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### The Ladies' Garment Worker Speaks Volumes for the Woman Worker and Writer

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*THE LADIES' GARMENT WORKER* SPEAKS VOLUMES FOR THE WOMAN WORKER  
AND WRITER

BY  
CAROLYN J CEI

A capstone project submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2019

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*The Ladies' Garment Worker Speaks* Volumes for the Woman Worker and Writer

By

Carolyn J Cei

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the capstone project requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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## ABSTRACT

*The Ladies' Garment Worker Speaks* Volumes for the Woman Worker and Writer

By

Carolyn J Cei

Advisor: Eugenia Paulicelli, Ph.D.

The nine volumes of *The Ladies' Garment Worker*, put through text analysis, would help find the voice of the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union through their own publications. On a C.U.N.Y. Commons site this analysis would provide digital images of each publication along with a timeline of frequently-used words and phrases that connect to each other; this analysis would establish the main “voice” and identity of the ILGWU women that would create a personified entity during these the issue that is analyzed, which is Volume 1 that was published throughout 1901. The identity of women workers, even under the unionization of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union is defined by unsafe work conditions and sexual harassment that led to sex slavery. Women workers became political and social activists in becoming strikers and part of a union that developed the “voice” of sisterhood and a rise for justice through these nine issues.

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## Digital Manifest

- I. Thesis Whitepaper (PDF)
  
- II. Website
  - a. Project website: <https://tlgwvolumes.commons.gc.cuny.edu/>
  - b. Archived website as WARC files created with webrecorder
  - c. Archived website using HTTRACK (.zip)
  
- III. Screenshots
  - a. voyant visual 1 (PNG)
  - b. voyant visual 2 (PNG)



## A Note on Technical Specifications

The process in preparing the website began with copying the underlying text from each Issue, which was scanned and uploaded on the Digital Commons IRL website and pasting the text into Notepad++. Once pasted, I went over and read through to take out any marks or symbols that were copied over that were just marks from the actual newsprint. I checked to make sure the words coincided with the newsletter and changed any pasting issues that did not pick up certain letters or words. After the text was accurate, I doubled checked for mistakes by pasting the body text of each newsletter into a word document by using a spell checker. After, I eliminated all spaces and punctuation so that only the text would be used in analysis. Each newsletter from Volume 1 was saved as a separate word document and uploaded into Voyant Tools to make the tables. The tables created in Voyant Tools showed the number of times a term was used in each issue and then the correlation to other terms within that issue. The more time a term was used in each volume showed the significance of that term and how important each term was; thus, the more times a term appeared, the more it would define the Volume because of its significance. Visualizations on the website were created in Voyant Tools by uploading all eight Issues of Volume 1 for analysis

The personified voice of *The Ladies Garment Worker*, analyzed in 1910's Volume 1, bundles volumes of collected injustices in literature that channeled a connection of outcry to the public through the bond of a union to demand change; the publication embodies literary exchanges between members of the Garment Industry whose silence was broken through this print. The voice is informative to the public in the cries, exemplified by uppercase words and other specific punctuations, for the poor work environments and sexual harassment for the Garment Industry women workers. Its sections of poetry and fiction are heavier with sorrow in order to relate to the subfields that were not immersed in such injustice. The genders of women and men behind the International Ladies Garment Workers Union ultimately established a voice of connection to each other through the injustice of inhumane working conditions in factories around the county; they informed the union members of policy changes and new or needed legislation. The publication's first year challenged beliefs in women and children's role in the home and workplace, published an insight into sexual misconduct and made a *voice* for change and togetherness from these workers by joining in the celebration of a union.

This publication from the ILGWU came out during an impactful time in history; The Progressive Era, between 1880 to 1920, developed advancements within its machinery, like the cutting knife and the sewing machine that came out of the Industrial Revolution. Unfortunately, this era also demonstrates how the lack of protection laws for women created a slave labor system that destroyed the identity of the female gender mentally and physically. The Garment Industry in New York City was a slave labor system; the brutality of women workers was exemplified in the Progressive Era with the use of prostitution, or sex slavery, due to the low wages that women workers earned in factories. State regulation was needed in private and public spheres as the term "social evil" referred to women prostitutes as they became further outcasts of

society (Smolak 498). As well, there were private sectors unions, regulated by National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) of 1935, who have union representation by union vote which differs from public sectors where the interests of the employees are represented by trade unions. the slave labor system within the Garment Industry is heavily documented, but change occurred over immense amounts of time due to difficulty of changing any social or economic norm.

