GENDERED ACTIVISM:

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Abstract: This article focuses on the repression of the student movement in the University of Granada during the state of exception of 1970. It relates the experiences of two students, Socorro and Jesus, a couple who joined the Communist Party of Spain (PCE) and suffered persecution and imprisonment. The Francoist university was governed by the University Regulatory Law (URL, University Regulatory Law) issued in 1943, which was replaced with the promulgation of the General Law of Education in 1970. As I explained in my previous work, the Catholic national rhetoric of the Franco regime forged an ideal "True Catholic Woman" based on the resurgence of the values of purity and subordination of the 16th century counter reform as proposed by Luis Vives in The Instruction of the Christian Woman (1523) and Fray Luis de León in The Perfect Wife (1583). This ideal of a woman came to contradict the ideal of an intellectual built on the letter of the University of Granada (1943). The transition to the consumer economy in the 1950s with the military and economic aid of the United States, as well as the social Catholicism of the Second Vatican Council in the sixties along with the arrival of tourism and emigration to Europe changed the social fabric and opened the doors of the classrooms to an increasing number of women, especially in the humanities careers of Philosophy and Letters. Through the analysis of interviews conducted in the late 1980s with two people who participated in the clandestine student movement, this article explores how young people transgressed the official discourse on the Catholic ideal of women, claimed the university environment for the working class and created a neutral space in terms of gender in which they could achieve their commitment to study, democratic freedom and feminism.

Key words: Gender relations; Student movement; Oral history

Activismo y relaciones de género: El movimiento estudiantil anti-franquista en la universidad de Granada en los años 60 y 70

Resumen: Este artículo se centra en la represión del movimiento estudiantil en la Universidad de Granada durante el estado de excepción de 1970. Relata las experiencias de dos estudiantes, Socorro y Jesús, una pareja que se afilió al Partido Comunista de España (PCE) y sufrió persecución y encarcelamiento. La universidad franquista fue gobernada por la Ley de Ordenación Universitaria emitida en 1943, que fue reemplazada con la promulgación de la Ley General de Educación en 1970. Como he explicado en mi trabajo anterior, la retórica nacional católica del franquista forjó un ideal "Mujer Católica Verdadera" basado en el resurgimiento de los valores de pureza y subordinación de la contrarreforma del siglo XVI como propusiera Luis Vives en La...
instrucción de la mujer cristiana de (1523) y Fray Luis de León en La perfecta casada (1583). Este ideal de mujer venía a contradecir al ideal de intelectual construido en la letra de la Ley de Ordenación Universitaria (1943). La transición a la economía de consumo en los años 1950 con la ayuda militar y económica de los Estados Unidos, así como el catolicismo social del Concilio Vaticano II en los sesenta con la llegada del turismo y la emigración a Europa cambiaron el tejido social y abrieron las puertas de las aulas a un número cada vez mayor de mujeres, especialmente en las carreras de humanidades de Filosofía y Letras. A través del análisis de entrevistas realizadas a fines de la década de 1980 con dos personas que participaron en el movimiento estudiantil clandestino, este artículo explora cómo los jóvenes transgredieron el discurso oficial sobre el ideal católico de mujer, reclamaron el ámbito universitario para la clase obrera y crearon un espacio neutral en cuanto al género en el que pudieran lograr su compromiso con el estudio, la libertad democrática y el feminismo.

Palabras clave: Relaciones de Género; Movimiento estudiantil; Historia oral

Activisme et relations de genre: le mouvement des étudiants anti-franquistes à l'université de Grenade dans les années 60 et 70

Résumé: Cet article porte sur la répression du mouvement étudiant à l'Université de Grenade pendant l'état d'exception de 1970. Il relate les expériences de deux étudiants, Socorro et Jesus, un couple qui a rejoint le Parti Communiste Espagnol (PCE) et qui a été persécuté et l'emprisonnement. L'université franquiste était régie par la Loi sur la réglementation des universités (LRU), promulguée en 1943, qui a été remplacée par la promulgation de la Loi générale sur l'éducation en 1970. Comme je l'ai expliqué dans mes précédents travaux, la rhétorique nationale Franco a forgé un idéal d'une "vraie femme catholique" fondé sur la résurgence des valeurs de pureté et de subordination de la contre-réforme du XVIe siècle, proposé par Luis Vives dans L'Instruction de la femme chrétienne de (1523) et Fray Luis de León dans Le parfait marié (1583). Cet idéal de femme en est venu à contredire l'idéal d'un intellectuel construit sur la lettre du Ley de Ordenación Universitaria (1943). La transition vers l'économie de consommation dans les années 1950 avec l'aide militaire et économique des États-Unis, ainsi que le catholicisme social du Concile Vatican II dans les années 1960 avec l'arrivée du tourisme et l'émigration vers l'Europe ont modifié le tissu social et ouvert les portes des salles de classe à un nombre croissant de femmes, en particulier dans les carrières des sciences humaines de la philosophie (philosophie et lettres). À travers l'analyse d'entretiens menés à la fin des années 1980 avec deux personnes ayant participé au mouvement étudiant clandestin, cet article explore la manière dont les jeunes ont transgressé le discours officiel sur l'idéal catholique des femmes et ont revendiqué l'environnement universitaire pour la classe ouvrière et ils ont créé un espace neutre en termes de genre dans lequel ils pourraient concrétiser leur engagement en matière d'étude, de liberté démocratique et de féminisme.

Mots-clés: Relations de genre; Mouvement étudiant; Histoire orale
Introduction
This article is part of a larger project, a book on the life experiences of ordinary Spaniards in the later years of the dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939-1975). Through the story of a young couple, Socorro and Jesús, in the pages that follow, I examine the impact of the December 1970 State of Emergency the regime proclaimed to repress the student and labor protests across the country. Socorro and Jesús were students at the University of Granada. They joined the Communist Party out of idealistic sentiments borne from their commitment to social justice and freedom as learned during their Catholic upbringing. Both of them transcended physical and symbolic boundaries to subvert their limitations placed on them by their own families’ and by Spanish social expectations. Socorro was one of a handful of women who joined the communist clandestine activism in the mid-1960s, and Jesús defied his right-wing family politics. As I have stated elsewhere (Morcillo, 2000 and 2008) National Catholic ideology informed the regime’s sexual repressive discourse through the imposition of Christian family values as the pillar of social and gender relations. The regime’s notion of physical and moral female purity and piety were carefully wrapped up in a formula of domesticity that had been sanctified by the Catholic Church since the Council of Trent. The Francoist National Catholic rhetoric forged an ideal “True Catholic Womanhood” based on the revival of the counterreformation values of purity and subordination of the 1500s as proposed in Luis Vives’ *The Instruction of the Christian Woman* (1523)\(^1\) and Fray Luis de Leon’s *The Perfect Wife* (1583) (Morcillo, 2000 and 2008, Chapter 3, pp. 27-46). The fusion of scientific discourses with religious conservatism lent a veneer of modernity to the official design of the “New Woman” embodied by the members of the Falange’s Women’s Section (Sección Femenina de Falange).\(^2\) This ideal womanhood was inimical to the intellectual subject constructed by the letter of the Regulatory University Law enacted in 1943 and replaced by the General Law of Education in 1970.

