irreverent Woman], because ‘you are there ... I express in the book my admiration for your personality’. After these many years, their relationship remained of signal importance to Vergara, who signed her letter ‘Your friend always, Marta Vergara’.⁹⁴

Notes

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- 1 Maria Aracil, ‘Qué es la Conferencia Panamericana?’ *La Mujer Nueva*, January 1936; ‘La Gran Concentración del MEMCh’, *La Mujer Nueva*, January 1936; ‘Una gran concentración Feminina para Ocuparse de la Conferencia Panamericana’, *La Opinión* (Santiago), 28 December 1935; ‘Concentración Feminina en el Teatro Balmaceda’, *El Mercurio* (Santiago), 30 December 1935.

- 2 Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Holt, 2006); Frederick B. Pike, *FDR's Good Neighbor Policy: Sixty Years of Generally Gentle Chaos* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995); Frank Niess, *A Hemisphere to Itself: A History of US-Latin American Relations* (London: Zed Books, 1990).
- 3 In Chile, France and Spain, the Popular Front achieved power in government and implemented state policies; in these countries and in others in the Americas, the Popular Front also functioned as a social movement and/or an alliance that eventually turned into an electoral coalition of political parties.
- 4 On feminism in Popular Front Chile, see Corinne A. Antezana-Pernet, 'Mobilizing Women in the Popular Front Era: Feminism, Class, and Politics in the Movimiento Pro-Emancipación de la Mujer Chilena (MEMCh), 1935–1950' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, Irvine, 1996); Karin Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises: Political Cultures and the State in Chile, 1920–1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Edda Gaviola, Ximena Jiles, Lorella Lopresti and Claudia Rojas, *Queremos votar en las próximas elecciones: Historia del movimiento sufragista chileno, 1913–1952* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 1986).
- 5 Indeed, they claimed the term 'feminist' with greater ease than their US leftist counterparts. Black Communist women and leftist women in the New Deal shied away from use of 'feminism', so contentious in its US context. See Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011) and Landon R. Y. Storrs, *The Second Red Scare and the Unmaking of the New Deal Left* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).
- 6 Leila Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Carol Riegelman Lubin and Anne Winslow, *Social Justice for Women: The International Labor Organization and Women* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990); Carol Miller, "'Geneva – the Key to Equality": Inter-war Feminists and the League of Nations', *Women's History Review* 3 (1994), pp. 219–45.
- 7 Eileen Boris, "'No Right to Laying or Nursing Time": Maternity Leave and the Question of US Exceptionalism', in Leon Fink (ed.), *Workers Across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 171–93, here p. 174. This dichotomy precluded Popular Front alliances between the NWP and US labour reformers or the Communist Party; the latter critiqued the NWP's limited vision of 'rights' for middle-class, white women. Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 74; Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).
- 8 Asunción Lavrin, *Women, Feminism, and Social Change in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay*,

1890–1940 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 16. While it would be dangerous to generalise 'Latin American feminism' the flexibility evinced by many Latin American feminists in the Pan-American sphere was distinctive from contemporaneous 'feminism' in the United States.

- 9 Sebastiaan Faber, "'La Hora ha llegado': Hispanism, Pan-Americanism, and the Hope of Spanish/American Glory, 1938–1948', in Mabel Moraña (ed.), *Ideologies of Hispanism* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005), pp. 62–106; Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
- 10 Donna J. Guy, 'The Politics of Pan-American Cooperation: Maternalist Feminism and the Child Rights Movement, 1913–1960', in Donna J. Guy, *White Slavery and Mothers Alive and Dead: The Troubled Meeting of Sex, Gender, Public Health, and Progress in Latin America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), pp. 54–71, here p. 55; Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, Chapter 8, pp. 180–204. For a rich analysis of friendship in transnational encounters, see Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).
- 11 Marta Vergara, *Memorias de una mujer irreverente* (Santiago: Zig-Zag, 1961), pp. 8–33, 66–7. The 1930 League of Nations Conference for the Codification of International Law at the Hague was established to formulate rules of international law on nationality, territorial waters and state responsibility for damage suffered by foreigners within its boundaries.
- 12 Vergara, *Memorias*, p. 66.
- 13 Beatrice McKenzie, 'The Power of International Positioning: The National Woman's Party, International Law, and Diplomacy, 1928–34', *Gender & History* 23 (2011), pp. 130–46.
- 14 Vergara, *Memorias*, pp. 67–9.
- 15 Ellen DuBois, 'Internationalizing Married Women's Nationality: The Hague Campaign of 1930', in Karen Offen (ed.), *Globalizing Feminisms, 1789–1945* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 204–16 provides rich insight into Vergara's role in the League of Nations's married women's nationality campaign. Vergara, 'The Women at the Hague', *Equal Rights* 16, no. 2 (9 August 1930), p. 211; Vergara, 'Women Fight for Equal Economic Rights', *Equal Rights* 17, no. 26 (1 August 1931), pp. 203–05; 'News from the Field: Chile Appoints Marta Vergara Technical Advisor', *Equal Rights* 17, no. 33 (19 September 1931), p. 264; 'Marta Vergara of Chile to Go to Geneva', *Equal Rights* 18, no. 29 (20 August 1932), p. 227.
- 16 Vergara, *Memorias*, p. 67.
- 17 Doris Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920).
- 18 Nancy Cott, 'Feminist Politics in the 1920s: The National Woman's Party', *Journal of American*