Identifying these women in the Industry begins with understanding and defining the “worker”; the Garment Industry’s working women were mainly cloak makers, which consisted of mainly Jewish women, who immigrated to the country. For immigrant workers from 1870 to 1880 who were either European Jewish or European Italian arriving in New York, were challenged by religious codes, rather than sexual codes, between the genders. The space in sweatshops were tight and Eastern Europeans, mainly Jewish, along with Irish and German immigrants mainly had two skills for the men which included skilled tailoring and skilled cutting (Bender 97). Most Eastern Europeans arrived in the garment industry in the early 1880’s, where skilled tailors and cutters were apart of “needle trade” while women immigrants from these areas mainly worked in the less-skilled job of “cloak making” (Bender 97). So, even for immigrant workers it was known that the men were the better skilled, and thus, better paid. By the early 1880’s, as well, it was unlikely to find much work in sweatshops that needed higher paying skilled work; it was much easier to pay less for less specialized work. For New York, by the 1890’s, factory work went from the average of fifty workers in 1880 to around an average of eight workers (Bender 97) as the 1900’s would show a significant growth in shops. Women still felt the effects of gender hierarchies as they were employed less in the trade of “cloak making” operators (and not allowed to become cutters) and were forced into even lower paying wage-jobs such as “...basting, finishing, and button-hole making” (Bender 97). The only instance of

reversed gender hierarchies was seen in shirt-waisting by 1911, where only a few women were machine operators, so that women were mostly employed skilled cutters. As Nan Enstad says in her book “Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century”:

“Most Jews immigrated to the United States in order to escape anti-Semitic persecution in Eastern Europe, including second-class citizenship, sporadic violence from gentiles, and organized pogroms. They incorporated this recent historical memory into a religious and cultural framework containing a long understand of oppression and religious persecution” (Enstad 125).

Flexibility was possible in the garment industry, but only rarely. In Issue 6, of Volume 1 of *The Ladies Garment Worker* it states blatantly: ““There is already existing among the people an idealism which is drawing them on to higher things and there is probably no class of toilers whom it is more conspicuous than among these clothing makers, most of whom are Jewish immigrants” (Digital Commons IRL). As seen in women immigrants from Italy, the hierarchy still dominated, as these women were forced in the least paying and worst skilled job as finishers (Bender 97) so that labor work was still sexually divided and sexually controlled. Unionism between immigrants was a challenge in itself to cross culture barriers between the sexes to unite in justice for better working conditions and developing a “sisterhood”; in Volume 1, Issue 8, it says: “(they need to) ...secure active workers from among these to spread the propaganda of unionism among their sister workers. Another purpose of the organizer is to increase the understanding between the Italian and Jewish worker; so as to prevent the employers using the Italian against the more strongly organized Jewish workers, for the employer’s own profits and the injury of the Union” (Digital Commons IRL).

Before the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911, and one year before the first volume of *The Ladies Garment Worker*, sex trafficking and white slavery were crucial literary terms for

the year of 1909. For example, "... some 65,000 daughters of American homes and 15,000 alien girls are prey each year of the procurers in this traffic" (Smolak 499). "White slavery" was defined as "...of unwilling persons into prostitution" as the New York Times claimed: "There is a White Slave Trade" (Smolak 499) where women resorted to sex work to make up money lost in their factory jobs. In June 1909, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory strikes begin by workers from the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory demanding improvements to the 14-hour long job they endured everyday where bathroom breaks occurred on the shop floor. These strikes were considered one of the first major women strikes against this gender hierarchy, especially from Jewish women. In November of 1909, they were known as the "Shirtwaist Strike", and "The Rise of 20,000" for New York women garment workers. By September, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory workers had the support of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Women Strike). By November 1909, newspapers hardly covered the strike causing the largest single work stoppage in the US. In the following year, *The White-Slave Traffic Act of 1910*, known as the Mann Act, since it came from the help of lawmaker James Robert Mann, was designed to address issues like prostitution, immoral work conditions, and human trafficking: "The Act was amended by Congress to limit its applications to criminal offenses, as its ambiguous language had been used for selective prosecution" (Smolak 500). This will show a trend in verbal terminology hindered the movement and work of the ILGWU. The infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire occurred on March 25, 1911. Angry from the fire, women workers demanded better safety standards, and overall better workplace standards: "Following the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire in 1911 and the exposure of dehumanizing sweatshop conditions, the union movement gained momentum, building on the 'Uprising of the Twenty Thousand' in 1909" (Ho, Powell & Volpp 388-389). Women shirt-waist united in walking out of

their jobs that faithful day; As Enstad explains, a strike only occurs through taking on an identity for change. Enstad used Jerney Brecher as an example as she declares: “A walkout is in part an imaginative process of coming to identify oneself as a striker as one takes dramatic public action” (Enstad 124). When women worker resistance reoccurred, women were shaping their identities as “strikers” and therefore shaping their identity in becoming political activists.

