



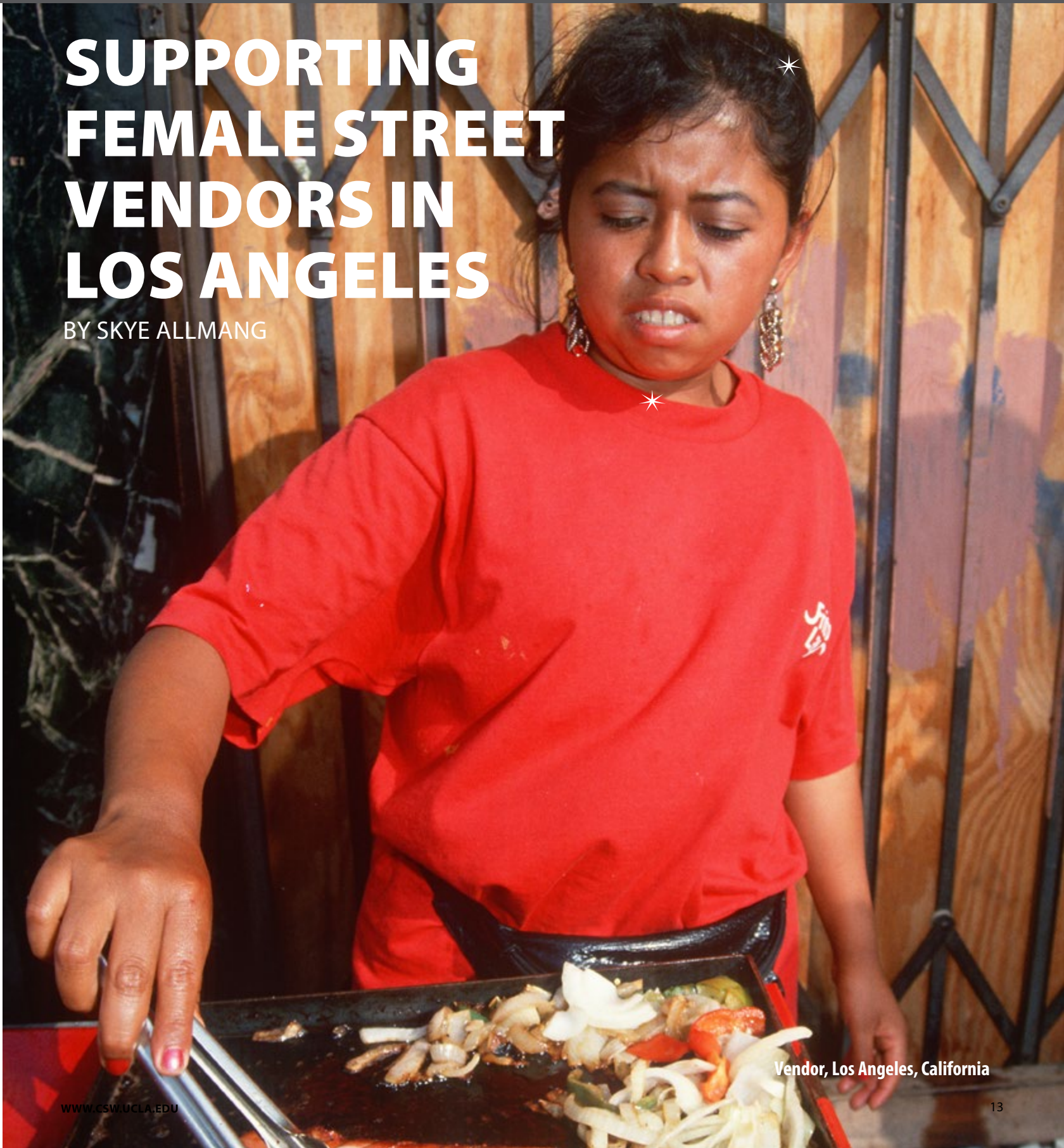
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# Policy Brief 20

RETHINKING POLICY ON GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND WOMEN'S ISSUES

## SUPPORTING FEMALE STREET VENDORS IN LOS ANGELES

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# SUPPORTING FEMALE STREET VENDORS IN LOS ANGELES

*Although the exact number of informal street vendors in Los Angeles is difficult to ascertain, the number appears to be growing, following the recent economic recession.<sup>1</sup> While street vending is technically illegal, approximately 50,000 vendors may be seen throughout the city,<sup>2</sup> selling goods ranging from bacon-wrapped hot dogs and pupusas, to clothing, flowers, and jewelry.*

IN THE SPRING OF 2014, city officials began reviewing potential policy options for the legalization of street vending in Los Angeles. While these efforts are an important first step, the options being discussed do not adequately support the vendors, and in particular, the needs of female vendors. Therefore, this brief aims to call attention to the gendered aspects of street vending and make policy recommendations related to the needs of female vendors in the drafting of a new street vending policy for Los Angeles.

While New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, and other major cities in the United States have policies regulating street vending,<sup>3</sup> Los Angeles has struggled to develop such a policy. The City of Los Angeles passed an initial ordinance regarding street vending in 1994, which created eight zones where vendors could vend legally. However, while there were some initial efforts made, the zones were not successfully implemented.

## CRITIQUE

In the fall of 2013, two Los Angeles City Council members, José Huizar and Curren Price, created a

motion to review and update the ordinance.<sup>4</sup> In response, the Los Angeles Chief Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) released a report that reviewed current regulations and enforcement efforts, and made recommendations for ways to move forward based on lessons learned both from regulation efforts in Los Angeles and other cities.

This report, along with neighborhood impact reports from across the city, highlights many of the current concerns regarding the implementation of such a policy. In particular, the LAO report calls for the City to revisit and update the policy on street vending zones and review enforcement efforts. In addition, the report suggests that the City develop plans regarding how to educate street vendors on the new policy and to identify food deserts where healthy food vending might be encouraged. Lastly, the LAO suggested that there might be ways to partner with the County Public Health Department to promote economic development and the development of microbusinesses.<sup>5</sup> The Los Angeles Economic Development Committee reviewed these reports in December of 2014 and requested additional information from various

city departments, which will be reviewed in the spring of 2015.

However, to date, there had been limited discussion about the particular needs of female vendors. This is an important area for consideration, as research has shown that in many areas the majority of street vendors are female,<sup>6</sup> who face additional challenges to those faced by male vendors.<sup>7</sup> These women often care for children on the job.<sup>8</sup> They may also be expected to take care of family-related emergencies. In addition, they may experience harassment from businesses, law enforcement, and/or gang members.<sup>9</sup> Lastly, they may be limited in the number of alternative occupations available to them or in the ability to obtain credit to grow their businesses.<sup>10</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Involve female vendors in the process of developing a new street vending policy for Los Angeles, in order to ensure that the new policy addresses their concerns.
- Work to build trust between vendors and law enforcement by creating clear boundaries for law enforcement officers on how to implement the new street vending enforcement policies. In addition, create a role for law enforcement to protect vendors from harassment.
- Develop additional opportunities for women to access free or low-cost childcare, obtain credit to grow their businesses, or enroll in vocational programs, should they wish to do so.

These are some ways in which policymakers may support female street vendors in Los Angeles and help set a precedent for other cities on how to balance enforcement and support in their

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street vending policies, while promoting economic development.

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## NOTES

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