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Ethnicity, Gender, and Divorce: Issues in the 1922 Campaign by Adelina Otero–Warren for the U.S. House of Representatives

ELIZABETH SALAS

When María Adelina Emilia (Nina) Otero–Warren died in 1965 her obituary did not say that she was the first New Mexican woman to run as a Republican for the United States House of Representatives in 1922. Nor did her obituary mention the divorce scandal that shook her candidacy during the latter half of her campaign for national office. Rather, her accomplishments were listed as the descendant of two pioneer Spanish families, an educator, businesswoman, woman's rights activist, and author of *Old Spain in Our Southwest* (1936).¹ Otero–Warren's misrepresentation of herself as a widow rather than as a divorcee, her Republican party political activities, her ethnicity, her gender, and Otero family animosities have not been given much attention from scholars.

While Joan M. Jensen has written an excellent article on women in politics that emphasized Otero–Warren's importance, Jensen did not refer to Otero–Warren's deliberately falsified information about her marital status and her divorce as a major cause for her never seeking public office again. In her recent book about Nina Otero–Warren, Charlotte Whaley does not mention the "divorce" as a distinct handicap in the 1922 election. Neither author enters the complex ground of ethnic labeling, preferring to call Otero–Warren a "Spanish American" rather than addressing her Mexican ancestry. While Juan Gómez–Quiñones does not deal with the divorce issue in her election, he does discuss Otero–Warren as a "noted Hispanophile," a "Hispana," and a "Mexican woman activist."²

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Adelina "Nina" Otero-Warren, ca 1930s, photo courtesy of
Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe, negative no. 30263

Otero–Warren struggled to overcome discrimination against women, Hispanics, and Republican party candidates in her 1922 campaign. She did not dare grapple with the thorny issue of divorce. To admit that she was divorced in the 1920s would have probably made it unlikely that she would have been nominated. She preferred to handle the problem by viewing herself as a “widow” and not a “divorcee.” She did not realize that her misrepresentation combined with Otero family rivalries would contribute to her downfall. One such rivalry emerged when Otero–Warren neglected to acknowledge the political prominence of her second cousin, Miguel A. Otero, former Republican territorial governor, as part of her family lineage during the 1922 campaign, which led to a spiteful retaliation. Miguel Otero provided information about her divorce in many of his campaign speeches before the election.

The result of the 1922 election brought into the spotlight Hispana political activism in mainstream American politics. While it is true that Republican Otero–Warren lost her bid to sit in the United States House of Representatives, another Hispana, Democrat Soledad Chávez de Chacón won her election as New Mexico’s first woman secretary of state.³ Chávez de Chacón insisted that everyone call her “Mrs.” as the best way to emphasize her first duty was that of a wife and mother. When she was notified of her nomination to office, it is said, she was in her kitchen, “baking a cake.” In the election returns printed in *Magee’s Independent*, she was listed as Mrs. Ed Chacón.⁴ The success of a woman candidate like Chacón and the failure of a woman like Otero–Warren suggests that, while Hispanic voters supported women candidates, they voted for a woman who emphasized her familial ties rather than an independent woman who touted her record as a political activist and officeholder as part of her credentials for a higher and more powerful office.

A closer look at the campaign will help to illuminate the bilingual and bicultural character of a Spanish American politician as well as the issues that confronted women in the 1920s. Otero–Warren’s life affirms Mary P. Ryan’s definition of a Progressive woman. Otero–Warren could be viewed as a “mother of civilization” and a “social housekeeper” especially with regard to her upper-class background, high educational achievement, involvement with the settlement house movement, membership in women’s organizations, suffrage activism, and public service.⁵ In similar fashion, Otero–Warren fits William L. O’Neill’s description: “new women . . . whose special characteristics might well have made them more susceptible to divorce.”⁶

Otero–Warren’s upbringing prepared her for being both a Hispanophile and a career-orientated “modern” woman. Born on 23 October 1881 to Eloisa Luna and Manuel B. Otero, she was the second of three children.⁷ Her father had attended Heidelberg University in Germany and early in the marriage was killed in a shootout over a land

dispute. Her mother remarried Alfred Maurice Bergere, an Englishman, with whom she had eight more children, six of them daughters. Otero-Warren was one among a few upper-class Hispanas to receive extensive education—both in Santa Fe and St. Louis, Missouri. Tutors taught her in Spanish and English for the first part of her education, and like her mother, Otero-Warren was educated at a girl's school in St. Louis. She then went on to attend Maryville College of the Sacred Heart, an all-women's school in St. Louis; however, she left Maryville before matriculating.

