My dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

The Mexicans in this country, and their American children loved your husband. One evening while talking with some of them, getting material for the book I am writing, a group of Pachuca girls told me this story.

Never have I seen more earnestness than on the faces of these so-called delinquent girls, when telling me about what Roosevelt meant to them. So I wanted you to have this copy before the book is published next year. It is as yet untitled, but when my publishers (Houghton Mifflin & Co -- it's a non-fiction award book -- 1945) publish it I hope I may send you a copy.

I have a sneaking hunch that that wonderful man, with his understanding and humour would like what these kids say about him. I worked on Ned Healy's election with a bunch of them, and I know Roosevelt was the cause of many impromptu fights, dares, threats, bets and corridos, those narrative songs which are so spontaneous and full of verve and poetry.

Gratefully,

Beatrice Griffin
That afternoon we went drunk to school. I was feeling fine. Feeling fine cause I was just 16, had a dime and gave a penny to the Salvation Army. I hadn't felt so fine for a long time, not since I thought one day at junior high I would be somebody. So I gave myself with respect and dressed like a square at school, and gave everybody good manners. But nobody would believe that I wanted to make something of my-
selves and they only laughed. And that light-skinned cholo teacher who talked real dainty Spanish, she gave me the reputation of a gangster in that school. She used to ask me, "Wild woman, what alley did you come from?" But when she saw me dressed like a square and giving myself with respect, she couldn't believe it and laughed too. So it was no go. But I sure felt good for awhile.

Well this noon we both walked past the vocational school, (where all the schools send their bad kids) singing all the way. Jitterbug and me. Only we couldn't walk very good. The girls yelled at us from behind the board fence, so we started back. When we got to the school door I threw my cigarette away and walked down the hall real fine. But one thing we forgot, we forgot to stop singing. So the principal came out and Jitterbug ran into one of the classrooms and sat down at a desk. But me...I walked straight into her office. I'm that dumb and started talking. I told that principal I was going to be somebody big, real famous. But she wouldn't listen. She was only crying and was calling me honey and asking me, "How could you do this to me, honey? You were my sweetheart girl, look at the appreciation you give me?"

But one thing she didn't know, it wasn't to her, it was to me and my mother I was doing it, being drunk.

I saw Jitterbug coming from the room across the hall,
and the teacher talking rough to her, pushing her along the hall, and telling her "We don't allow drunkards in this school." She yelled loud enough for another school to hear. Jitterbug never drank before today, and now already they think she is a lost weekend. So I tried to stop talking, cause I remembered how faksey they are at this school. You give them the trust and they don't keep the truth, so everything is dirty. Only my mother they don't tell, and that's not fair. Just cause they're afraid all the chucks will raise a lot of noise and tear the place down if they do me something. But someday those dumb teachers will be sorry they didn't give me the punishment too. But someday, too, maybe, they will tell my mother.

The principal was telling me I was a dear sweet girl, and all that jive. And next door Jitterbug was crying and crying, asking them for the favor not to tell her mother. Jitterbug never asked any favors of anybody, only one. Just to play Beat Bad Boogie and Ave Maria when she died. That's all. But those teachers would promise not to tell her mother, and then would do her dirty and tell everything to the cops and her mother sure.

The principal was talking a lot of talk, "You aren't happy, are you honey? Why do you smoke the marihuana, honey? Tell me where you got the whiskey, honey."

So I told her the truth that a drunk man bought it for us, but she believed it for a lie. Then she looked at me with those missionary eyes and gave me that longdistance em-
barrassment, and promised her word not to tell my mother.

That day, after school, while we was waiting for the
cold street car to take us home, (all but jitterbug and the cop
from Juvenile took her home), we tried to buy some ice cream
cones at the drug store. But sometimes they wouldn't sell
you any. Today was one of those days. We all crowded in
there. I wanted to get some Aspirin and went back in the store.
When I heard them calling the girls "You dirty *Pachucas*, get
out of this store," I came up front.

"I bought some Aspirin, Mister. How about a glass
of water?" I asked him.

But he yelled at me, "There's a gas station across
the street, if you want water. We don't want you *Pachucas*
in here. Now get out."

So I told him, "Chinzo to me, and your grandmother,
and you great grandmother's mother's mother, and all their
eww and goats. You don't stop to know if we are *Pachucas* or
not, just because we dress this way."

The girls were more. Everybody was mad, waiting out-
side that drug store. Larga wrote her name real big on the
ossa cola sign by the brick wall. "Remember, Gato, when they
used to make you scrub all the names off the basement walls
at school just cause Negra put them there and they thought it
was you?"

