

An Honorable Avocation for Ladies: The Work of the Mexico City Unión de Damas Católicas Mexicanas, 1912-1926.

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Abstract

This article examines the volunteer work of the Unión de Damas Católicas Mexicanas (Union of Mexican Catholic Ladies, UDCM) in Mexico City from the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) to the beginning of the Cristero Rebellion (1926-1929). The UDCM used such means as vocational education, union organizing, and morality campaigns to respond to changes in society precipitated by the revolution. While in other countries Catholics cooperated with feminists and socialists to achieve shared goals, the anticlericalism of 1920s Mexico made cooperation with non-Catholic organizations impossible for the UDCM. Eventually, the hostility of Mexico's revolutionary governments toward the Catholic Church pushed the UDCM, an

AN HONORABLE AVOCATION FOR LADIES:

*The Work of the Mexico City Unión de Damas
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This article examines the volunteer work of the Unión de Damas Católicas Mexicanas (Union of Mexican Catholic Ladies, UDCM) in Mexico City from the Mexican Revolution (1910–1917) to the beginning of the Cristero Rebellion (1926–1929). The UDCM used such means as vocational education, union organizing, and morality campaigns to respond to changes in society precipitated by the revolution. While in other countries Catholics cooperated with feminists and socialists to achieve shared goals, the anticlericalism of 1920s Mexico made cooperation with non-Catholic organizations impossible for the UDCM. Eventually, the hostility of Mexico's revolutionary governments toward the Catholic Church pushed the UDCM, an organization that officially avoided political entanglements, to protest anticlerical policies vociferously.

In 1926, when the Mexican government attempted to close Sagrada Familia Church in Mexico City, elite women were among the protesters blocking the entrance and hurling stones at soldiers. Only after the arrival of mounted police could soldiers close the church. Many of these women were members of the Unión de Damas Católicas Mexicanas (Union of Mexican Catholic Ladies, UDCM). The UDCM was founded in 1912 as a nonpolitical lay organization dedicated to re-Catholicizing Mexican society. However, the political and social changes wrought by the Mexican Revolution of 1910–1917 forced these elite women into a publicly confrontational stance, in order to protect their churches and their families. The Catholic Ladies (Damas) were conservative in comparison to Mexican feminists, who advocated a single sexual standard and access to birth control, but Damas nonetheless were women of the revolution. They witnessed and suffered through its upheaval, and organized themselves to respond to its sociopolitical consequences.

In this article, I examine the origins and membership of the UDCM, its work during and after the revolution, and its role during the initiation of the church-state conflict in 1925–1926, demonstrating that the circum-



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