On 25 June 1908, Otero-Warren married Lieutenant Rawson Warren, United States Army.⁸ According to biographical news releases during her campaign, Otero-Warren's husband died shortly after their marriage. The truth was, however, that Rawson Warren had a common-law wife in the Philippines, and Otero-Warren had found life as an army officer's wife too confining. She divorced him after two years but insisted until her death in 1965 that she was a widow. Otero-Warren's inability to deal with her own marital separation was perhaps reinforced by negative views of divorce held by society. From 1912-14, Otero-Warren lived in New York where she worked with Ann Morgan, a settlement house organizer who advocated vocational work for poor city youth. Upon her mother's death, Otero-Warren returned to New Mexico to take care of her many siblings.

While Otero-Warren was in New York, a Hispana in New Mexico challenged the governor about the extension of women's rights. Lola Chávez de Armijo went to court to keep her appointment as state librarian under the Republican territorial governor, reaffirming the legal right to hold public office in New Mexico.⁹ She had been appointed state librarian in 1909 by Territorial Governor George Curry, a Republican. After New Mexico had become a state in 1912, the new governor, Democrat William C. McDonald, tried to remove Chávez de Armijo from office by nominating another woman. A Republican senate rejected McDonald's nominee and Chávez de Armijo held onto her nine hundred dollar-a-year job. McDonald then began a legal challenge saying that as a woman, Chávez de Armijo was "not qualified under the constitution and laws of New Mexico to hold office."¹⁰

The governor even nominated William T. Thornton, an ex-mayor for the position, but he was considered "over-qualified" for the job. During the two-year struggle, Chávez de Armijo hired lawyers to argue her position that Article XXII, Section 9 of the new state constitution verified her right to hold office from territorial to state status. Two court rulings favored Chávez de Armijo. Her lawsuit stirred the Republican

legislature to pass Bill 150 on 15 March 1913 which affirmed that, "women may hold any appointive office."¹¹ She held her job as state librarian until 1917. It was in this political and social milieu that Otero-Warren waged her own battles for public office.

The legal struggle and victory of a Hispana was not lost on New Mexico's suffragist branch organization, the Congressional Union (CU). The CU had been founded in 1912 by Alice Paul who was very much in favor of promoting Hispana participation in that group. Paul sent CU organizer Ella St. Clair Thompson to New Mexico in 1915. Speaking some Spanish, St. Clair Thompson printed leaflets in Spanish and invited Otero-Warren and five other prominent Hispanas to join the CU. Although St. Clair Thompson recalled Otero-Warren's timidity to speak, she recognized her abilities and in September of 1917, St. Clair Thompson asked Otero-Warren to head the state Congressional Union chapter. Jensen calls Otero-Warren's leadership "skillful" in handling "local tensions among factions," and "guiding the last phase of the [suffrage] campaign" in New Mexico.¹² In a show of solidarity with women's causes, Otero-Warren wrote to Paul affirming her belief in women's rights by stating, "I . . . will take a stand and a firm one whenever necessary for I am with you now and always!"¹³ In time, Otero-Warren was also chair of the women's division of the Republican State Committee for New Mexico, as well as chair of the Legislative Committee of the New Mexico Federation of Women's Clubs. Otero-Warren's ability to navigate successfully among white American women was in large part due to her constant exposure to them while a schoolgirl in St. Louis and also as a dedicated idealist working in the slums of New York.

While some of Otero-Warren's success may be viewed as deriving from her association with the CU and suffragists, her familial connections also played an important role in her appointments to various state positions leading to her run for political office. Many of her male Otero relatives had been quite powerful in New Mexico politics, including her maternal uncle Solomon Luna and her brother Eduardo "Ed" Otero. Both men represented the unity of the Luna and Otero clans and together members of the families dominated the economic and political future of Valencia County until the 1920s.¹⁴ Luna and Otero can both be described as "paternal," having "dictatorial powers" and serving as political "jefes" of Valencia County. Their considerable influence extended into state politics as well. Both were also prominent ranchers and businessmen. Luna headed the Republican Party until his death in 1912, and brother Ed also was an influential Republican.¹⁵

Otero-Warren's familial influences reinforced her political connections and career. Her mother, Eloisa, greatly influenced Otero-Warren's lifelong interest in the field of education. Eloisa Luna de Otero had "devoted a great deal of her life to fostering the cause of education and at

the time of her death in 1914 was serving as chairman of the board of education in Santa Fe."¹⁶ In 1917, Democratic Governor Ezéquiél Cabeza de Baca appointed Republican Otero–Warren school superintendent of Santa Fe. When Otero–Warren ran for re–election in 1918, she successfully defeated a male opponent and remained superintendent until 1929. As superintendent, she stressed adult education programs, the establishment of a county high school, a nine–month school term, higher teaching standards, better salaries for teachers, and improved rural schools. She also oversaw the repairs of old or inadequate school buildings.