Garment factory owners decided that union organization would be accepted and the workers finally agreed to the offered, and much better, pay increase. Enstad states that the “Uprising” was a surprise for all involved and a major impact in the history of workers and the ILGWU:

“A delegate from the shirtwaist makers’ union, the ILGWU, local 25, has hopefully predicted in the days before the strike that ‘a few thousand of them will quit the shops’ but more than 20,000 strikers answered the strike call. While women workers had gone on strike since the 1830’s, the Uprising of the 20,000 was at the time the largest strike ever in female-dominated industries” (Enstad 122).

Between 1909 to 1913, in terms of unionization, before and after the strike, women were purposely paid and labeled as “temporary workers” so that they did not qualify for the benefits of joining a union; the first momentum of male unions occurred in New York after 1900 and then in Chicago (Bender 101), and women would finally have the right to union after 1911’s impactful strikes.

The International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union became the most stable women union in the entire Garment Industry. “But in a moment in the early twentieth century, the interests of working-class women who were fighting for labor rights and human rights aligned with those of middle-class feminists, who, they write, were ‘focused primarily on achieving equality with male professionals and executives.’” (Eschner). As part of the ILGWU, women finally had an outlet for their sexual harassment, even with resistance from Jewish male garment works inside the union. In 1911, the ILGWU insisted that women get better trade and skill jobs as the men unions

started to part ways from their gender alliance from their male bosses. 50,000 new members joined the ILGWU in 1913 after a big strike which brought about the Joint Board of Sanitary Control that formed after 1910, where cloak sweatshops had shirtwaist and dress inspections (Bender 101). Bender states about how strikes became international, as well:

“The surge of women's organizing in New York catalyzed strikes of women workers in Philadelphia in 1909 as stated in Volume 1, Issue 1: “The strike is now over, and a few hundred factories have settled with the union. In such settled shops, the girls are now working 52 hours a week. Their wages are fairer, and they receive half again as much pay for overtime. Sunday is now a real day of rest; fines are abolished, and the individual girl does not have to deal with her powerful employer, the representative of the union takes up all the grievances with the firm” (Digital Commons IRL).

Then strikes occurred in Chicago in 1911, Cleveland in 1912, Kalamazoo in 1912, and Boston in 1913” (Bender 102). By 1920, 75% of the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union was made up of women. After the Triangle Shirtwaist Company strike, the 1924 Immigration Act forced women immigrant workers to relocate to southern states that had a larger economic profit for the firms whom relocated.

While efforts from the union continued throughout the ILGWU’s almost 100 years in commission, *The Ladies Garment Worker’s* first Volume is crucial in the development of injustice, and channels the *voice* that would echo through strikers’ actions in educating the members of such union whom are the very people who prompted this initial outcry. Women as “strikers” were developing themselves as changing subjects while the change for injustice, especially in sexual harassment of women workers, occurred. Enstad states: “Because the formation of subjectivity is an ongoing process, women’s subjectivities as strikers were not unitary or unchanging, but were complex, heterogeneous and shifting in response to changing experiences” (Enstad 122). For example, the challenges in striking were evident, as well by May of 1910 when contracts of the Union could be preventive as seen in Issue 5: “Provided any

member strikes in violation of the Union Stamp agreement the National Union fulfills its obligations under the contract and proceeds to assist the firm to fill 'heir places" (Digital Commons IRL). The job market for women workers was already scarce, or limited by craft and skill, so the demand for striking was promising, but the repercussions are also considered. As well in Issue 5, when Committees representing 28 shops formed in the article "The Strike of the Ladies' Waist Makers, of New York and its Results", the threat of being unemployed is exemplified: "At this very moment the union has three strikes on hand against the dismissal of the employees for joining the union, and the local is bound to support the demands of its members, otherwise the employees would never dare to join the union" (Digital Commons IRL).