History 71 (1984), pp. 43–68, see esp. pp. 66–7.

- 19 Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor, *Survival in Doldrums: The American Women's Rights Movement, 1945 to the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 102.
- 20 Vergara, *Memorias*, pp. 53–4, 79–80.
- 21 'Chilean Representative Pleads for Equality', *Equal Rights* 16, no. 15 (17 May 1930), p. 117.
- 22 Vergara, *Memorias*, p. 80.
- 23 Vergara, *Memorias*, p. 80. For an insightful exploration of the racialist and imperialist dimensions of the World Woman's Party, see Susan Zimmermann, 'Night Work for White Women, Bonded Labour for Coloured Women? The International Struggle on Labour Protection and Legal Equality, 1926 to 1944', in Sara Kimble and Marion Röwenkamp (eds), *New Perspectives on European Women's History* (forthcoming, 2015).
- 24 Vergara, *Memorias*, p. 70.
- 25 Vergara to Stevens, 24 October 1933, Box 78, Folder 3, Doris Stevens Papers, 1884–1983, MC 546, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge. (hereafter SP)
- 26 Patrick Barr-Melej, *Reforming Chile: Cultural Politics, Nationalism, and the Rise of the Middle Class* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), p. 110.
- 27 Vergara to Stevens, 24 October 1933; Vergara to Stevens, 8 December 1933, Folder 78.3, SP.
- 28 Vergara to Stevens, 24 October 1933, Folder 78.3, SP.
- 29 Vergara to Stevens, 8 December 1933, Folder 78.3, SP.
- 30 Vergara, *Memorias*, p. 95. It is important to note that the context in which Vergara's memoirs were written – a time when she was disenchanted with the Communist Party – influenced the way that she retrospectively recounted events from the 1930s.
- 31 Vergara, *Memorias*, p. 95. Vergara's metaphor of the 'illegitimate child' would have been redolent with meaning for readers familiar with early-twentieth-century Latin American feminist debates over the rights of illegitimate children. Vergara's feminist organisation MEMCh would itself include 'equality for legitimate and illegitimate children' and determination of paternity of illegitimate children in their aims.
- 32 Vergara, *Memorias*, pp. 92–4.

- 33 'Nazi Treatment of Women', *The Vote*, London, 9 June 1933 (reprinted in *Equal Rights* 19, no. 21 (24 June 1933), p. 167); 'Hitler Derides Women's Rights', *The Baltimore Sun*, 9 September 1934 (reprinted in *Equal Rights* 20, no. 34 (22 September 1934), p. 271).
- 34 Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
- 35 Vergara, *Memorias*, pp. 92–4.
- 36 'Congreso Internacional de Mujeres Contra la Guerra y el Fascismo', Caja 250, Carpeta 3; 'Congreso Internacional de Mujeres Contra la Guerra y el Fascismo, Principios Fundamentales', Caja 256, Carpeta 2, Archivo de Paulina Luisi, Archivo General de la Nación, Montevideo, Uruguay.
- 37 'News from the Field: Against War and Fascism', *Equal Rights* 20, no. 45 (8 December 1934), p. 360; 'Resolution Unanimously Adopted August 7, 1934, by Women's International Congress Against War and Fascism, Paris, France', *Equal Rights* 20, no. 31 (1 September 1934), p. 244; Monica Whately, 'Equality, Freedom and Peace', *Equal Rights* 20, no. 32 (8 September 1934), pp. 254–5.
- 38 Vergara, *Memorias*, p. 92.
- 39 Pernet, 'Mobilizing Women in the Popular Front Era'; Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*, pp. 3–4, 6, 101–03; Vergara, *Memorias*, pp. 135–6.
- 40 MEMCh Manifesto, *La Mujer Nueva*, November 1935.
- 41 MEMCh Manifesto, *La Mujer Nueva*, November 1935.
- 42 Stevens's letters to Vergara were most often translated into Spanish from English with the help of a translator in the Washington, DC IACW office.
- 43 Eileen Boris and Jill Jensen, 'The ILO: Women's Networks and the Making of the Women Worker' in Thomas Dublin and Kathryn Kish Sklar (ed.), *Women and Social Movements International, 1840 to Present*, http://wasi.alexanderstreet.com/help/view/the_ilo_womens_networks_and_the_making_of_the_women_worker.
- 44 Stevens to Vergara, 25 November 1935, Folder 72.3, SP.
- 45 Stevens to Vergara, 25 November 1935, Folder 72.3, SP.
- 46 Gwendolyn Mink, *The Wages of Motherhood: Inequality in the Welfare State, 1917–1942*

(Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 62–3; Linda Gordon, 'Social Insurance and Public Assistance: The Influence of Gender in Welfare Thought in the United States, 1890–1935', *American Historical Review* 97 (1992), pp. 19–54. While some US Women's Bureau members did support maternity legislation in the 1930s, as Dorothy Sue Cobble explains, their support of maternity leave became more robust after the start of the Second World War, when female workers also increasingly pushed unions to implement maternity leave plans. Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 57, 128–9.

- 47 'Victory in Brazil, A Short Report on Fifteen Years of Work', *Boletim da Federação Brasileira pelo Progresso Feminino* 1 (February 1935), p. 3.
- 48 Frieda Miller, 'Personal and Confidential Report to the Secretary of Labor on the First Pan-American Labor Conference of the International Labor Organisation, Santiago, Chile, 2–14 January 1936', Box 47, RG 174, General Records of the Department of Labor, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland.
- 49 Vergara to Stevens, 10 December 1935, Folder 72.3, SP.
- 50 Vergara to Stevens, 10 December 1935, Folder 72.3, SP; Felisa Vergara, 'Tres Mujeres en la Conferencia Panamericana del Trabajo', *Acción Social* 46 (1936), pp. 16–17; Aracil, 'Qué es la Conferencia Panamericana?'; 'Una gran concentración Feminina'.
- 51 Susan D. Becker, *The Origins of the Equal Rights Amendment: American Feminism Between the Wars* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1981), p. 178; Nancy Cott, 'Historical Perspectives: The Equal Rights Amendment in the 1920s', in Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller (eds), *Conflicts in Feminism* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 44–59, here p. 54.
- 52 Vergara to Stevens, 16 January 1936, Folder 72.3, SP.
- 53 Stevens to Vergara, 10 September 1936, Folder 64.7, SP.
- 54 Elena Caffarena to Mabel Vernon, 19 August 1936, Carpeta 3, Archivo de Elena Caffarena, Biblioteca Nacional, Santiago, Chile, <<http://www.memoriachilena.cl/602/w3-article-96049.html>>.
- 55 Harold F. Peterson, *Argentina and the United States, 1810–1960* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), p. 389; State Department Memo 'Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Peace', 8 August 1936, RG 43, 710.PEACE-AGENDA/76, NARA II; Vergara's letters to Stevens of 15 June 1936 and 17 August 1936, refer to Stevens's requests, Folder 64.7, SP.
- 56 Vergara to Stevens, 17 August 1936, Folder 64.7, SP.

- 57 Stevens to Vergara, 10 September 1936, Folder 64.7, SP.
- 58 Stevens to Vergara, 19 October 1936, Folder 64.7, SP.
- 59 Stevens to Edith Houghton Hooker, 28 November 1936, Folder 63.3; Untitled memo re: Buenos Aires Conference, Folder 62.14; 'Record of Main Events of the Trip to and from Buenos Aires and in Buenos Aires, 7 November 1936–13 January 1937', Folder 63.6, SP.
- 60 'Resolución propuesta sugerida para ser adoptada por el Congreso de Mujeres pro Paz en Buenos Aires', 23 November 1936; 'La Conferencia Popular por la Paz de América', Folder 63.3, SP.
- 61 John W. White, 'Women In a Clash at Peace Meeting', *New York Times*, 23 November 1936, p. 8.
- 62 'Record of Main Events', Folder 63.6, SP.
- 63 'Rough Notes on Equal Rights Battle – People's Conference for the Peace of America', 25 November 1936, Folder 63.3, SP.
- 64 'Rough Notes on Equal Rights Battle', 25 November 1936.
- 65 Stevens to Mitchell, 28 November 1936, Folder 25.4, SP.
- 66 'Record of Main Events'.
- 67 Alicia Moreau de Justo to Dr Carlos Saavedra Lamas, December 1936, Folder 63.1, SP.
- 68 Vergara, *Memorias*, p. 142.
- 69 Vergara, *Memorias*, p. 142.
- 70 Donna Guy, *Women Build the Welfare State: Performing Charity and Creating Rights in Argentina, 1880–1955* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), pp. 153–4; Marifran Carlson, *Feminismo!: The Woman's Movement in Argentina from Its Beginnings to Eva Perón* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1988), p. 172.
- 71 J. B. S. Hardman (ed.), *Rendezvous with Destiny: Addresses and Opinions of Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (New York, 1944), pp. 143–5.
- 72 'Memo for Dr Feis', 12 December 1936, Folder 62.1, SP.