This study utilizes oral history as a theoretical intervention into the engagement of the concepts of time and space.\(^3\) To accomplish this, it is necessary to deploy an interdisciplinary

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\(^1\) Luis Vives’ *The Instruction of the Christian Woman* (1523), written to guide the education of Mary, daughter of Catherine of Aragon and Henry VIII of England, was translated into different languages and became the basic guide for the instruction of Christian ladies in Europe, whose education was supposed to be designed to protect their chastity. Fray Luis de León, in *La Perfecta Casada*, (1583), instructed newlyweds on the sanctity of marriage and the value of chastity within it.

\(^2\) The nationalization of women’s bodies became part of the Falangist Women’s Section, which was in charge of physical education as a means to prepare Spanish women physically for their motherly duties.

\(^3\) Some of the oral history seminal works include: Passerini (1996); Passerini (2009); Portelli (1990); Ritchie (2014); Thompson (1988); Thomson (2011); Thomson and Puri (2017); and Hamilton (2005), pp. 11-18. See also Graham Smith’s current work on food and family relations and doctor-patient memory narratives. Some works on the Spanish historiography include: Folguera (1994); Llona (2002); Vilanova (1995); Borderías (1995); Llona (2008) as well as Llona (2010); and Hernandez Sandoica (2004). It is impossible to do justice to the voluminous oral history literature, today a truly global interdisciplinary field across cultures. Some of the best information is available on line at: the Columbia Center for Oral History (CCOHR) [http://www.incite.columbia.edu/ccohr/](http://www.incite.columbia.edu/ccohr/); the Oral History Association
approach to the narratives in both content and form. First, because late Francoism represented the transition from autarky to consumer economy with the ensuing evolution of urbanization, migration, and tourism, this narrative is located in the urban setting, that of the city of Granada, which experienced a profound transformation during the 1960s and 1970s the time of economic boom. The economic growth occurred after the regime signed the Pact of Madrid with the United States in the summer of 1953. New neighborhoods were built in the provincial town, allotting zones to specific classes. Likewise, the university became a space of contestation (Lefebvre, 2005) for the offspring of the lower classes, as a number of scholarships became available to the children of rural and lower income families. That new generation of idealistic students, many of them women in disciplines like Philosophy, History, or Classics, became radicalized and joined grassroots Catholic organizations and the clandestine Communist Party opposition. Second, I construct the narrative as a creative non-fiction piece in order to prioritize a lyrical narrative that more effectively captures the emotional landscape of the late Francoism in its orchestration of a technocratic modernizing project in the context of the Cold War, and the resistant strategies deployed by anonymous Spaniards. Finally, my engagement with the informants leads to my own auto-biographical narrative. This intrusion of my “self” into the story emerged organically during the writing process; my personal sense of self evolved over time in my role of writer, as I shaped each individual story as well as my own, becoming both narrator and participant.

As a critique of alienation, the city’s quotidian rhythms become simultaneously the concrete site of capitalist control as well as frontal contestation from below, with songs and poems that articulate the informants’ feelings and convert them into actions. It was not strange for these young students to carry in one hand subversive propaganda and a guitar in the other, as they led a poetic revolution of everyday life.

The discussion that follows considers spaces as gendered, in the same way that the hours of the day are male or female, friendly or threatening. The discussion of gender roles in academic language is rich in “spatial metaphors,” from the “separate spheres” doctrine (Peterson, 2000) developing from the industrial revolution’s division of private, identified as female, and public spaces, identified as male, to the debates about marginal periphery versus center experiences and “location” to refer to identity politics. Of great importance is the rich literature on feminist geography emerging in the 1980s which lends weight to the social relations in space and time. The works of feminist geographers like Gillian Rose (1993) and Doreen Massey (1994) are crucial

http://www.oralhistory.org/resources/; and the International Oral History Association provides a good bibliography http://www.ioha.org/useful-readings/ In Spain see the following archives: In Madrid late Professor Carmen Garcia Nieto from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid established in 1981 the Seminario de fuentes orales http://www.seminariofuentesorales.es/somos/somos.php to explore the experiences of women during the Spanish Civil War; in the Basque Country professor Miren Llona from the Universidad del Pais Vasco leads the establishment of the Archivo de Historia Oral. AHOA, Ahozco Historiaren Artxiboa http://www.ahoaweb.org/ 4 Ronald Grele calls it “conversational narrative,” the result of the exchange between the interviewer and the informant in which both shape the outcome of the conversation. While the informant provides the story, the ultimate author of the narrative resulting from the interview is the interviewer. See Grele (1991, pp. 257-58). See also: Abrams (2010); Llona, ed. (2012); Dominguez, Benmayor, and Maria Eugenia Cardinal de la Nuez, eds. (2016). 5 See also McDowell and Sharp (1999); Nelson and Seager (2005); and Pratt (2004).
for a more sophisticated understanding of how space and time are inseparable from gender. The informants in the narratives that follow made self-conscious choices to transgress those urban zones and bio-political (gendered) limitations. As a woman Socorro entered the male-centered space of the university where she was implicitly excluded or “out of place” (Massey, 1994, pp. 130-134), as the Regulatory law of the University—in place from 1943 to 1970—defined the university student identity as inimical to the official discourse on true Catholic womanhood. In many instances, she asserted herself. by becoming “one of the guys.” Jesús for his part, became utterly aware of the dictatorship’s unjust class structure while fighting side by side with his girlfriend. Examining their synchronized moves offers a nuanced look at the gender dynamics at play in the moment in which the transition to democracy was about to dawn. The small trespassing choices each informant revealed in the interviews are illuminating for a historical account of invisible acts of resistance and empowerment, of solidarity and betrayal between the sexes in the fight for democracy. While the urban landscape was their visible space of action, the impetus behind their decision to move from a zone to another is only revealed through a new understanding of spatiality and temporality which places time and space in a dialectical continuous engagement.

Socorro and Jesús’s Story

Every morning on my way to school, my little brother and sister tagging behind me, I used to walk through the ruins of what once was a tannery located across from Granada’s provincial prison. We had moved seven years earlier in the summer of 1964 to a newly constructed neighborhood in the outskirts of town. In 1928, the city hall had erected the bullring nicknamed the Monumental de Frascuelo, then came in 1932 the building of the provincial jail under the aegis of the progressive II Republic, and then after the civil war the equally monumental brand-new Hospital Ruiz de Alda in 1953. I remember most of the surroundings were lush orchards and muddy streets where the city had built in 1963 five-story boxy public housing in rows bordering to the north the ruinous tannery and the old prison.