Otero–Warren turned the Santa Fe school district from indebtedness and unpaid school warrants to a fiscally solvent administration with a budget surplus of \$27,000 as of 1922. Otero–Warren argued that future monies for the schools should come from the federal government through grants of public lands for school maintenance.¹⁷ During her tenure as superintendent of schools in Santa Fe, Otero–Warren encouraged bicultural education in the preservation of Hispano arts and crafts. She did not, however, believe in allowing instruction to be given in Spanish. Her opinion on bilingual education was decidedly negative as revealed in her statement, "We can not permit the children to speak Spanish in the classroom and the teachers are instructed to keep the children from conversing in it on the playground, thereby conforming to the national system of education."¹⁸

As an elected official Otero–Warren used her position to influence Governor Octaviano A. Larrazolo in the passage of a state suffrage amendment. Larrazolo had stated in a 1919 *Albuquerque Morning Journal* article that "personally he wished that women had not asked for the suffrage, but since they have asked and it has been granted as far as Congress is concerned, and since his party is pledged to the principle he for one will leave nothing undone to secure a speedy ratification."¹⁹ Larrazolo appointed Otero–Warren to the state Health Board in April 1919, and she was elected chair for the group.²⁰ As much as he could, Larrazolo always tried to incorporate Hispanics into formal political structures. On 26 May 1919, Larrazolo named her as one of the delegates to attend the National Conference of Social Work in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Larrazolo also named Mrs. S. P. Ascárate, Mrs. Román Gallegos, Mrs. Felix Baca and Mrs. José A. Baca to attend as well.²¹ Otero–Warren was then appointed to the state board of public welfare and also served as chair. When she tried to resign in December 1921, the *Albuquerque Morning Journal* reported that Governor Merritt C. Mechem declined her resignation stating that "Mrs. Otero–Warren's retirement at this time would serve seriously to impair the public service." Otero–Warren was known as a tireless worker and quite skilled in promoting welfare legislation.²²

After American women gained the vote in 1920, Hispanas in New Mexico did their best to make the most of it. It became a custom for young women of all Hispano classes to celebrate their twenty-first birthdays by registering to vote as part of the "coming of age" ritual. According to Jensen, 59 percent of eligible Hispanic voters voted in 1920 and by 1924 that number had increased to 68 percent. While women gained voting rights in 1920, a special election had to be called in 1921 to affirm the right of women to hold political office. Four of the five Hispano counties defeated the amendment, but the amendment carried on the majority vote of four of the six Little Texas counties.²³ By the year 1922, it was clear to Otero-Warren that her next career step was to run for national office. Her credentials were considerable. She had successfully helped to steer suffrage efforts in the state, she was a strong advocate of educational reform, and she had proven her organizational abilities by her appointments as presiding chair for social welfare boards.

On 9 September 1922 Otero-Warren received the Republican nomination for the House of Representatives. At the Republican convention she defeated United States House incumbent member Nestor Montoya.²⁴ Her Democratic opponent was to be John Morrow, a lawyer, educator and stockman from Raton.²⁵ As Otero-Warren mapped out her strategy, she emphasized her Spanish-American family heritage and appealed to women, especially registered Republicans, to vote for her based on her past accomplishments.²⁶ Local and national newspapers expressed an interest in running a photo of Otero-Warren and a brief biography. Otero-Warren complied with a very lengthy article emphasizing her famous relatives. The *Socorro Chieftain* ran the entire article, while the *Arizona Daily Star* featured a front-page sketch of her face and briefly mentioned her prestigious ancestors.²⁷ Other newspapers from New York, Chicago, Boston, and Philadelphia ran parts of Otero-Warren's account of her family history during her campaign for office.