- 73 'Record of Main Events', Folder 63.6; 'Points for the Ambassador', 12 December 1936, Folder 62.16, SP.
- 74 John W. White, 'Equal Rights Fight at Peak at Parley', *New York Times*, 9 December 1936, p. 19; 'Statement of Mrs. Elise F. Musser', 8 December 1936; 'Statement Made to *New York Times* by Doris Stevens, 14 December 1936, Folder 62.16, SP.
- 75 'Statement of Hispanic Organization of Women and other Feminist Individual Leaders Concerning Women's Rights in the Peace Conference', Folder 62.16, SP.
- 76 'Statement made to *New York Times* by Doris Stevens', 14 December 1936, Folder 62.16, SP.
- 77 'Equal Rights at the Inter American Conference for Peace', Folder 62.16; 'Verbatim Translation of Debate in Sixth Commission', Tuesday, 15 December 1936, Folder 63.2, SP.
- 78 'Declaración de la mujer Argentina', Folder 62.16, SP.
- 79 Stevens to Fanny Bunand-Sévastos, 19 April 1937, Folder 29.5, SP.
- 80 The Salvation Army had been influential in the temperance movement. Vergara, *Memorias*, p. 141.
- 81 Vergara, *Memorias*, p. 144.
- 82 'Las empleadas tendrán salario minimo igual al hombre', *La Mujer Nueva*, (December 1936), p. 1.
- 83 Stevens to Smith, 11 April 1938, Folder 90.17, SP.
- 84 The Commission inserted a study of maternity legislation throughout the Americas into their comprehensive research on women's civil and political rights, reporting on 'pregnancy, maternity and other social benefits to the end that better conditions for mothers, and especially working mothers be consummated in industry, commerce, and agriculture'. IACW report to Lima Conference, 1938, SP.
- 85 J. Schain to Mary Anderson, 23 December 1936, 'The Woman's Charter', Box 24, Women's Bureau Papers, International Division, Correspondence, General Records, 1919–52, NARA II. The Women's Bureau of the US Labor Department was founded in 1920 to 'investigate and improve the condition of the working women, guide and assist women workers'. It became one of the staunchest opponents of the NWP Equal Rights Amendment.
- 86 Stevens Memoirs, Folders 127.3 and 127.4; Stevens to Mercedes Gallagher de Parks, 27 January 1939, Folder 85.5; Vergara to Stevens, 20 December 1938, Folder 64.5, SP.

- 87 In the early to mid-1940s, Vergara also lived in New York City, Vermont and Louisiana, teaching Spanish at Middlebury College and at Sophie Newcomb College.
- 88 Inter-American Commission of Women, *Informe de la Comisión Interamericana de Mujeres a la Novena Conferencia Internacional Americana, Sobre Derechos Civiles y Políticos de la Mujer* (1948), p. 227 (accessed on Women and Social Movements International, 1840 to Present, <<http://wasi.alexanderstreet.com.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/view/1664781>>).
- 89 For more on how Latin American feminists took the lead in universalising women's rights at the 1945 Conference, see Ellen DuBois and Lauren Derby, 'The Strange Case of Minerva Bernardino: Pan American and United Nations Women's Rights Activist', *Women's Studies International Forum* 32 (2009), pp. 43–50; Katherine M. Marino, 'Transnational Pan-American Feminism: The Friendship of Bertha Lutz and Mary Wilhelmine Williams, 1926–1944', *Journal of Women's History* 26 (2014), pp. 77–80.
- 90 Vergara to Stevens, 5 April 1939, Folder 64.5, SP.
- 91 See correspondence from Vergara to Stevens, 1941 to 1946, Folder 64.5, SP.
- 92 Vergara, *Memorias*, p. 190.
- 93 Vergara, *Memorias*, p. 259.
- 94 Vergara to Stevens, 16 August 1962, Folder 36.13, SP.

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