Over the years, lack of common-sense urban planning had swallowed the jail structure, which suddenly stood in the middle of the city—an ugly red brick building facing a fetid ruinous tannery structure where leather treatments of an invisible past dwelled in the walls’ pores. As I, then only nine, walked by these places they smelled of death. Very organic. Across the street from the ruins of the tannery emerged the prison where common and political prisoners were

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6 See Morcillo (2000).
7 The Monumental de Frascuelo is the third bullring of the city of Granada. It was built in 1928, during the golden age of bullfighting. The man behind its construction was the bullfighter Lagartijillo Chico, and his fondness for his teacher Frascuelo gave the ring its nickname.
8 The Ruiz de Alda Hospital (1953), the Plaza de Toros and the Los Cármenes Stadium. The project was designed by the architect Aurelio Botella, who also designed the College of Medicine and its adjacent Hospital Clinico (1927-45). The inauguration of Ruiz de Alda Hospital took place on September 26, 1953 by the Marquis of Villaverde, Franco’s son-in-law. Originally it was going to be called Sanatorium Virgen de las Angustias, but it was understood that this name was not appropriate for a hospital, as “Angustias” means anguish or pain in Spanish. See [http://rinconesgranainos.blogspot.com/2014/11/granada-en-blanco-y-negro-la-granada.html](http://rinconesgranainos.blogspot.com/2014/11/granada-en-blanco-y-negro-la-granada.html)
housed. Built during the Second Republic (1931-1936), Granada’s provincial jail was inaugurated in 1933 as part of the modernization plan led by then General Director of Prisons, Victoria Kent (Malaga 1891- New York, 1987), a socialist and a feminist. The architect, Felipe Jiménez Lacal, found inspiration in the mudejar style, with a floor plan organized in renaissance revival fashion around four interior patios. The prison mortar and structure emulated, in humble economical red brick, the design of the sixteenth-century Hospital Real, a jewel of gothic, renaissance, mudejar, and baroque styles where today sits the University of Granada’s central administration.

While the prison, originally built for 500 inmates, aspired to be the space of rehabilitation in the modernizing project of the Second Republic, ironically it imprisoned ten times that number during the dictatorship, mostly political dissidents. Demolished in 2010, only the main entrance tower survives, protected as a historical monument upon which the Second Republic shield was carved. The dictatorship decided not to tear it down after the civil war, leaving it as a symbolic grin to political prisoners.

Only later, on a spring sunny afternoon in 1989, over a cup of coffee in her cozy dining table, I learned that Socorro and Jesús had been inside that very same prison in September 1971.

For me, then a third grader, that school year was of no particular significance. Every morning I walked to school, completely unaware of the Art History student, a senior in college behind the redbrick walls, taking her finals that September 1971, imprisoned after eight months on the run from the police for being a rebel with a cause, a communist, but above all, a dedicated student. Socorro’s passion for knowledge was inseparable from her fervor for freedom and social justice born out of love, love of God and love for Jesús, her boyfriend.

Jesusito de mi vida
Tu eres niño como yo
Por eso te quiero tanto
Y te doy mi corazón

Only sixteen, just children, they met at a party and fell in love (Carreño Tenorio, 2017). Jesús was born in Calahorra, a tiny city in the province of Granada, the son of a strict father who was a teacher and head of the Falange in the village. Socorro, born in Granada, was the daughter of a post office employee and a stay-at-home mom. She had only one brother, four years older than her, a circumstance which made them an atypical family in a country of pro-natalist policies where seven, eight, nine children per family was the norm. Socorro worried about her parents’ piety and their inconsistent attendance of weekly mass; as a child she would pray, “please let them become more religious, I’m afraid they’ll be damned.” Things changed after her father took some catechism courses, making him rather than her mother the religious one in the family. “My mother is very sensitive,” Socorro explains. A small village woman who grew up without a father after he abandoned them and left for Cuba, Socorro’s mother suffered from cyclical depression and mental illness. “My mother, while she belonged to a conservative family, felt a visceral anticlericalism and would express herself in many ways as a Lorquian character: ‘don’t bring me flowers, those are for the dead’ or ‘I need to be close to the soil because it is my shroud.’”

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9 Little Jesus of my life / You are a child like me / That’s why I love you so much / And I give you my heart / Popular children’s bedtime prayer [Translation by the author]
Socorro’s father fought with the self-proclaimed nationalists during the civil war. He was only 17 years old and forced to serve with the Francoist troops, a trauma no doubt for him as a member of a leftist family. In contrast, his older brother, a Republican leftist, was imprisoned in a concentration camp. In Socorro’s assessment, they might have been leftists but still very sexist and macho as well, an ideal manhood based on their almost “Calvinist” self-discipline, a cult of the hardworking breadwinners. This overwhelming self-assurance on her father’s part intimidated Socorro’s mother. The political views at home were right-wing, and her father felt this was the best way to “survive” as a mutilated war veteran under the regime. However, there were contradictions and puzzling behaviors that Socorro could not understand as a little girl, such as her father listening to the clandestine radio station known as “la Pirenaica.”10 His love for his dissident brother, a victim of the regime’s repression, made him sensitive to the losing side’s fortunes and vicissitudes while simultaneously making his mutilated veteran status within the regime worth his while.

Socorro received the mandatory Catholic education, attending first the Adoratrices nunnery, then the Cristo Rey schools. Always studious, she enjoyed the scholarships available at the time for lower income families. Rather than any encouragement at home, her eagerness to learn was what led her to the university. Her father always considered a formal education unnecessary for a girl. The ideal scenario in his mind was for her to perhaps open a perfume boutique, “something elegant,” she laughs. Her persistence led him to allow her to enter the Normal School for teachers in 1965, regarded as a “proper and feminine” career for a girl but, above all, a very short path to marriage, he hoped. Socorro, however, had other plans; she persevered and, once she received her teaching credentials in 1968, transferred to college to pursue a degree in Art History. In college, she made friends with likeminded students who shared a commitment for social justice. Her relationship with Jesús blossomed, and they joined in the struggle for a better world. His family was part of the victors, and he was raised in an environment saturated with religious and nationalist principles. Jesús’ parents were both teachers and thus inculcated the obligation to study in their children.