The biographical article stressed the purity of her familial origins back to Visigoths and Aragonese nobility in Spain. She cited many famous ancestors in Spanish, Mexican, and New Mexican history ranging from conquistadors who fought with Hernán Cortés, don Pedro de Luna of Aragon, a famous diplomat; don Miguel Vandelmire Luna, a well-known jurist in Mexico; and don Antonio José Otero, the first judge on the New Mexico Supreme Court.²⁸

Since most of the male relatives she mentioned were politicians or were involved in the processes of governance, it can be assumed that she wished to portray herself as descended from a long line of public servants. Otero-Warren was not the only candidate to tout her famous ancestors in a political campaign. Both Lola Chávez de Armijo and Mrs. Soledad Chávez de Chacón also noted their familial connections with well-placed relatives in politics or the military.²⁹ The *Socorro Chieftain*

article did make note of this connection. As a descendent of men of prestige, it was only natural that Otero–Warren “should gravitate to public life [and it] seems a natural application of the maxim that, ‘blood will tell.’”³⁰

While Otero–Warren’s claim to Spanish nobility can be viewed as a case of racial blinders, it also served as an essential campaign strategy to not only gain publicity, but to acknowledge her Spanish American ethnicity, dispel the myths about Spaniards, and help her win the election. Otero–Warren emphasized her Spanish and European ancestry in response to the negative portrayal of Mexican ancestry by the white American community both at the local and national levels. Declaring themselves to be “Spanish Americans” was a way for New Mexicans to acknowledge that they were “different if not better” than white Americans as well as Mexicans.³¹ In addition, according to Phillip Gonzales, “Spanish heritage provided the terms with which to swipe at Anglo superiors.”³² There is no question that Otero–Warren and her generation of Hispanos denied the multi–racial heritage of most Mexicans, which, since colonial times, has incorporated Indian, European, and African ancestors.

Yet as Tey Diana Rebolledo elaborates, Otero–Warren and others of her generation “were just beginning to express resistance to domination imposed by an encroaching Anglo culture,” and that they initiated the first step in that process of legitimizing “Hispanic culture by emphasizing that which was Spanish.”³³ As Suzanne Forrest contends, this was no easy task since “many Americans harbored deep suspicions concerning the Spanish character. They believed that people of Spanish ancestry were peculiarly untrustworthy, cruel, and lascivious—a set of negative stereotypes dating back to sixteenth–century England that historians called the ‘black legend.’”³⁴ In New Mexico, however, being “Spanish” was considered better than being “Mexican,” so it made good political sense for her to use that ethnic label.

Otero–Warren’s use of her distinguished family background has been considered to reflect upper–class sentiments that cast her as a community leader, a *patrona*, and, in relation to white Americans, a power broker for her people. Sarah Deutsch makes reference to Otero–Warren as a “patron” and observes that she did not personally identify with the class of Spanish Americans she hoped to represent.³⁵ Forrest also states that “Upper class Hispanos, while not entirely exempt from prejudicial treatment by Anglo Americans, maintained such a strong feeling of class status that they did not identify with the lower class villagers.”³⁶ Otero–Warren, in Forrest’s view, saw herself as a culture and power broker mediator between people in the New Mexican villages and white American reformers. Rebolledo’s comment that Otero–Warren’s “sense of social consciousness is not clear,” is more appropriate until such time

as more information becomes available about her personal views.³⁷ As Rebolledo indicates Otero–Warren, like other upper–class women of her generation, was “enclosed and socialized by a process where women are expected to perform in traditional ways, yet none . . . did.”³⁸ It must be remembered that Otero–Warren was a “modern” woman struggling with a whole array of ethnic, gender, and career issues in an essentially pragmatic fashion.

As the first New Mexico woman candidate for national office, Otero–Warren drew both positive and negative responses from the local press, which tended to be rabidly partisan. A Republican paper, the *Deming Graphic*, carried a story written by a white journalist who called her “Nina,” “a sort of pet in New Mexico,” a “red–haired bundle of personality and winsomeness,” and called her campaign “a novelty.”³⁹ The journalist went on to state that “many people go to see her because she is the first woman to run for state office and then shake her hand, after falling a victim of that friendly smile and winning personality and tell her they are going to vote for her.”⁴⁰ The *New York Evening Post* made reference to her “Titian–red hair,” and noted that she had large freckles, “the kind which make a chic, girlish–figured woman, barely forty, look ‘cute.’”⁴¹ The reporter also theorized that her red hair and freckles came from her Visigoth ancestors who left the German forests for Castile, Spain.