"Sure man, just cause I was dark they thought those
names were mine. Some were, but not all. I worked a lot for
that chick cause my skin is dark....but then it took my mother
a lot of months to get it just that color, I guess." I was
getting tired hanging around waiting for that street car, and
none of the guys showed up yet.

Mostly when the girls wait for the streetcar they talk
about that school and the teachers. All the troubles come out
on that corner, cause we have to wait sometimes a long time.
If the conductor sees a big bunch of us he won't stop, so we
hang around.

Pushia was sore today cause she got expelled from
school, too. "Just cause there was a big commotion when Yoyo
and Chanto drove by the school, they thought it was me. Al-
ways those teachers give the blame some place else. How come
they aren't ever fair? They sit me in a room with a pencil
and tell me, 'Now honey, write down on that paper why you're
bad.' So when I drew a picture of Joan Crawford with a big
overlip, old lady Wiggins got real real mad. Then they gave
me a summons, nice and polite from the office. 'Well dearie,
that's the last. We've tried our best with you. We're simply
fed up. We just can't go on. We can no longer help you,' and
all that jive, she told me. But it was dirty not to hear my
story."

Some of the guys drove by then and there was a lot
of commotion. Simon, Napa, and Gage all got in the car
and drove away down town. Lola scratched her name on a brick that
didn't have none. "Sure those teachers should know how to keep girls with their problems, not shut them out because they're hard. Remember Miss Stevens and those teachers at Cambria? That other special school? They'd give you chances and chances. That's why we went in there real rugged and came out all squarey, with no overlip, no short skirts, or pompadours or zombie shoes. They didn't try to control our clothes, and no teacher's pet stuff."

Caledonia lit a cigarette and sat down on the curb, "And they didn't yell at you. They were honest and equal. It's not the strictness that counts. I've sat in a lot of principals' offices for hours, with them trying to get me to take down my pompadour. But strictness and nothing else doesn't get control. Some teachers can keep you after school for hours, but couldn't make me mind, ever." She passed me a cigarette then, cause another streetcar had just banged on up the street without stopping.

"Heck yes, if they expect a courteous answer they should set the example for some one to follow, and not yell like you are deaf. Remember that old teacher in junior high who used to yell at us, 'You stupid B'zs' she'd yell. 'You blockheads'. But that day she called my mother a Mexican dumbbell was too bad for her. She was so surprised when I slapped her she just stared pop-eyed, while I walked down the stairs to the principal's office. That began all my trouble."
Changa bought some gum across at the grocery store and passed it around. "Sure, I remember her. Deeply deeply in my heart, to the last inch of my heart, to the deepest part of my heart, I shall always remember that old son of a bitch. How could I forget her?"

"Yeah, and Miss Stevens never threw it to you that you were a Mexican, and would explain all the big long words, cause she came out strong for work. Remember Changa, it took me two weeks to learn to say vulgar profanity? But if you tried hard she didn't fail you. She was with respect and was fair....and those beautiful hair and eyes. Things would be different here if she was our teacher. She'd have control."

Huera let out a yell at the street car that almost stopped, and then it banged the bell and went on. "Son of a bitch, why doesn't he stop. I gotta get home."

I told the girls to pipe down, cause that old store guy would call the police if he heard so much noise, but it was no use. Everybody was talking at once.

"Why even if Stevens wasn't for Roosevelt, she never let a galacho girl say something against him. I bet if Roosevelt was alive this school would be different. Remember the CCO's he gave us, and all those things? And remember when Roosevelt talked on the radio? Man it was real keen....made you all warm inside, like Kate Smith singing. Let's put his name here by ours real big." Guata and Vicki started in
making a big Roosevelt name on the Coca Cola sign, standing high on the wall. We watched to see if the drug store boss came out.

"Sure the school would be different. Cause Roosevelt knew our language even if he didn't speak Spanish, cause he knew the language the poor people talk. He knew the languages of all the people who don't speak American, and the poor people who speak American but not with rich money. We could write him and tell him about what we want in this school, and he'd do something I bet," I told them, "cause my aunt wrote him when her house was going to be sold, and it wasn't."

"Yeah, but it's different now. With Roosevelt you felt safe, like inside the house when it's raining outside. Or you've just had a long drag of tea and everything is comfortable and smooth. Cause he would protect you, there was nothing to fear like being hungry. He knew about being hungry I guess, cause he gave us the NYA and hospitals and WPA and lots of other things people need when they haven't money and can't speak." Beaver picked up a piece of dirt and threw it smack in the face of the cute little blonde chick in the Coca Cola sign. "Make that name Roosevelt bigger....so everybody can see it."