Jesús attended the Escuela del Ave María in the popular historic neighborhood of the Albayzin in Granada, where his religious and political consciousness took shape, thanks to certain values the teachers imprinted on the students: compassion for the weak, solidarity, understanding the suffering and needs of others. Wrapped in a religious language, never political, the messages transmitted emphasized the importance to consider the needs of the poor. Jesús’ growing awareness triggered his conscious rejection of the world surrounding him, of a Spain that in the 1960s was still poverty stricken, socially and politically desperate. When he fell in love with Socorro, as idealistic and religiously committed as he was, Jesús was not aware of the regime’s repression against dissidents—a repression he and Socorro would soon suffer in their own flesh as they entered the university. Their political convictions rooted in their religious

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10 Established as Radio España Independiente (REI, July 22, 1941- July 14, 1977), known also as La Pirenaica, created after the Civil War by the Communist Party of Spain in exile, under the leadership of Dolores Ibarruri, to reach the population inside the country. This was the most important clandestine radio station in opposition to the regime and its location was never disclosed. The first broadcast took place on July 22, 1941 from Moscow. On January 5, 1955, the station was moved permanently to Bucharest, Romania.
understanding of the maxim “love of neighbor” and their dream for social justice. In Socorro’s own words, her religious conviction and involvement with youth groups working with the poor in Granada resulted in her becoming utterly sensitive to the political activism in the clandestine university circles. Granada urban development exploded after the regime granted the region the status of “polo de desarrollo” (development area). A number of districts were carved out to relocate the poor and disadvantaged. Some of those neighborhoods included La Virgencica, El Chinarral, or a cluster of barracks in the district of La Chana, all ripe with social problems rooted in abject misery, hunger, and illiteracy.

El Sacromonte (Sacred Hill) was historically occupied by the Gypsies who made their homes in the caves of the mountain. One hundred and seventy-three families were forcibly evacuated in trucks from the historic neighborhood after the flooding and landslides in the winter of 1963. A total of 7000 people were resettled in different parts in the outskirts of the city. A twenty-four-year-old man and his toddler son died in one of the collapsed caves. Franco himself visited the devastated region, and the Ministry of Housing, in cooperation with Granada’s city hall, developed the temporary housing project of La Virgencica. The architectonic design received a government award, and the evacuees moved into hexagonal $37\text{m}^2$ (scarce 400 square feet) houses laid out in a hive pattern. Ill equipped, the houses lacked the necessary hygienic and light conditions to be able to efficiently shelter large families of ten and fifteen in some instances.

When Socorro mentions La Virgencica, I go back in time to 1968 too, only six years old, I remember vaguely going with my family to visit uncle Miguel, my mother’s brother, a young construction worker who had recently moved to the city to live with my parents for two years. Now newly wed to a young woman whose family had been relocated to La Virgencica, they were living with her parents, still waiting after having their first child to find a home of their own. Among my parents’ old black and white photos there is one of us children sitting outside in the hexagonal tiny front patio.

It was in La Virgencica that the first neighborhood association was established in 1969, with the encouragement of the parish priest, Antonio Quitián González. It was Father Quitián who inspired young students like Socorro and Jesús. Like other priests who belonged to the Communist party or were sympathizers, father Quitián was arrested and imprisoned. With the

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11 On the urban development of La Virgencica and other marginal neighborhoods in Granada see: Andreo Sánchez (2015); and Ortega López (2004).

12 See http://granadaimedia.com/50-anos-inundaciones-sacromonte/

13 By the mid-1970s, many of the residents of La Virgencica relocated to the new district in the north of the city limits called Poligono de Cartuja, where they resettled in tiny cheap single-story homes sponsored by the regime’s Obra Sindical del Hogar. City Hall was determined to move the families in La Virgencica by force to the northern district by 1981. They came with bulldozers and forced the remaining families to evacuate. The Gypsy clan “Los Jaros” refused to leave, as the claimed to have received death threats from other clans now settled in the Polígono.

14 On the important work of the neighborhood associations as seedbeds of democratization in late Francoism see: Ofer (2017). On women’s participation in the neighborhood association movement see Radcliff (2008, pp. 54-78).

15 Father Quitián was arrested and sent to prison in 1975 but Cardinal Enrique Tarancón was able to intercede on his behalf under the provisions of the 1953 Concordat between the regime and the Vatican.
encouragement of Antonio Quitián, Socorro joined a project to teach reading and writing in these neighborhoods in 1969, her first academic year in college.

For Socorro, distributing a bag of chickpeas among the indigent families did not address the fundamental problems at hand but rather only emphasized the class distinctions between the young “señoritas” like herself and those less fortunate. She felt that kind of charity only worked to appease the guilty conscience of the upper classes and kept the poor defenseless. The most dramatic stories she remembers included the story of the pregnant woman who, when Socorro asked about her due date, calmly replied with resignation that the baby she was carrying was dead in utero. Socorro was determined to empower those who made her feel so self-conscious about her fortunate position and actively sought an alternative to what she regarded as condescending religious activism. In order to achieve justice, she saw education as essential for these disadvantaged people to achieve self-reliance. During her second year in college, she finally left behind the religious-based groups to join the Communist Party. Entering college enabled her to trespass a first limitation by crossing from charity to political activism. Such crossing had been first spatial, forged in the many visits to the poor neighborhoods from her more comfortable apartment in the city center. She declares confidently how she felt in her element when, as a 19-year-old, she encountered—in her words—a sort of a “revolutionary mystique.” She felt herself to be a true historical actor as one of only five young women who joined the Party at the time.

From her perspective, only the communists within the student body in the university sought true effective solutions to the socio-political evils, in contrast to other organizations like FECUN (Federación Española de Comunidades Universitarias), an openly Catholic organization under the guidance of the Jesuits.

Socorro and Jesús affirm their youthful idealism felt like a heroic mission. “We were not violent,” Jesús remarks. “Or maybe we were violent in our own way; we did not glorify violence but behaved violently without actual weapons, we were violent with our words, and did not fear anything. We were able to resist all forms of repression, we did not care. I remember saying to myself ‘I won’t live in a country with this state of affairs and will do everything in my power to change it.’ That was the root of our mobilization through the Communist Party because it was truly the only effective political organization. It mobilized, stood up and fought the regime and organized the opposing forces on the street, in the university, and the factories. The PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español) existed only in name because it did not function at that level.” (Carreño Tenorio, 2017).

Quitín was released from the prison of Carabanchel in Madrid with bail. See Martínez Foronda and Rueda Castaño (2012); and also Quitián González (2005).

Formerly Federación Española de Congregaciones Marianas Universitarias or FECUM. This organization operated under the auspices of the Society of Jesus and was the alternative movement to the Communists in the student resistance. Within the members, known simply among students as the Christians in daily parlance, there were a few persecuted by the regime as they underwent a process of radicalization from their contact with the labor movement. See Sainz Martínez (1996).

