

"Hunger, thank god, never struck us"
Memories of six women from Facinas and Tarifa (Cádiz)

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"I have worked on this book for my children and family, for the day that I won't be here anymore, so they can have it to remember me and know everything we've been through," says María. Antonia recalls how at first she didn't want to talk because, when remembering what she had gone through, *"I felt like crying,"* and Mari Luz acknowledges that she could resume many forgotten things, *"with help from people who gave me the confidence to tell."* Reviewing her life, Luz says, *"we had no clothes, we had no distractions like now, but what I had in my youth I would not change it for nothing"*. Manuela, on the other hand, says that, if she could, *"I would change everything since I was born until I was fourteen."*

Luz Manso and Maria Marquez, from Facinas; Antonia Moreno, Luz Trujillo, Manuela Román and Mari Luz Díaz, from Tarifa, were students at the Adult Education Centre of Tarifa. The six of them participated in the workshop "The Story of My Life", held in 2004-2005, and that I coordinated myself. My proposal was to collect memories and images of their life, and create a record afterwards in the form of a notebook that would be distributed among their relatives.

What would be the way to translate their life experiences? First, we would record our meetings, where everybody had to tell their stories, relying on the memories of everyone and all. We started our stories among tears, building trust with them. Then, we continued telling stories, laughing and singing, in the group or privately. It was also about writing; writing so we could read each other and then, explain each other to better understand us.

Maria Marquez felt at ease with the paper. For Manuela Román it was difficult, but even so, she never stopped writing at home, word by word, everything she remembered. Antonia Moreno asked not to be interrupted with questions, but we had to when we realized her stories were never ending! Although often left blank, Luz Manso told us stories with remarkable closeness; Luz Trujillo, despite the tears, was honest in her speech, and Mari Luz Diaz gave names to injustices many years old. Among us all we have reconstructed pieces of interlocking lives that, after all, belong to a larger story: the History of Facinas and Tarifa, their land and their sea.

The six of them, being women and with a healthy pride of being talkative, knew how to tell their life and that of their closers. They did it with strokes of feelings and emotions, putting aside dates, names and numbers, so much appreciated by cold historical records. They saw their children and those of neighbors and friends grow and they took care of all their family members. They, rather than the men who lived beside them, were able to observe and appreciate the vast extent of life and they did it from their daily work at home and at other people's homes; when in the ditch, in the fish factory, at their little patio, their fruit garden or the busy plaza market: from their marginal jobs and from their non- school...

In the school of life, Luz and Maria from Facinas, and Antonia, Luz, Manuela and Mari Luz from Tarifa, their mothers, sisters and grandmothers taught them to perceive many daily details that have not always been considered part of History. Therefore they can bring so many memories to reconstruct the History of our people.

They have left their voices, experiences and memories on paper, because they need to tell and because they want to fight against oblivion. They know that their children, nephews and grandchildren's future is built on their own lives. Those lives that are key if we want to know us as a community and discern the important from the accessory, at a time when the color of money blurs almost everything. What reader may not feel reflected in reading them? Who won't feel their own memories or family bonds come alive? Or even find a hidden knowledge that never suspected was there...

Personally, I've had the privilege to be a channel for their voice and writings, playing devil's advocate, suggesting readings, connecting the recorder, pounding the keypad, and printing and correcting piles of sheets. It was also a great opportunity for me to settle in the land of my father's family and learn again to love it through their own lives. I could not ask for more.