Analyzing the first Issue of *The Ladies Garment Worker*, issued April 1, 1910, shows the most common word as union, which needs to be defined alongside "worker" and "striker" in assembling the identity of women workers. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the most current definition is as "Senses referring to an action or state of joining together" (union, n.2). In Volume 1, Issue 1, it affirms: "There is no doubt which girls and which employers you will want to support. But how can you make sure you are doing so? There is just one way. You may not be able to remember the trade marks or names of all those fair manufacturers, but you can easily recognize the union label which is uniform for the trade" (Digital Commons IRL). There was a literal togetherness in wearing the label of the ILGWU that also brought about the union ship of men and women garment workers. Employers who supported the ILGWU were crucial in not only stopping injustice by their own actions, but also relating to the consumer. The publication, as seen in the ending advertisement depicting where to buy such ILGWU label posted on every issue, wanted the public consumer to only buy garments where women and men were protected under union ship; each Issue ends with such statement: "There is no excuse for



you wearing a Non-Union Waist. Sig. Klein of 50 Third Ave N. Y. City, sells Union Label Waists” (Digital Commons IRL).

In contrast, while men and women workers, as well as men and women in society and politics, joined in forming the ILGWU, the two roles seem separated when analyzing the publication further. Representing the society and workplace at the time, looking at the terminology list created in Voyant, the term “men” is the 11th most common term while “women” is the 23rd most common term. This finding reflects the publication history of the time, where mostly men were published, but also speaks for how even though women and children were the subjects for injustice in the Garment Industry, the terminology is focused on the abuser. For action to arise, the abuser must be talked about first, as we see in the first two issues of *The Ladies Garment Worker* even though it poses a paradox that “women” become the less common term used in publication. It could be argued that “men”, as the abuser, are being outed for such injustices and thus, the word is repeated more throughout the volumes. Although the 5th most common word “workers” and 6th most common term “members” can represent a variety of genders, including women, it is also key to note that the options for women workers at this time were limited and the union was the beginning to gaining a voice in the Garment Industry. As Samuel Gompers, President of the ILGWU at the time of publication, says in Volume 1, Issue 2: “By its means only can he protect himself against the aggressiveness of hostile employers and secure rates of wages and conditions of employment commensurate with the constantly growing demands of civilization. The wage workers have no other resource for common defensive purposes than the trade union” (Digital Commons IRL).

Studying the terminology of the time period is especially difficult when balancing between what protection is need, what protection can be given with security of the Union, and

how society can define such terms to the themselves and the public accurately to spark action. Daniel Bender declares: “As historian Nan Enstad points out, for female garment workers, there was no legal term they could use to describe their abuse... (as) popular culture, especially dime novels, helped working women articulate a form of ladyhood that cast harassment as morally wrong and punishable” (95). Women started to define themselves as “ladies” in order to establish the moral injustice of their sexual harassment in the workplace. “Ladies” as a term elevated their existence. Studying the terminology from Voyant Tools, the term “ladies” in the publication by the ILGWU is only used 8 times between the two issues of 1910. Women workers wanted to be able to be a part of the already established unions formed by Garment Industry workers. The elevated term of “ladies” was meant to represent the respect that was demanded by women workers, but not in relation to privilege. Enstad, in her book “Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century” asserts: “Working women work them and declared themselves ‘American ladies.’ They invested French heels with great meanings of entitlement and belonging: they actively rejected the class ideologies that excluded women from the privileged label of ‘lady’...” (Enstad 2). For the ILGWU publication, it is seen that most documents and publications kept the gender terms as is. Surprisingly, many male garment workers supported the female workers because they saw sexual harassment as a sign of disrespect to women, rather than a challenge to their (male worker’s) skills in the workplace (Bender 95). Some scholars even argue that women could see the harassment in the sweatshops as “...the chance to meet men who would treat them to meals, gifts, and entertainment, which was, for women, a way of augmenting low wage” (Bender 96). Women could even marry their abusers, and bosses, to start families in a time where motherhood was essential in defining the gender of women. However, heterosexuality and male hierarchy

dominated as a demeaning and damaging relationship for women who were trying to survive in such conditions.

Men supervisors of the sweatshops, along with male garment workers, saw no need for change of how sexuality and abused defined the gender norms of the time as long as it didn't affect the job status of the male garment worker. The narcissism in job security is seen in the first two issues, as well. In Volume 1, Issue 1, under the title "Woman Needs the Vote to Change the Home", the issue of women's voting is not for right to vote as an individual, but rather a vote for fire safety in the home in which not only the women live, but her family, as well. The husband, or "man", would be included in that home; thus, the action and progression for "women" in April of 1910 still lingers on a very little line between independence for the women gender and dependence as "the woman" who is responsible for also being a wife and mother. In a poem published in Volume 1, Issue 1, by Breshkovskaya it reads:

“Still-born at last on  
History's cold lap  
And yet she rests not; yet she will not drink.  
The cup of peace held to her parching lips  
By smug Dishonor's hand.  
Nay.  
Forth she fares.  
Old and alone, on exile's rocky road—  
That well-worn road with snows incarnadined” (Digital Commons IRL).