Militants of the PESOE at the time dispute vehemently this assertion of marginal significance of their struggle. The PSOE (founded in 1879) was present during the clandestine fight against the dictatorship but the Communist Party had a stronger clandestine network throughout the country. The internal crisis
As years went by, Jesús realized he is more of a social democrat than a communist, considering himself the offspring of the Second Socialist International. In hindsight, he reflects on the lost opportunity of the socialist party to capitalize on the opposition’s strength, the young idealism and hearts of so many that poured into the resistance. Indeed, there was more “heart” than reasoning behind the activism of these young students and workers. But the communists were better organized, which led to a de facto engagement for many people. Moreover, the rhetoric used to recruit did not emphasize Stalinism but rather constructed a pragmatic agenda to bring democracy and civil liberties back to Spain and criticized the Soviet Union’s repression of the Prague’s spring in 1968. Jesús remembered their protests and calling the Soviets barbarians. Taking these stances were the result, in his assessment, of a younger generation with a solid foundation built on values of solidarity and peace who were receptive to the international wave of revolutionary student and labor movements erupting around the world, a youth with a conscientious rejection of colonial and imperialistic subjugation in the context of the process of decolonization.

The first time Jesús was arrested was in mid-June 1969, charged with instigating a Partido Comunista de España (PCE) protest against the showing of the Hollywood film *Green Berets*, in which John Wayne played the main character in a story of pro-USA involvement in Vietnam. Vietnam was central to the student resistance movement, in which they demonstrated solidarity with their counterparts on the other side of the Atlantic. Socorro was also arrested a few days later, after the police came to her parent’s home, looking for her brother rather than her, as they were not convinced that a young woman could have a militant role. Both Socorro and Jesús were released after a few days because they did not have a previous police record.

Socorro’s and Jesús’ thirst for knowledge informed their activism. Their dedication to studying included actively learning about Marxism and political philosophy in general outside the classroom, to seek information about everything happening beyond Spain, in the world. Although mass social media platforms of today did not exist then, they read foreign newspapers and listened to BBC or Paris radio stations as well as to the Pirenaica. Their desire to learn represented also a most subversive act. The censorship of certain books and literature invigorated them to smuggle prohibited titles from France or England every time a friend traveled there. From Paris, they would bring books published in Ruedo Iberico and works by Althusser, Sartre, and Camus, along with any other leftist thinkers. There existed a passion for knowledge to inform their struggle, particularly an interpretation of history from the perspective of Marxism. They hid zealously all those readings at home from the searches of the political police Brigada Político Social (BPS) when they came to arrest them. Finding any of those books led not only to arrest but also prison. Those books were as powerful as bombs and guns in the eyes of the political police, who considered them the source of violence poisoning their minds and souls (Carreño Tenorio, 2017). Their ability to think and reinterpret their reality made them extremely dangerous in the eyes of the regime.

Jesús also considered the dictatorship’s silence about the Spanish Civil War a violation of his rights. He did not have a chance to learn about it until he was 17 years old and entered college as a Geography and History major. His reading of the causes leading to the conflict revealed to within the PCE (founded in 1921) led to the overwhelming victory of the PSOE in the general elections in 1982 turning it into the most important political force of the left in the transition to democracy.
him how those who presented themselves as victims had been in reality the aggressors against the democratically established II Republic. This realization was, in Jesús’ words, “like Saint Paul’s conversion after falling from his horse.” “Never ever,” Jesús said to himself, “will I accept a regime that deceives us in this odious way. A regime based on lies and corruption. There was nothing more corrupt, intransigent and dogmatic, than an authoritarian regime like Francoism” (Carreño Tenorio, 2017). His deception was so profound that Jesús pledged to fight the dictatorship with all his might politically and intellectually. From the intellectual perspective, they sought the reading of anything with Marxist overtones. That kind of approach, in hindsight he believes maybe proved too excessive because every subject they studied was illuminated with the Marxist stance. He considers that kind of approach not scientific but rather sectarian, leading to a slanted version of reality, he admits. With time, Jesús became exposed to the writings of Enlightenment thinkers like Locke and Hegel, who did not appear to be as bad as his comrades made them out to be. All that reading, reflection, and introspection led him to realize how proselytism dominated their actions, to a certain extent understandable given the desperate urgency of Spain’s political circumstances. Pressing crisis called for them to forget about intellectual debates and address the fight in a doctrinarism fashion.

“Our cell structure allowed us to hold discussions,” Jesús explains. “As comrades, we tried to maintain a certain discipline utilizing our ‘combat names’ in a futile attempt to forget for a brief moment that outside we remained all friends and fellow learners.” (Carreño Tenorio, 2017). For the militants, there was no praxis without a profound theoretical analysis and discussion and vice versa: studying, debating, dissenting, planning, and acting represented the continuum of the revolutionary practice. Reading Gramsci, Althusser, and Lukacs made them pause and deliberate about action as an episteme, a Janus-like conundrum—making evident their life/death precarious situation. Jesús remembers that Marta Harnecker’s book on materialism seemed to him a rather basic read, sort of an indoctrination rather than a text to encourage reflection. Reflection represented a fundamental part of his militancy, as he prepared discussions for recruitment and elaborated and distributed propaganda. He even went so far as to explain the political situation and their leftist activism to the foreign students who attended the University of Granada in order to raise consciousness about the need to fight not only inside Spain but also abroad to bring Franco’s dictatorship down. College students also taught workers and peasants to read and write and used cinema and poetry readings to help them understand and improve their miserable conditions. Many were their same age but had not enjoyed the same advantages as the university youths. Through this sort of cultural brigade they all, students and workers, felt united in a common fight for dignified life and justice. However, Jesús also laments their dogmatism and inflexible modus operandi, in which any frailty or doubt was considered treason.

For Socorro, her activism as an anti-Francoist student revolves around the time before and after that “state of emergency.” The academic year 1970-71 began with a tense political crisis in the University of Granada. In July 1970, the construction workers went on strike and took up the streets of the city, leading to a brutal police repression that resulted in the death of five workers and numerous arrests. The Communist Party mobilized students as soon as classes started, and a number of them were arrested during a college assembly in October, including Jesús, Socorro’s boyfriend, and Joaquín, head of their college cell, among others.

In addition to the summer workers crisis, the national political landscape in 1970 was saturated with the hardening repression of sixteen members (including three women and two
priests) of the Basque terrorist organization ETA\(^{18}\) accused of “rebellion” and then court marshalled for the assassination of three people: in June 1968 José Pardines Arcay, a Civil Guard officer, was killed when he intercepted two ETA members in a road control point; Melitón Manzanas, Chief of the Political Brigade of the Police, was killed in August the same year in San Sebastian, Basque Country; and finally, Fermín Monasterio Pérez, a taxi driver, in April 1969.\(^{19}\) By the fall of 1969, all the accused were imprisoned, awaiting trial, with the prosecution seeking six death penalties and a total of 752 years of imprisonment in what became known as the “Burgos Trial.”\(^{20}\)

The Basque independentists and the opposition to the regime beyond the Basque provinces appealed to the international press to denounce the regime’s repressive apparatus and demanded a civil trial rather than a hasty military one. The Burgos Trial revealed the implosion of the regime as it faced the Basque ETA armed opposition, ready to kill to achieve their political and nationalist goals. In addition, the well-organized opposition of trade unions and the PCE benefited from the popular rejection of constant brutal repression from the regime’s Dirección General de Seguridad’s political police, the Brigada Político Social, which manifested itself in strikes and street protests organized by workers and students. The trial of Burgos ignited student and faculty mobilization across universities, joining an international trend that mirrored other protests in Europe (Prague and Paris, 1968), Latin America (Mexico City, La Paz, Guayaquil, Caracas 1968), and the United States (anti-war Vietnam protests at Kent State University in Ohio in 1970). Finally, the Catholic Church’s rejection of the regime’s repressive machine highlighted the most profound generational rupture among Catholics with and against Franco. The case of Father Antonio Quitián from the poor neighborhood of La Virgencica mentioned above is a good example. He worked as a construction worker in Granada and was involved in the strike of July 1970, during which several construction workers were killed and many arrested, leading to the regime’s declaration of the State of Emergency on 14 December 1970.