Senator Holm O. Bursum called Otero–Warren “a citizen whose ability, and personality (the latter quality so essential to bringing about effects), loyalty to her people, and her state, entitles her to the kindest consideration by the voters.”⁴² An unsigned editorial in *Magee’s Independent* stated that women would be good office holders because they “are naturally democratic in their thinking,” and that “they like justice, clean elections, fair play, liberal thought and action, peace instead of war.”⁴³ The *Socorro Chieftain* promoted women candidates, “Men,” said an editorial, “may vote for Mrs. Otero–Warren with complete confidence that she will give to her congressional duties earnest effort, sound judgment and capacity to meet on equal terms every responsibility that will [revolve] upon her.”⁴⁴

Not all editorials supported women in the realm of politics. An editorial in the *Magee’s Independent* chided women to reform politics by engaging in service. Only then, the editorial continued, “when your service grows too great and has proven a disinterested one, the office may come seeking you and you will then know, beyond a doubt, where your duty lies.”⁴⁵ The *Glenrio Tribune* came out with an editorial against women in politics. According to the *Tribune*, “nature did not intend women to function in politics but to be queen in a home.”⁴⁶ The *Alamogordo News* did not believe that it “was the right thing to do . . . to

send a woman to Congress bright as the lady may be."⁴⁷ The *Alamogordo News* went on to call the candidacy of a woman "a joke" and that "there are offices where women are preeminently fitted to serve, and there are offices where men are better qualified."⁴⁸

Medill McCormack, chairman of the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee, said that "persons might vote for a woman for superintendent of schools or for the town council or other little jobs like that, but when it comes to the Senate of the United States, they simply will not do it."⁴⁹ The *Cuervo Clipper* thought that Otero-Warren's opponent Morrow was the better candidate simply because he was a man. The newspaper said that the House of Representatives has always been adjusted to having only male members as shown by the fact that "legislation is threshed out between Congresses in their clubs, smoking rooms and cloak rooms or as they meet on street corners."⁵⁰ Elfeigio Baca, who was miffed because he did not receive the Republican nomination for governor, urged everyone to vote only for Democrats. His statement was meant as a slap to Frank A. Hubbell, Republican county chairman.⁵¹

To counter party hostility toward women as candidates in national office, Otero-Warren sent out news releases to local newspapers which included her photo, her accomplishments, and her views. The news releases ran in one newspaper, the *Socorro Chieftain*, on a weekly basis. Titles of the news releases were, "An Experienced Observer's Estimate of Mrs. Otero-Warren," "Mrs. Otero-Warren's Work in the Field of Social Service," "Mrs. Otero-Warren in the Field of Education," and "Mrs. Otero-Warren's Equipment for Service in the U.S. Congress."⁵² Commenting on her social welfare activities, a journalist for the *Deming Graphic* said that Otero-Warren had been "identified since early youth with educational and welfare work, she is known personally to all the prominent people of the state and by reputation to all the others. Through her kindly interest in the education of the native children and the welfare of the needy families in the state, she has already endeared herself to thousands."⁵³

Other issues in which Otero-Warren expressed views included her support for the prohibition amendment and her advocacy of a veteran's bonus, or "adjustment compensation measure," which antagonized many veterans. But she stated that "if there is a New Mexico vet of the world who wants more than justice I have not met him yet. They want a just compensation law. They are entitled to it and they will get it at the hands of a Republican Congress."⁵⁴ When asked about her views on United States-Mexico relations and the recognition of the Alvaro Obregón government, she expressed "coyness," and reminded the *New York Evening Post* reporter of Calvin Coolidge in her "disinclination to confide state

secrets to casual interviewers.”⁵⁵ She said, “that’s something I won’t talk about. Think how the Mexican situation could change before I could take my seat in Congress if elected. And I don’t want to embarrass the administration.”⁵⁶

The Spanish language press also noted Otero–Warren’s candidacy. The *Santa Rosa Sun* was offended by the nerve of Democratic candidate Morrow for suggesting that he could best represent a state where approximately 185,000 loyal American citizens of Spanish origin lived.⁵⁷ The *Albuquerque Morning Journal* reported that at a rally in Cimarron, Otero–Warren said in Spanish that voters should elect her by stating that their “communities are just as good or just as bad as you wish them to be. You should select your officers and representatives such men and women as will best serve and represent you. Make a study of the records of the candidates and choose those who are qualified to serve you. If you do not choose those best qualified then it is your own fault that you do not have better regulated communities or better government.”⁵⁸

At another rally, Otero–Warren began her campaign talk with the observation that “her people had founded the state” and that she did not think she was nominated because she was a woman but because “she could take charge and perform her duties to the best of her ability.”⁵⁹ In these glimpses of Otero–Warren’s campaign style, one can see her, on the one hand, urging Hispanics to vote for a Hispana for ethnic solidarity, while on the other hand, appealing to an intelligent electorate to vote for her based on her knowledge of important legislative matters such as education, public health, and social services.