Labeled as the term “ladies” and then “women”, the subject of the women gender in this poem is shown as denying her peace and holding many titles. While “she” works for the family to make money, as seen in the Garment Industry's working women, she is stuck in a history of being the breadwinner that ties her to the role of motherhood and marriage. The action of being “born” used in the poetry ties the identity of a “woman” to terminology associated to birth, children, and

motherhood, while her identity as a “worker” is thus considered less than her role as a “mother”.

The identity of a “women” and a “worker” are both exclusive to the role of the male:

“Identity categories such as ‘workers’ or ‘women’ are necessarily based in exclusions: as they define the inside, they also define the outside...the phrase ‘the worker’ has had the same insidious role in the labor movement: this seemingly descriptive category is also based in exclusions, ways in which some workers can seem less serious than others and less deserving of the name” (Enstad 3-4).

The “working women” is thus excluded in either role and together makes that identity even further excluded from any rights or a fight for justice. Then, how does a scholar see this identity of a “woman” when dis-attached from the ideas of being a “mother” and does this identity exist in 1910, or the publication of *The Ladies Garment Worker*?

With technological advances like the cutting knife, garment making became simpler and faster which allowed artists to no longer be needed and skills were divided and transformed by sexuality (Bender 98). Patriarchy truly began to form in the Garment Industry with male workers, especially Jewish immigrants (Bender 97), using the term “worker” to define males as “breadwinners” in the dominate skilled jobs. For example, in Issue 6, Jewish women in the Wrapper Industry suffered especially:

“They suffer besides a great many abuses, such as weekly assessments imposed by the manufacturer to defray expenses for fixing machines, charges for needles, gatherers, oil, etc. These charges are continued even during the dull season. On one occasion, during Jewish holidays, the girls having worked only two days of the week, were nevertheless docked the usual 25 cents for machine charges” (Digital Commons IRL).

Women in general were then seen as “temporary” for the workplace and again, seen as the “breadwinners” as a mother and a wife. Women were not worthy of attention unless they are in their homes and not working. Gender issues in the workplace became even more complicated when immigrant sweatshop owners and bosses started to hire relatives or friends, which might invite a woman worker into the workplace based on social relationships. Although in marriages,

women as workers would seem to be a financial benefit for the family and/or couple, women, especially Italian women, were not allowed to operate machinery since it was seen as “man’s job”; the Garment Industry workers were mainly male because it was seen as “natural” at this point (Bender 99). There is a direct connection, as deemed in society, to see machinery work as being gendered as “male” which is the starting point to how women became mistreated since they were seen as unnatural in this position. What might seem worse than the sexual and physical abuse in sweatshops, was the degradation of viewing women as “less than” men when outside the workplace. Only men could work labor intensive jobs, under the ideals of society, but the benefits of corporations to hire women for low wages had an economic advantage. Designating garment work as “men’s trade”, male garment workers became to detest any female relatives that were hired into the industry and saw it as a threat to the gender hierarchy that had been established. And while garment work was defined as “men’s trade”, the term “women” became as obsolete and worthless as the actual women were in the eyes of the supervisors who hired women workers to be *used*.

The male gender in the Garment Industry related to each other based on their control over women. Between 1880 and 1910, it took about an average of fifty dollars to open a sweatshop so that it became normal that these locations had hegemony equipment and crammed many workers and their supervisors in tight spaces, where appropriate behavior between the genders was declared “unclear” (Bender 99). Sexual harassment of women workers became a daily occurrence for this era and the idea of boundaries seemed blurred; established hierarchies were needed from the blurring of worker and supervisor, even if that hierarchy was based on abuse of the female gender. Many women sat behind razor wires and armed guards as they worked for 18 hours a day (Ho, Powell & Volpp 383). Enstad maintains:

