

September 2004

LUISA MORENO

Latino Heritage Month
(September 15 - October 15)



(1906-) Trade union leader and civil rights activist Luisa Moreno was born into an upper-class Guatemalan family, Moreno attended schools in both the United States and Guatemala. As a teenager, she organized her affluent peers into La Sociedad Gabriela Mistral, a group that successfully lobbied for the admittance of women into Guatemalan universities. She decided against pursuing a college degree herself and moved to Mexico where she worked as a journalist and wrote poetry. In 1927, she married a Mexican artist and the couple immigrated to New York City the next year. A few months later, Moreno gave birth to her only child.

With the onset of the Great Depression, Moreno found work as a sewing machine operator in a Spanish Harlem sweatshop. Applying her organizing skills, she founded La Liga de Costureras, a Latina garment workers' union. Her talents did not go unnoticed, and, in 1935, the AFL hired her as a professional organizer.

Leaving her abusive husband, and with her daughter in tow, she moved to Florida where she unionized African-American and Latina cigar rollers. Within two years, she had switched to the CIO and, in 1938, became an international representative of the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA-CIO).

From 1938 to 1947, Moreno organized Mexican farm and food processing workers throughout the Southwest. Her efforts, especially in California, helped bring thousands of cannery workers, 75 percent of whom were women, into the union. Under UCAPAWA, Mexican, Jewish, and Anglo women secured higher wages and innovative benefits, including free legal advice and equal pay for equal work. A strong believer in grass-roots unionism, she encouraged people of color and women to run for local union offices. In 1943, Mexican women filled eight of 15 elected positions within Los Angeles local. Moreno herself was the Latina vice president of a major U.S. trade union and the first Latina member of the California CIO council.

Moreno also organized El Congreso de Pueblos Que Espanol (Spanish Speaking Peoples' Congress), the first Latino civil rights assembly. In April 1939, delegates from across the nation gathered in downtown Los Angeles and called for an end to segregation in public facilities, housing, education and employment. They also declared a boycott of consumer goods manufactured by Germany, Italy, and Japan.




From 1945 to 1950, UCAPAWA slowly disintegrated a target of red-baiting politicians and conservative trade unionists. After marrying a former labor organizer, Moreno retired from public life in 1947. A year later, the Immigration and Naturalization Service initiated deportation proceedings against her. Journalist Carey McWilliams and newspaper editor Ignacio Lopez headed her defense committee. Moreno was offered citizenship in exchange for testifying at the deportation hearing of labor leader Harry Bridges, but she refused to be "a free woman with a mortgaged soul." She was voluntarily deported to Guatemala in 1950, eventually settling in Tijuana.

(text: <http://college.hmco.com>)

Photograph courtesy of the Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education.

SOCIAL EQUITY September 2004

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

<p>*Women in Academia Roundtables. Co-sponsored by the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women and PARTNERS, noon - 2:00 p.m. Carlson Library Level A.</p> <p>*Gallery Exhibit, Monday, August 30 - Sunday, September 12. Clarion County Historical Society.</p> <p>*Gallery Exhibit, Thursday, September 16 - Friday, October 15, Chat Hay Ko, Paintings and Prints.</p>		1	2	3	4	
		*Gallery Exhibit, Monday, August 30 - Sunday, September 12. Clarion County Historical Society.				
5	6  Labor Day	7	8	9	10	11  In Memory of the lives lost on September 11, 2001
12	13	14	15 Rosh Hashanah begins at sundown	16 *Chat Hay Ko Gallery Reception 5 p.m. - 7 p.m.	17	18
		*Gallery Exhibit, Thursday, September 16 - Friday, October 15, Chat Hay Ko, Paintings and Prints.				
		Rosh Hashanah				
19	20 MLK Program Joetta Clark Diggs, Four Time Olympian Hart Chapel, 7:30 p.m.	21	22 *Women in Academia Roundtables  Autumn Begins	23	24 Yom Kipper begins at sundown	25 Autumn Leaf Week Begins Yom Kipper
26	27 Cultural Night - Kick-off event featuring "One World Tribe" in front of the Courthouse: 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. Rain date is Tuesday.	28 Runa Kuna, featuring music from Latin America. 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in front of the Courthouse.	29 Ambridge High School Steel Drum Ensemble 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in front of the Courthouse.	30 Cultural Night Event TBA Mid Semester Break Begins 10 p.m.		