One of the most interesting responses to her candidacy was by a Hispano poet named Felipe Maximiliano Chacón. He penned a poem about her entitled, “To Mrs. Adelina Otero–Warren/ Republican Candidate for Congress, 1922” The poem is as follows:

Your forehead is ringed with laurel
And your name radiates honor,
Today your star appears on the threshold
Of the triumphal dawn of a new day.
The world advances with human thought
And new things are born in life,
Today the morning light is reflected
in a new sphere where woman is born.
Born in suffrage equal to man,
But spiritually, more elevated,
In moral purity she carves her name
And the earth benefits from her journey.
This very meritorious evolution
Marking the noble path of Progress

Will cover New Mexico with glory
By putting a woman in Congress.
Able, competent, honorable,
With a gentle soul and a sincere heart
There she is, proclaimed by the people,
The typical lady, Adelina Otero!
Noble offspring of Spanish lineage,
And what is more, pure American,
But what does outer clothing matter
In one who merits distinguished heights!
Human greatness is not exclusive
Nor limited to any nation,
From heaven above its power extends
And unites its beauty with discretion.
But this flattery is not motivated
By the servile interest of egotism,
My noble intention is only
To point out the Justice of an Ideal.
Here, here! A toast of joy,
The pleasure of a progressive citizen,
I send to you along with my verses
The greetings of a sovereign people!⁶⁰

The poem combines the Hispano affection for Otero–Warren as an able, competent, gentle, and sincere lady as well as aspects desired of a Hispano politician: Spanish heritage, justice, progress, and the beliefs of a united people. Otero–Warren, however, did have Hispano critics. According to the *Tucumcari News*, Democrats accused Republican women voters of voting not once, but between fourteen and fifteen times each. This feat was accomplished because each woman wore “un tápalo negro” (a black shawl) to protect their identities.⁶¹ Otero–Warren was also criticized for her educational policies. The *Albuquerque Morning Journal* reported that “a group of Mexicans” were upset that a second grade certificate teacher from their town school had been relieved of her duties. In her tenure as school superintendent, Otero–Warren had “entirely eliminated the second and third grade certificate teachers, often against strong local political opposition.”⁶² Many of the teachers were Hispanas, who spoke Spanish in the schools and had less educational preparedness than Otero–Warren had mandated for the schools in her county. When the delegation threatened to vote for Democratic candidate Morrow, Otero–Warren responded, “vote as you please. But you’ll get the best teacher I can send you just the same.”⁶³

Throughout her campaign, Otero–Warren stressed her high moral values. On 31 October 1922, Otero–Warren said at a rally in Cimarron that she “was a great believer in play. You learn nearly as much in play as in study, for it is on the playground that you learn to be square. If you violate the rules on the playground and cheat in your games remember that you really cheat nobody but yourself. Play the game square.”⁶⁴ This speech haunted her as the election grew closer. Her distant relative, former Governor Miguel Otero, accused Otero–Warren of not “playing square” by not telling the truth about her “dead” husband Captain Rawson Warren.

Ex–Governor Otero said that his information revealed that Captain Warren was not dead, but having divorced Otero–Warren, he had remarried and was living with his new wife at 2311 Connecticut Avenue, Washington D.C. In *Magee’s Independent*, Miguel Otero claimed that the reason for the lie was due to Otero–Warren’s and Republican fears since “divorces were unpopular with Catholics in New Mexico,” they thought it better to “figuratively kill Captain Warren.”⁶⁵ The ex–governor’s motivation in revealing Otero–Warren’s divorce status seems to have been motivated simply by the desire to catch a Republican in a lie. His remarks also tend to suggest that if Otero–Warren had remembered to mention him as one of her “famous relatives” he might have kept quiet. He noted with pride that Chávez de Chacón, the newly–elected secretary of state, always graciously remembered that he was one of her most honored relatives.⁶⁶

What impact this news had on the voters cannot be determined because in the following election all Democrats defeated their Republican opponents. Surely misrepresenting herself as a widow rather than as a divorcee lost Otero–Warren votes. In addition, being both a Spanish American and a woman was probably too much for some people in New Mexico to handle. On the other hand, New Mexican voters were offended by the Republican voting record against veterans, and especially by the national passage of the Republican Fordney–McCumber tariff bill on 4 March 1921. According to critics, the bill took \$160 annually out of the income of every family in the United States. The Republicans also received blame for the rise in taxes from \$4.06 per capita in 1915 to \$13.09 in 1921.⁶⁷ In addition, Otero–Warren might have offended Hispanics not only in relation to her misrepresenting her divorce, but also with her policies with regard to forbidding spoken Spanish in schools and the removal of many Hispana teachers.

