

“Creating a Second Revolution: Gendering the Guatemalan Revolution, 1944-1954”  
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The Guatemalan Revolution (1944-1954) disrupted seventy years of Liberal dictatorships initiating a decade of social democracy. The three day armed insurrection itself remained primarily a military affair of middle class officers and although revolutionary efforts were supported by civilians throughout Guatemala City, the uprising did not require the participation of a large number of insurgents or civilians. While armed struggles later in the twentieth century would disrupt traditional gender norms, if only incompletely, with the incorporation of large numbers of female combatants and *guerrillas* in Cuba and Nicaragua, Guatemala's 1944 revolution does not fit this pattern. Despite their indisputable influence within the revolutionary movement, women were quickly marginalized from positions of social and political authority following the revolutionary triumph in October 1944. Consequently, the uprising against dictator Jorge Ubico became just the first of two revolutions for Guatemalan women; the second being against the masculinized revolutionary project which proved to be much more difficult and ultimately less successful.

The unwillingness of the State apparatus and male revolutionary leaders to integrate them into positions of real authority shaped the nature of the woman's revolution. Turning the State's blindness to their advantage, these women chose to establish their own sphere of influence. While the revolution remained an incomplete project with regards to gender reforms, it offered women unprecedented freedom. Working largely outside of institutional boundaries, women defined their own reforms without the overt interference of men. Born of their own perceptions and lived experiences as teachers and social welfare volunteers, they created a parallel reform movement distinct from the male revolutionary hierarchy. Embracing two of the most fundamental elements of the Guatemalan revolution, educational and social reform, women embarked upon a second and vastly more challenging revolutionary process, that of changing the very nature of Guatemalan society.

As my paper will establish, gender analysis of the much studied Guatemalan Revolution shifts our gaze from the traditional sites of contested power, expands definitions of revolutionary change and in the process raises new questions about the very nature of revolution itself.

