

# Chapter Ten: Maria de Lopez\_California, 1911

In 1911, Maria Guadalupe Evangelina de Lopez took to the streets of California, standing atop her car in the plaza, advocating for women's suffrage in Spanish, making her a unique voice in the movement. Known simply as Maria, she was a product of the San Gabriel Valley, where her father, a Mexican immigrant and blacksmith, had originally bought an adobe house by the San Gabriel Mission. Unlike the traditional image of women at the time, Maria, or Lupe as she often went by, was highly educated, likely the first Latina professor at UCLA, where she taught Spanish and encouraged students to engage with their heritage.

Her educational pursuits and adventurous spirit led her to travel abroad alone, giving lectures on her experiences in the Andes. After her father's death in 1904, she returned to her childhood home, hosting holiday teas and fostering a sense of community among her students. Maria's activism extended beyond education; she participated in various women's clubs, working to elect the first female president of the California Teachers Association and distributing pamphlets advocating for suffrage. Her pamphlets boldly questioned the delay of women's right to vote, emphasizing that both women and men, along with the state, required the inclusion of women in democracy.

An article featuring Maria appeared in the \*Los Angeles Herald\*, in which she argued for the equality between men and women. Later, as World War I loomed, Maria decided to take action and traveled to New York to train as an ambulance mechanic, even beginning her studies in aviation. She expressed excitement about helping her country, willing to make sacrifices on the front lines.

By 1918, Maria was driving ambulances in France during WWI, carrying out a task that blended bravery and compassion. She and her team defied expectations, running towards danger to assist wounded soldiers rather than fleeing. Maria's act of heroism did not go unnoticed; she received a commendation from the French government for her courage. When the war concluded, she returned home, married a French professor, and continued her legacy of hospitality and education in her family home, ensuring the history of her contributions lived on.