It must be said, however, that of all the Republican candidates, Otero–Warren lost by less votes than the other top candidates. The official results were: Morrow, 59,254, and Otero–Warren, 49,635, a difference of 9, 619 votes.⁶⁸ The backlash against her candidacy did not come from Hispanics as she carried four of the five Hispano counties, but

rather from predominantly white Little Texas counties.⁶⁹ After her defeat, Otero–Warren’s brother Ed openly assaulted ex–governor Miguel Otero in the lobby of a bank and beat him severely for allegedly making “improper remarks” about his sister. Ed pleaded guilty to the assault and was fined \$1,000 in damages.⁷⁰

In the other race for the secretary of state, Chávez de Chacón won 58,387 votes to 49,456 votes of her opponent Des Georges. The majority was 8,931 votes.⁷¹ Her victory represents New Mexico’s custom, as well as that of other states, to elect mostly women as secretary of state. This office must be viewed as a “largely honorific” position and speaks to the practice of state politicians “reserving a lesser office” for women rather than advocating women candidates for higher offices.⁷² Chávez de Chacón later went on to serve in the New Mexico House of Representatives from 1935–36, and she was a presidential elector for Franklin D. Roosevelt. Chávez de Chacón might have continued a political career, but she died in 1939 in her early forties.⁷³

After her 1922 loss, Otero–Warren never again ran for public office. It is certain that she was stigmatized by her divorce, which became a political liability. Her attention shifted more toward education, social work, a real estate and insurance business, writing, and accepting state–appointed positions. Otero–Warren’s 1922 campaign reveals that she was one of the few important Hispana precursors to the modern–day ethnic woman politician. Her candidacy and activities show the complexities of being a modern, highly educated, career–oriented, well–traveled Hispana in the early part of the twentieth century.

Among Hispanos, she had to contend with the emerging “Spanish–American” identity label and its repercussions from a community that admired her loyalty to the Spanish part of her heritage but questioned her “Anglicized” educational policies relating to spoken language and teacher retention. As a Republican she probably would have lost the election in any case, but the press she received about her candidacy demonstrates that prejudices against Hispanics—especially women candidates—were considerable. Her lack of candor, however, about her divorce is indicative of her own failing as a truthful candidate and of the rigidity of public morality against divorce in the 1920s.

NOTES

1. *New Mexican*, 4 January 1965.

2. Joan M. Jensen, “Disfranchisement is a Disgrace: Women and Politics in New Mexico, 1900–1940,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 56 (January 1981), 5–36; Joan M. Jensen, “Pioneers in Politics,” *El Palacio*, 92 (Summer/Fall 1986), 14–19; Charlotte Whaley, *Nina Otero–Warren of Santa Fe* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994); Juan Gómez–Quiñones, *Roots of Chicano Politics, 1600–1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 356–58;

Merrihelen Ponce, "The Lives and Works of Five Hispanic New Mexican Women Writers, 1878-1991," *Southwest Hispanic Research Institute, Working Paper #119*, (Summer, 1992); Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). Deutsch refers to the activities of Otero-Warren and other Hispana politicians mostly in footnotes, 179, 261-62, 297. Necah Stewart Furman, "Women's Campaign For Equality: A National and State Perspective," *New Mexico Historical Review* 53 (October 1978), 365-74. The only Hispana politician Furman mentions is Concha Ortiz y Pino de Kleven.

3. Margaret Espinosa MacDonald, "Hispanic Women of New Mexico at Work," slide presentation at the Twelfth Annual New Mexico Women's Studies Conference, Eastern New Mexico University, 27 March 1992.

4. *Magee's Independent*, 9 November 1922. Isabel Eckles of Grant County, a white American woman, also won election as superintendent of public instruction.

5. Mary P. Ryan, *Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1975), 231-34.

6. William L. O'Neill, *Divorce in the Progressive Era* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1967), 24-25.

