

FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

PERONIST POPULARITY

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## Peronist Popularity

Juan Perón, before becoming President, was responsible for organizing labor unions for the people that would in turn truly represent the workers. In regard to unions that were already in existence, he helped to expel Communist and Socialist leaders, feeling that they were more interested in looking after the welfare of the State and not the interests of the workers. In addition to his active interest in the unions, Perón was responsible for establishing a minimum wage for workers and attaining for them social security benefits for after their retirement. These reforms that Perón implemented were especially helpful to a large number of immigrants who immigrated to Argentina in the 1930s. Perón's reforms made him largely popular among the lower and working classes.

After becoming President, Perón's wife, Evita, took over the implementation of the social programs that Perón had started, which had gained him his following. Evita, to her credit was responsible for establishing a welfare system that helped people with various types of problems and illnesses. As her popularity grew, she collected more and more money, although, at times resorting to extortion threats against groups who had money, but were reluctant to contribute to her welfare fund. With the money that she was afforded, she helped and gave to the workers goods that would fulfill their needs and services. When a peasant or worker needed something, whether it be money, land, medicine, household supplies or anything else she would see them personally and take care of their needs. She was responsible for creating new schools and hospitals for the poor, as well. She wanted the poor to have an equal opportunity to enjoy life. As such, the state-run hospitals that she created were staffed with numerous luxuries and

competently trained doctors, equal to those in privately owned hospitals. In addition, when unions needed help to get pay raises that were duly owed to them, she would see to it that they got their raises. Essentially, she declared a war on poverty and strove for social justice. But perhaps the longest lasting accomplishment of Evita, was her push to get women involved in government by pressuring and succeeding at getting women's suffrage.

The popularity of the Peronist Movement increased tremendously after women were given the right to vote. As a whole, the reason that Juan and Evita Perón achieved the astonishing level of popularity that they attained was as a result of all of the public works and the welfare that they gave to the workers, and the less fortunate peasants. They gave a voice to the workers and peasants, who had long been disregarded.