Socorro considers her activism marked by the events that unfolded before and after the State of Emergency of 1970. “They placed police surveillance at my parents’ home thinking I would be hiding there. I had practiced avoiding my father’s inquisitorial control,” Socorro reflects. “I feared him more than the police. I would sneak out with a bag full of pamphlets to drop into home mailboxes. As I closed the elevator door and as I started the descent, I could see my father’s eyes following me through the glass pane on the elevator door. I made sure to exit on the ground floor to reassure him but climbed up the stairs to the first floor to take the emergency exit. The thrill of escaping was part of my drive and conviction to seek a higher truth or meaning. It made me feel useful within a circle of friends who valued my word, not as a woman or as a feminist, but as a committed militant. I was aware at the time that the best way to gain their respect was to assume their role and for them to count me in as one more of the ‘guys.’ In fact,” she continued, “when I fled Granada, I was the only woman in the group and that made no difference, we all were equal because we were all men...including me.”

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\(^{18}\) Acronym for Euskadi Ta Askatasuna Basque meaning: “Basque Homeland and Liberty.”

\(^{19}\) The regime declared the state of emergency in 1969, first in Guipuzcoa and then throughout the entire country.
She felt guilty only for abandoning her mother during the tensest times. “My mother was psychologically devastated, and I wasn’t there for her when she had her hysterectomy.” Socorro had been arrested but never told her mother that she couldn’t be there for her in the hospital because she was in prison. “I prefer she does not know and imagines whatever she likes.”

In the evening of December 14, when the radio announced the State of Emergency Socorro immediately knew the political police would come for her and for Jesús. With little sleep, very early the next morning, she packed a change of underwear and her curlers and hurried to Jesús’ home. They briefly discussed escaping to avoid arrest, but he was reluctant to go with her at that very moment. “I understood,” recalls Socorro, “considering the rightwing politics in his home. There was no time to think about it too much, so, instead of going back home, I decided to meet some of the other students in my party’s cell. As it happened, the police had already started their hunt for us. My heart was beating so hard; I was so excited to be on the move.” There was a house in El Barrichuelo that belonged to Maria del Carmen Sanmillán, one of their professors, where she allowed them to hide. For a week they waited, hiding in this house, thanks to the kindness of this woman. As Socorro paced nervously back and forth to the front door, expecting the doorbell to ring, hoping to welcome Jesús or Joaquín, Socorro noticed that there was a little hole on the top panel of the wooden door. She decided to cover it with a piece of paper. After dinner, the doorbell rang, followed by pounding on the door. Someone ordered them to open. “All of us froze. I tip toed to the door and looked through the hole, hoping Jesús would be there, but it was not him or Joaquín. They had been arrested and all I could see was a red tie. None of our comrades wore ties. This was the political police. They had found out about our hiding place. No words were spoken among us, only a rushed exit through the second floor on to rooftops in the neighborhood. My mouth tasted like metal from the acid reflex from my stomach, my feet moved at a speed I was not able to control. Joaquín had fallen, Jesús had fallen. We could not help them. We had to escape.”

“It was obvious we could not stay in Granada. What I did not realized at the time was that I was about to embark on a six-month long escapade. The plan was to go to Malaga, to the district of El Palo, to hide in another safe house that belonged to Juan de Dios and wife María. We spent the night in their house in Granada and Maria volunteered to drive us before dawn to avoid police check points established by the State of Emergency decree in public transportation terminals. At that particular moment I was elated and did not care about the pain I was causing my parents. My life had a purpose; I was fulfilling my destiny. I spent our two hours’ drive talking to this fascinating woman who was risking her life for us. I decided then and there I would adopt a clandestine name: Laura… Laura Izquierdo. I was a fugitive, had no money, only my comrades. All of them were men, and I became one too to earn their respect.”

Meanwhile, Jesús had not made it to the meeting point with Socorro and was arrested as soon as he set foot on the street on December 14, 1970. This was not the first time Jesús had been in political police custody. After being detained for the protest against the Green Berets film in 1969, Jesús was arrested a second time along with Berta for distributing propaganda at a construction site later that year. After his arrest during the State of Emergency of 1970, he was taken to the main police precinct in Plaza de los Lobos. Because he had been arrested previously, this time the political police treated him violently during eight days of interrogations that included constant beatings to force him to identify himself as a member of the PCE and disclose
the propaganda apparatus of the party as well as names and addresses of its members. While the first State of Emergency declared in January 1969 had not been harsh for the students, this time the regime was cracking down on the PCE nationally, and many students who were suspected of militancy in the communist organization suffered severe torture during the six months the martial law prevailed in 1971.

The police moved him to the prison on Christmas Eve 1970. Jesús remembers the freezing temperatures: “They gave us some blankets, but they were filthy, stained with dry feces.” The students demanded to be consigned separately from the common inmates and organized themselves to teach the other prisoners to read and write. They also refused to eat the prison food and were granted permission to receive foodstuff from their families and sometimes even cooked. Federico Mayor Zaragoza, Rector of the University of Granada at the time, was able to negotiate some leniency from the Civil Governor of the city who allowed the academic authorities to administer exams to those students imprisoned. Jesús took his exams in February 1971, remained in jail until May 24 and stood trial in front of the TOP (Public Order Tribunal) in 1973 to be absolved for lack of evidence. Many students had to pay bail between 15,000 to 25,000 pesetas (about 250 USD today).

Jesús had begun his six months of imprisonment on Christmas Eve 1970 while Socorro, now a fugitive with her comrades, had settled in an apartment in El Palo beach district of Malaga, but she knew it was only a matter of time before the police found them. “My father and my brother came to El Palo to make sure I was all right. Our encounter was emotional, tense, angry. My father gave me an envelope and told me to open it when I was by myself at the safe house. We parted a little bit calmer but uncertain of when we would see each other again. When I opened the envelope that night, I discovered a bundle of money: ten thousand pesetas! (about $1000 USD today) I was now sure I could survive for a few months.” As they started to make plans about where to go next, the group split. Some of the men wanted to go to Zaragoza to hide at the house of another comrade. Miguel Angel and Socorro thought that would be dangerous since the political police was surely keeping watch over the party’s movements and did not want to risk being arrested. In the end, after the festivity of the Epiphany on January 6, 1971 Angel and Socorro took a bus and went to Alicante where they rented an apartment for a month, pretending to be a married couple. They knew they could not continue together for much longer and decided after that month in Alicante to go their separate ways.