“Female garment workers were paid an average of six dollars per week for ten to fourteen hours of labor per day... women also routinely endured arbitrary extensions of working hours, the demeaning fine system for ‘mistakes’ in their work, and sexual harassment which ranged from constant insinuations to intrusive touching” (Enstad 8). By 1900, male garment workers and male supervisors were supportive of each other based on gender. The males in the sweatshop, thus, would taunt the women with inappropriate touching and inappropriate jokes (Bender 100). While male workers held security in their dominant status above female workers, the female workers were subjugated to actual abuse inside and outside of the workplace. Many bosses or supervisors would force women workers to go to dinner with them or “spend the night” in hotels (Bender 100) which reaffirmed the unequal treatment of garment workers based on gender. As miserable as sweatshops were as jobs for both genders, women suffered from more than the job itself. In Volume 1, Issue 6, the “working girl’s home is described as misery: “The little hall bedroom with the privilege of light housekeeping over an oil stove-that means desperate loneliness, aggravated by the inevitable boiled eggs, pork and beans, distressful break and baker’s pie. With the only choice that between cheap boarding houses and light housekeeping, the marvel is that there is a working girl still living and respectable, to the tale of her misery” (Digital Commons IRL). Bender is similar in his statement: “Life in the sweat-shop was miserable enough for the men," he concluded, "but for the women it was a thousand times worse” (Bender 100) because of the added sexual abuse that left the women worker barely alive to describe this mistreatment.

The term “condition” is used 21 times in all 8 issues to describe the dangerous environment of the Garment Industry workplace and it is known that even films and novels discussed the topic to criticize women sex slaves (Smolak 498). Many people in the time, especially reformers had two reasons why prostitution was a “choice” for women, which of course do not mention the desperate need for women to make money to survive in an era of

abuse and gender hierarchies. First, prostitution in the Progressive Era was fueled by changes in society like immigration, industrialization, commercialization, and civil morality; these all fueled prostitution itself, as well as the anti-prostitution movements (Smolak 498). Second, many people blamed what termed “moral resiliency” as the problem with women who were sex slaves or prostitutes due to their lack of family life, low-wage work conditions, and overall poverty during this era. Police corruption, low wages for women workers, and the start of venereal diseases spreading rapidly were all factors to the social problems facing the Progressive Era (Smolak 498). As prostitution and sex slavery became alternatives, but not improvements, for women workers, the term “white slavery” became used to describe these work decisions for women. For literary description of such slavery, Chicago tailors are described in Issue 8 as: “the tailoring trader-of Chicago have sunk to the lowest degree; if they would only demand the abolition of the disgraceful slave-driving system, prevalent there to a large extent, their bosses would not dare to so openly defy the strikes” (Digital Commons IRL).

“White slavery” was defined as “...of unwilling persons into prostitution” (Smolak) in the Progressive Era, which targeted white women in relation to their “white master” and included many immigrants from Eastern Europe, Jewish women, and Chinese women. The terminology came from the way society associated “white” with the purity of the color, so that any women who volunteered or was forced into prostitution was deemed as being immoral in sexual behavior (Smolak 499). As of 1909: “some 65,000 daughters of American homes and 15,000 alien girls are prey each year of the procurers in this traffic” (Smolak 499). The police chief of New York City in 1911, Theodore Bingham, guessed that over 2,000 foreign women were enslaved in brothels after being brought into the United States; the problems that arose out of this epidemic was based on the actual terminology of “White slavery” and “prostitution” which were seen as

interchangeable for women. It was undisputed that in 1909, as the New York Times claimed: “There is a White Slave Trade” (Smolak 499). However, sex work became misunderstood when it was termed as “White slavery”.

Many people thought of “White slavery” as a myth because people collectively believed that sex slaves came from White slavery. So, when sex work was part of White slavery, the “victim” of the sex worker was different than that of an immigrant women sex worker, seen not as a victim. For immigrant women, who were forced to work in brothels, society viewed them as impoverished, weak-speaking in the English language, and had little to no education, so that sex work provided them a lifestyle to support themselves and others. White women were perceived as being actively forced into sex slavery directly and were not influenced in any way by gender norms or the political economy (Smolak 499). In Volume 1, Issue 5, the exact term of “White slavery” is not used, but the word “slave” is used to describe trade-union workers:

“Following the advice of the employing class, he for a time tries practicing economy, pleasing the employer, acquiring unusual skill, but in the end, he finds himself among the mass who have not drawn prizes in this lottery, for all that the scheme yields are something more than the average for the saving, the overworked, and the pliant slave” (Digital Commons IRL).

In Issue 3 it states about a prominent job, the cloakmaker, being held to slave conditions: “If any work people have even been brought down to a low degree and practically enslaved, they are the cloak finisher, they work in the factory to long as its door are open, and when its doors are closed, the finisher turns “bundle” bearer” (Digital Commons IRL). In the next section, about “coming home to a wife” presuming that the cloakmaker is a male, because women were not allowed such craft (even though they are also not ideal positions to in). Womanhood in the



Progressive Era already made the woman gender victims in their society, and the institution of slavery is an accurate representation in literary terms to describe the everyday working-women in her identity.