I remembered what my mother said, "The only thing Roosevelt did to hurt his people was to die. If Americans could give their lives to save him you'd have to stand in line."
Dear President Roosevelt,

I began to write:

December 6th, 1939.

I ask for help now, not because I fear, but because I want to do what I can to help.

I want to say to those who believe in our country, and to those who believe in the power of the people, that we must act now.

I cannot say much, but I think it's important to act quickly.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
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The picture on the water. I have no idea if it is a real picture or not. It seems to be a reflection of something, but I am not sure. I am just guessing that it could be a boat or a ship. It is difficult to tell for sure.
The motorman turned around and yelled, "Sit down and shut up, you dago, or get off."
I told him, "Okay, mister, okay."
Then I told the chinks not to save him back cause they'd have to wait longer for a streetcar next time.

At home I slipped in real quiet, but it was okay. My sister was ever at the settlement house and my mother was out. I took the letter to Roosevelt and put it in the wooden treasure box my brother made in manual training. Everything was in that box, our baptism certificates, my brother's Purple Heart and Silver Star medals, and a letter from his officer when he died; a report card from my school when I got good marks, the old white maquina ribbon from my mother's wedding.

I folded the things and put the rosary and the paper rose back on top the box, then stuck it on the shelf under the Virgin's picture. Roosevelt's letter would be okay there for awhile.

I went in the kitchen and started making tortillas, so to be busy when my mother came in full of mad...if she did... if they told her from school about me. And soon she did come in. She had been crying. I knew from her face she knew. When that old dame called me in before class was over and told me I was free as the air to get a job, and that they didn't
want drunks and "tea" smokers there....I knew if they expelled me they'd tell my mother. And sure enough, they snitched. But I knew one thing. She wouldn't let them have the satisfaction of seeing her cry. So for them she would have the smile that took her tears away. But she came home real sad with her sadness.

But for me there was just hell. My mother and dad got too many old fashioned ideas. She's from another country. I'm from America and I'm not like her. With Mexican girls they want you to sit in the house like muertos, dead flies....like that. If you tell them what the teachers say, they say the teachers don't know. And what they tell us will only get us in trouble. They think they know what is good, not the American teachers. And even if we take our parents to school to explain them, our parents don't hear. They only know from Mexico.

I remember when me and my sister told my mother we wanted to dress neat and American, they beat us and said no, to dress like they wanted us to, in old Mexico. So after awhile it's no use. You can't have any fun, so you get your fun where you find it. Like little Gutdown said to the teacher when she asked her why she drank, "It's the only fun I have, Miss," she told her, and it's true.

My dad hadn't come home yet, so I knew I was going to get the preaching first. I'd rather they beat me silly
I'm not sure what you mean by "You make your own sunshine" and you get mean.

When we first met in Mexico, it was just my way, but now I want more. I need more when you wake up. When I wake up, I need more. When I want to hide some shade when I look at you, I need more when you wake up. When I need shade, I need more.

So I'll let her make the long little Portland.

- don't have the understanding

To see when we met, but I can't tell her that. I can't make her see what I want to hide some shade when I look at you. I can't make her see when we met. I don't want to hide some shade when we met. I can't make her see when we met.

I won't be here. I put a name on the shade. I broke with him. I won't be here. I put a name on the shade. I broke with him.

She said that I don't understand her, and all I think is that you can't do any more. She wanted to me, do any more. She wanted to me.

I asked her why she wanted to me, and she said that I don't understand her, and all I think is that you can't do any more. She wanted to me, do any more. She wanted to me.

But I need more of you to be happy, you.

I can't make you understand me. I can't make you understand me. I can't make you understand me.
But in my heart I am crying for my mother....I don't really know what's the matter. If I did anything to my mother I'd kill myself. All Mexican mothers got is a flock of family and too much work, that's why they're old young.

I knew my dad would beat me, so I decided to get away to Changá's house or someplace before he come home. I remember how he beat me silly when he saw me on the street talking to a boy, a real decent boy. And it'd be worse now, with him calling me a dirty puta, and street lady. I couldn't stand it and wait for him to chase me out.

So when my mother went in crying to pray to the Virgin, I got my hands washed and took my coat from the closet. Some girls can't go to a friend's house if their mother knows you've got a bad reputation, no matter if you're not really bad but just do some wrong things. So, if I couldn't stay at Changá's, then someplace else, or stay the night at the bus station. And tomorrow I could get work at a malt shop, or a sewing factory or walnut place maybe.

I slipped out the door quiet, and walked in a hurry down the alley, towards town. Cause with me, it is to live life. You never live long, so the thing is to take life while you can make it.