Socorro ended up staying in Barcelona for several months, where she ran out of the money her father had given her and had to look for temporary jobs. Since she had her teaching credentials, she was able to land a temporary substitute position at a small private school. The risk of being arrested forced her to move three times within Barcelona, always staying in cheap pensions where she shared her life with working class girls, some with mixed reputations. Socorro remembers how the communist party contacted and urged her to drive with a comrade to Madrid to seek the counsel of a party’s lawyer and even considered moving to Madrid to sidestep the police. “That was the lowest point in my escape,” Socorro recalls, “the comrade who drove me dropped me in the center of town at around three in the morning. I had no place to go and

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21 The minimum wage was set at 60 pesetas (pts) ($1 at the time) per day in 1963. By 1972 the minimum wage was 156/day.
wandered the city alone and scared. For the first time, I felt so desolate. I had been on the run for four months. The lawyer I was to speak to was Manuela Carmena, and I remember her office was located in a rough part of Madrid city center. She was reassuring and told me to remain in Barcelona for the time being since I had employment but to make sure to change address every few weeks and to keep using an alias so the police could not find me so easily” (Robles, 2017).

By June 13, 1971 the State of Emergency had been lifted and Socorro decided to return home to Granada. “I might have left with just a pair of underwear and my curlers, but I came back with two suitcases full of books and some clothes I had stolen throughout the ordeal. I was determined to study and be prepared for my finals. The State of Emergency would not deter me from my intellectual goals as well,” Socorro remarks. It was in September during an exam that the police finally arrested her at the College of Philosophy and Letters.

In her interrogation, she denied “absolutely everything and they did not touch me. I had been outsmarting ‘Don Paco,’ known as ‘El Jirafa’” (Robles, 1989) the policeman noted for his violent treatment of prisoners. They charged her with the usual crimes of illicit association and tried to pin on her the throwing of a Molotov bomb at the Bilbao Bank and having planted a Communist flag in the Telefónica building. But they did not have incriminating evidence, only a glove presented as evidence during the interrogation that did not belong to her. The only plausible accusation was her membership in the then illegal and clandestine Communist Party of Spain “because someone had turned me in. But I denied everything,” she asserts. “I refused to eat during the days they kept me in the police station in Plaza de los Lobos. The jail in Granada for women is utter shit. They put me in this small cell with a rickety bed and a latrine in the corner. The only ventilation was a small opening high above the wall that barely let light in. The food came on a metal plate infested with mold around the edges and so I continued to go without eating for a while” (Robles, 1989).

After a while they allowed prisoners to go out on the patio. The women were located in the same building with male prisoners but, unlike their male counterparts, were isolated without distinction between political and common inmates. “There was the usual whore abandoned by her man,” recalls Socorro, “illiterate, whose letters to her family I had to write; or that other poor soul, always pregnant, who survived by committing petty crimes. The ghastly conditions in the Granada jail were beyond words. I remember the celebration of the Patron Day of Prisons, the Virgen de la Merced. The administration of the jail distributed cakes as a special treat for everyone. Let them eat cake! Right? Sure... the cakes were spoiled and caused serious dysentery among the children housed in jail with their mothers. We were around twenty women and it was very easy to get to know each other. Eventually they placed me in a separate area called Brigada on the second floor after my demand to be treated as a political prisoner. In this big room, there were bunkbeds where political prisoners were housed together. The windows were broken, and although I was there in September and the weather was not bad, many comrades suffered serious pulmonary infections when they stayed there through the coldest winter in Granada’s history during the State of Emergency of 1970-1971. I could put up with the weather conditions, but I could not stand to see the children, from infants to about three years old, suffer like that. I demanded my right to be isolated as a political activist and most of all as a student. It was September 1971, I needed to take my final exams, which I did. I remember how Professor Pita brought the slides for the art history exam. It was a three-hour exam, and the beautiful art projected on the walls made me renew my commitment to learning and freedom.” Socorro only
stayed in prison for a month. She was released as a result of the pardon decree issued on 27 September 1971.

“My commitment and conviction to the cause was almost religious. I felt I was chosen. I was conscious at the time of the significance of my actions and have never looked back. I felt profoundly guilty about deserting my family, abandoning my mother...a woman with serious nerves problems and mentally fragile. To this day, I feel sad about my choices but do not regret them and would not change anything. I paid dearly throughout my young adult life for my political commitment and prison record. As a matter of fact, we could not work in the public-school system or obtain a passport, or even get a driver’s license. Joaquin’s father, a professor of Geography at the University of Granada, was always a very dear mentor to me. After Joaquin was arrested, I remember I managed to meet his father at the Plaza de San Nicolás where this gentleman offered me a hiding place, so I would not run away. After our graduation, he sponsored the establishment of a private school in the city where all of us who had been repressed by the regime could find work. You see, Jesús and I had gotten married in 1972 and could not find work anywhere” (Robles, 2017)

Franco’s death in 1975 and the legalization of the PCE in 1977 opened the way to a very challenging period for the communist party and for those who had been part of the clandestine resistance. With the legalization of the party “there was a moment of euphoria,” says Jesús. “In that moment, everything was worth it: the suffering, the prison, the beatings in the police precincts. It had been a great political, social, economic, and above all emotional, investment” (Carreño Tenorio, 2017). However, both Jesús and Socorro were profoundly disillusioned with what ensued after what they regarded as an exultant deliverance from the dictatorship. They felt like they had been living in an alternative reality not to their liking. The internal fights for power among the different communist party members to seize a parliamentary seat and political appointments meant “there were only crumbs to share,” Jesús points out, who little by little disengaged from the party. His loss of enthusiasm and revolutionary spirit recalled Ortega y Gasset, who would declare at another time in Spanish history, during the Second Republic, “No es esto, no es esto.” It was not what they had in mind and were hoping for. A few of them rejected the power-hungry game of the inner circle who attempted to impose a dogmatic authoritarian leadership, something that in Jesús’ and Socorro’s mind reproduced the same politics they had fought to undo throughout their youth.

Socorro became disillusioned with the party’s structural politics as well and, like Jesús, joined the trade union CCOO (Comisiones Obreras) as part of the Education sector. Both of them were high school professors of history and literature respectively. In the CCOO, dissent was possible, thus opening a new path to activism for them within the concrete improvement of labor conditions.