The identity of women became an image of helplessness and passivity, while also becoming an identity of lost freedom towards their own sexual desires or responsibilities (Smolak 500). “Freedom” became a word of literary trickery when it was misused in policy, and as stated in speaking of cloak makers in Issue 5:

“The individualism of the nineteenth century has ‘fostered and actively sanctioned this anti-social right under various disguises: “individual liberty,” “freedom of contract,” “sanctity of property.” Such were the high-sounding phrases with which the possessing classes and their paid supporters have covered a multitude of sins of oppression and tyranny practised against we helpless laborer.” (Digital Commons IRL).

Women in sex slavery or prostitution were viewed as being “tricked” or forced by: “the drugged drink, chloroformed cloth, or the hypodermic needle, which led to their captivity” (Smolak 500). Fortunately, there were organizations like the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, the National Congress of Mothers, and the Women’s Christian Temperance Union who fought against prostitution, for the abolition of child labor, and had a strong focus on helping women as mothers (Smolak 500). Many interventions occurred to gain some amount of social control, but for immigrant families, there was some resistance. There was a generational gap as Southern and Eastern European immigrants depended on their daughters’ wage work, which could include sexual norms that were different in their original countries than in the United States (Smolak 500).

A supporter of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory strike was the daughter of J.P. Morgan’s international financier, named Ann Morgan, who represented the wealthy, upper class supporting the unfair treatment of women workers in the industry. Many women workers now only went

back to work at union-organized factories. A huge influence was the creator of the Local 25, Clara Lemlich and received support from the upper class in a lower-class battle: “J.P. Morgan's daughter Ann and the wealthy suffragist Alva Belmont also helped the strikers gain credibility, public sympathy, and physical protection” (ILGWU Office). In response, Max Blanck and Isaac Harris from the Asch Building in Greenwich Village decided, amongst bribing police and picketers, to form a union of their own; in December 1909, factory owners decided to offer a slight increase in wages but refused union organization (Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Women Strike). When women worker resistance reoccurred, garment factory owners decided that union organization would be accepted and the workers finally agreed to the offer, and much better, pay increase. The strike was known for being successful, and a huge milestone for women even after the fire of 1911. Other strikes included the “Orphan Strike” when women workers felt like actual “orphans”, as well as the resistance against the terminology of “Shopgirl” which a women worker was who talked about the sexual abused they endured in the factories. Speaking out against the abuse in the Garment Industry was a challenge for change, but also a challenge to the demining terminology used during these organized strikes and riots.

By 1913, while unions were establishing what respect and ladyhood entailed with the rights of women workers in the Garment Industry, the contradiction came from unions not seeing male power over the industry in direct relation to sexual harassment. Sexual differences in the workplace could not be changed in the names of justice without seeing the relationship between patriarchy and abuse; once garment unions began to organize for men garment workers, the male boss and male worker relationship weakened. Thus, male unions began to fight for women morality (Bender 103). As well: “By 1910, mechanized factories, housed in industrial loft buildings and employing dozens of workers, had largely replaced small-er sweatshops” (Bender

103). So, the two distinct work environments created class divisions and by 1911, the ILGWU insisted that women get better trade and skill jobs as the men unions started to part ways from their gender alliance and their male bosses. Ironically, many men had to fight to get into women's worker unions who wanted to stop the gender hierarchies. Male garment workers did help to divide the sexes on the shop floor, but never went far enough to have women be a part of certain trades that men garment workers dominated (Bender 104). Sexual divides seemed impossible to break as President of a male union stated: "You better go home and have babies" (Bender 104). Men encouraged that women focus less on joining unions and stick to the gender separation where men were still the "breadwinners". Masculinity was so strong in the Garment Industry, even after unions and strikes, not only were women's role in marriage as the matron enforced, but even women in the unions felt inferiority to the male gender.