7. This paragraph is derived from "Maria Adelina Emelia Otero-Warren," in *History of New Mexico: Family and Personal History*, vol. III, Frank Driver Reeve, ed., 3 vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., 1961), 243-44; John Sherman, *Santa Fe: A Pictorial History* (Virginia Beach, Virginia: Donning Company, 1983), 69.

8. *La Voz Del Pueblo*, 2 December 1922.

9. Rana Adler and Ny Adler, "How a Plucky Woman Foiled a Governor," *Albuquerque Journal Magazine*, 10 February 1981, 10.

10. *Ibid.*, 12.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Jensen, "Disfranchisement," 16.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *La Voz Del Pueblo*, 25 November 1922.

15. Jensen, "Disfranchisement," 15.

16. "Otero-Warren," *History of New Mexico*, 243.

17. *Socorro Chieftain*, 21 October 1922.

18. Adelina Otero, "My People," *Survey Graphic*, 1 May 1931, 150.

19. *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 16 June 1919.

20. *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 27 April 1919.

21. *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 26 May 1919.

22. *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 1 January 1922.

23. Jensen, "Disfranchisement," 26-27. Hispano voting patterns in relation to women candidates appears to fluctuate, possibly due to bias against women as powerful elected officials at the national level, but eventually Hispanos did support women candidates for state level offices.

24. *Magee's Independent*, 14 September 1922.

25. *Glenrio Tribune*, 29 September 1922.

26. *Hot Springs Herald*, 5 October 1922; *Raton Range*, 24 October 1933.

27. *Socorro Chieftain*, 30 September 1922; *Arizona Daily Star*, 12 October 1922.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Adler, "How a Plucky Woman," 10; *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 22 June 1924.

30. *Socorro Chieftain*, 30 September 1922.

31. John R. Chávez, *The Lost Land: The Chicano Image of the Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 97-98; Phillip B. Gonzales, "Spanish Heritage and Ethnic Protest in New Mexico: The Anti-Fraternity Bill of 1933," *New Mexico Historical Review* 61 (October 1986), 281-99.

32. Gonzales, "Spanish Heritage and Ethnic Protest," 296.

33. Tey Diana Rebolledo, "Hispanic Women Writers of the Southwest: Tradition and Innovation," *Old Southwest/New Southwest: Essays on a Region and its Literature*, Judy Nolte Lensink, ed. (Tucson, Arizona: The Tucson Public Library, 1987), 50.

34. Suzanne Forrest, *The Preservation of the Village: New Mexico's Hispanics and the New Deal* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1986), 13.

35. Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge*, 191.

36. Forrest, *The Preservation of the Village*, 75.

37. Rebolledo, 50.

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Deming Graphic*, 2 October 1922.

40. *Ibid.*

41. As quoted in *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 1 October 1922.

42. *Socorro Chieftain*, 28 October 1922.

43. *Magee's Independent*, 2 November 1922.

44. *Socorro Chieftain*, 28 October 1922.

45. *Magee's Independent*, 14 September 1922.

46. *Glenrio Tribune*, 13 October 1922.

47. *Alamogordo News*, 14 October 1922.

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Magee's Independent*, 2 November 1922.

50. *Cuervo Clipper*, 27 October 1922.

51. *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 30 October 1922.

52. *Socorro Chieftain*, 7, 14, 21, 28 October 1922.

53. *The Deming Graphic*, 2 October 1922.

54. *Raton Range*, 27 October 1922.

55. As quoted in *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 1 October 1922.

56. *Ibid.*

57. *Santa Rosa Sun*, 6 October 1922.

58. *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 31 October 1922.

59. *La Voz del Pueblo*, 16 September 1922.

60. Doris Meyer, "Felipe Maximiliano Chacón: A Forgotten Mexican American Author," *New Scholar* 6 (1977), 112-26.

61. Quote from *Tucumcari News*, 6 October 1922; printed in the *Santa Rosa Sun*.

62. *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 1 October 1922.

63. *Ibid.*

64. She gave the speech in Dawson on 30 October and her comments appeared in the *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 31 October 1922.

65. *Magee's Independent*, 23 November 1922.

66. *Ibid.*

67. *Carrizozo News*, 3 November 1922.

68. *La Voz Del Pueblo*, 16 December 1922.

69. Jensen, "Disfranchisement," 27.

70. *La Voz Del Pueblo*, 2 December 1922.

71. *La Voz Del Pueblo*, 16 December 1922.

72. Robert J. Nickels, "The Plural Executive," *New Mexico Government*, F. Chris García and Paul L. Hain, eds. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), 18.

73. MacDonald, "Hispanic Women."