Socorro was asked to lead the women’s office. The Communist Party had created the Women’s Democratic Movement (Movimiento Democrático de Mujeres)\(^2\) to enlist women in

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\(^2\) At the beginning of the 1960s, the Communist Party of Spain (PCE) launched a platform to mobilize women. The first goal was to connect prisoners’ wives with each other through the organization of Communist women party members. The two leaders were Carmen Rodríguez and Dulcinea Bellido, wives of Simón Sánchez Montero and Luis Lucío Lobato respectively, both imprisoned in 1959. Carmen and Dulcinea worked with the intellectual group of women in the party to protest the repression inflicted upon...
the mid 1960s. Socorro had been in charge of two areas within the Party at the University of Granada: political militancy and recruitment of women to the movement. At the same time, as a student, she was a course delegate and a representative of the College of Arts and Letters in the university’s governing assembly.

Socorro and her comrades visited different villages around Granada (Fuentevaqueros, Pinos, Atarfe) to meet the rural women married to communist party members. They spoke to them about feminism, from the issue of contraception to integration into the political struggle. Most of them reluctantly attended the meetings as an obligation to their husbands and boyfriends. Socorro called their commitment “vaginal political consciousness.” As a university student, this proselytizing with their working-class counterparts resonated as an artificial exercise since the male members of the party did not partake in changing the movement’s sexist culture. The ultimate goal was to make sure these women would not interfere with their husbands’ and boyfriends’ political activism. The task to rein them in rested on the university’s young women like Socorro, recently enlisted in the party and idealistic. Jesús admits sexism was rampant in those years.

In hindsight, Socorro never felt like an equal within the party, in spite of the many well-intentioned manifestos and theoretical discussions held within. It was no secret that the party was a sexist machine, a mirror of the social environment in which it had emerged. Joining as a woman was a conscientious effort to prove to “ourselves,” Socorro reflects, that as women “we had self-determination and we could make it.” But they were only called upon during elections in the immediate transition period after 1975, she emphasizes, when they needed women on the lists for the ballot. For her, membership turned into a complex navigation to prove to the hierarchy apparatus, on the one hand, her political convictions, while, on the other hand, making sure to assert her freedom to expose the sexist inner workings within the left. The incipient change came in 1977, when the electoral campaigning made it necessary to incorporate more explicit feminist agendas, but, according to Socorro’s analysis, the party’s intention in the 1960s was to create a women’s organization network only to keep them out of the way of their male partners’ political struggle.

In hindsight after a lifelong marriage to Socorro and two daughters in common, Jesús also acknowledges the existence of strong sexism among the rank and file of the party. “We all had a very sexist education,” he admits, “because one of the pillars of Francoism was to preserve a patriarchal order in which either father, husband or any other male became women’s guardians. However, for many of us, it was an opportunity to realize we needed to start a process to achieve gender equality. We needed to understand that equality was not a favor we graciously bestowed upon our female comrades or women in general but rather it would benefit everybody. It is counterproductive,” he remarks, referring to women, “that fifty percent of the population be oppressed rather than happy, because if there were more happiness for women that would translate into more happiness for everyone. Understanding happiness in the sense of life’s
plenitude or self-realization in life. Happiness indeed is very complicated” (Carreño Tenorio, 2017). That was a challenge for many, Jesus recognizes in hindsight. “Our working-class comrades,” he points out, “with whom we had a political relationship and an interest in educating them, we addressed this topic. For them this was a very difficult proposition; their girlfriends were not to go out with any other men without their consent, so they exercised their patriarchal prerogatives with their women.” “We university men did not turn into feminists,” Jesús admits, “but we did understand there was an unjust situation towards our female counterparts and fifty percent of the population could not be ignored. Being the father of two daughters and having a pedagogical commitment in my work led me to analyze this situation more in depth. Now I am in the position to encourage in those male circles I frequent a sentiment of gender equality and in feminizing our relations” (Carreño Tenorio, 2017).

Socorro reflects: “I have to confess that the gender politics and the misogyny within the party were very profound. My taking charge of the women’s office was regarded almost like a demotion, like a task beneath my talent,” she explains. “Every time I had to report in the executive committee about these matters, I could see the contempt and impatience in my male comrades, their absent gazes and mocking grins. That did not deter me. I have joined several feminist groups along the way: the Asamblea de Mujeres de Granada, the Mujeres Universitarias platform and within my professional environment, I spearheaded a high school curriculum initiative to infuse our teaching with gender awareness and content.” (Robles, 2017).

Jesús reflects upon his life experiences and recalls with great satisfaction and admiration the people he fought with, “buenas personas” he calls them. “Good people. I was fortunate to live with them as part of a brotherhood. Another important issue is that I never was interested in paid political appointments. I always considered myself a politician with professionalism rather than a professional politician. To the extent that now I am a member of the PSOE and expressly asked to be assigned to an ethical rather than a political committee. Likewise, my political outlook and militancy have had a very profound impact on my vision of education. As a professor, I would have not been the same pedagogue without my political experiences. I learned from my father, a rural teacher in La Calahorra, a village north of Guadix in the province of Granada, an appallingly poor area in the 1950s and 1960s, who said to me, ‘They live in utter poverty and their only way out is education.’ Imagine, my father was a Falangist. I will say that me being a Socialist and he being Falangist, I do not think I am a more honest man than he was, in spite of our fights and our disagreements. However, he had a very clear vision of education as a means to liberation, and he prepared kids to study their bachelor’s degree in Guadix. That is my baggage. We in Spain are very good at othering each other, demonizing each other, which allows us to settle into irrationality and everything therefore make sense in our myopic turf.”

Socorro is now retired; she divorced Jesús in 2015 after fifty years together. “Our two daughters have given us grandchildren and I continue to be involved in trying to make life better for others and to be faithful to my convictions as an intellectual, a feminist and a left-wing person.”

Conclusion

Socorro’s and Jesús’ story offers us a window into the human resilience and commitment to freedom in spite of totalitarian politics. Examining their stories side by side allow us to see the gendered dynamics in transition during the last decade of the regime. Both transgressed the
gendered expectations placed on them. Both of them joined the university activism as a result of their radicalization in the grassroots Catholic organizations that worked with the poor. Granada’s new urban development facilitated their crossing to the others’ side both physically and symbolically. Socorro escaped the repression and gained the respect and support of her father and brother who even traveled to Malaga and gave her money to survive her flight from the political police. Jesús went against his father’s Falangist politics to fight for freedom. The interviews conducted in 2017 allowed them to reflect on the sexism present within the left. A sexism which was not exclusive of Spanish political landscape but universal which remains a sore issue in Western democracies.

Examining the lives of Socorro and Jesús in these pivotal years announcing the advent of democracy reveal how many anonymous Spaniards were planting the seeds of freedom for young children like me who grew up under the dictatorship. What I did not know as I walked by the prison building on my way to school every morning in September 1971 was that these young students, and my mom and dad, were committed to making sure that my future was one full of opportunities and freedom.

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