Men still dominated the shop floors as workers or supervisors, while women workers in unions sometimes encouraged heterosexual behavior. In 1920: "...when the ILGWU erupted in violent factionalism between Communists and socialists, the leaders of each side-maintained notions of sexual difference" (Bender 105). Most union leaders supported Communists and was known for capitalizing on women unions; Communists did want male Communist leaders, although they got the support, they needed from women worker unions; 80% of these union supporters were union women workers (Bender 106) in hopes to destroy gender hierarchies. In Issue 6 of *The Ladies Garment Worker*, in 1910 after the Roxbury carpet factory fires it states: "As a result of this strike four vigorous trade unions have sprung into being at this factory, two of which are made up almost exclusively of women, and another in which are enrolled many boys and girls employed in the factory, between the ages of fourteen and sixteen—the most difficult years of adolescence" (Digital Commons IRL). Even communist ideals were supported

by women workers who faced the strong threat and desperation of ending gender hierarchies. This did not occur, but the language of morality and ladyhood had a pronounced distaste towards masculinity. Ladyhood represented women as not only humans, but of a higher and gentler class that demanded to be respected. Class standards made men feel victorious and chivalrous during the Victorian era's cast male union members, to defend women who were insulted or harassed (Bender 107). These men unions during the time were now called "brothers" who would use their unions to defend women if they need to, so that union masculinity became a source of rescue rather than helping in the harassment.

"Manhood" and "womanhood" became the representation of each gender unions that were against the male supervisors or bosses. Industrial change brought about a change in abuse towards women, while also promoting a strong voice for women worker unions to show strong femininity outside of their labels as victims. Workplace morality and the definition of the "strong woman" started out of the negatives of assault on femininity. After the Triangle Shirtwaist Company strike, the 1924 Immigration Act forced women immigrant workers to relocate to southern states that had a larger economic profit for the firms who relocated; as well, White slavery continued as the rural White women were used as inexpensive labor (Po, Howell & Volpp 389). The 1970's civil rights movement was successful in allowing African American women to work more manufacturing jobs, but many African American women were still brought to the South to be a source of cheap labor. During this time, New York and California were at the center of the Garment Industry where immigrants remained the source of low-wage workers. While opportunities and relocations seemed to be a step towards progress for women workers, it is merely a contradiction: "While the Garment Industry has provided women, particularly women of color and immigrants, access to the manufacturing workforce, this result has been

accompanied by a downward spiral of wages and consistent exploitation” (Ho, Powell, & Volpp 390). In underground economies and hidden sweatshops, especially in New York City, women can make less than \$4.25 per hour.

Presently, women are exploitations of each other and are now seeing themselves as competitors within the gender for job security. Oppression seems to be affecting the women gender based on race and class, where immigrant women struggle for status as American workers, women of color want fairness for their race, and white women fight against both groups to keep their jobs. Even those who didn't unionize faced division within the gender, as seen in Volume 1, Issue 1: “Which girls do you prefer to support, the girls who remained at work during the strike, refusing to join the union, and afraid to sacrifice their own interests for those less fortunate; or the girls who have faced brutality, starvation and homelessness rather than stand aloof from their sisters?” (Digital Commons IRL); the Union Label created a community for women to fight together and have gender oppression fought within such community.

The United States, and especially New York City, today is known for the inception of the Garment Industry and many bosses now look globally for women workers outside of the area they started manufacturing: “(they scoured) the rest of the globe for the cheapest and most malleable labor--predominantly female, low-skilled, and disempowered--in order to squeeze out as much profit as possible for themselves” (Ho, Powell & Volpp 387). The fight inside New York City towards equal work conditions in the Garment Industry has now become a fight for the United States to stop using cheap labor abroad. The only way to protect women workers against each other, or their oppressors in New York City, is the establishment of protection laws. Other than unions like the ILGWU, and the National Labor Relations Act which helps with collective bargaining protections, Title VII helps garment workers overseas in U.S. plants by

applying the Title's anti-discrimination protections (Ho, Powell, & Volpp 396). Congress amended Title VII to not only fight against sexual harassment abuse, but also to fight discrimination in the United States and abroad; unfortunately, United States' law do not always benefit overseas where many deals are made out of political and corporate motivation rather than the interest of protecting labor laws and workers' rights (Ho, Powell & Volpp 397). In terms of public international law, the International Labor Organization fights for fundamental human rights, defined as: "fundamental" or "basic" labor/human rights are: (1) freedom of association (including freedom to organize and bargain collectively), (2) freedom from forced labor, and (3) equality of opportunity and treatment (including equal remuneration and freedom from discrimination)" (Ho, Powell, & Volpp 397). Uniquely, the ILO works as a structure involving employer, employee, and government representatives in 152 countries.

Other organizations that have developed in the United States, to prevent Garment Industry standards seen in the Progressive Era, include the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the World Trade Organization, and The North American Free Trade Agreement. NAFTA protects labor agreements to afford workers greater protection in the workplace. Annex 1 in Article 1's labor side agreement states: "(1) protection of the rights to organize, bargain, and strike; (2) prohibition of forced labor, child labor, sub minimal wages, and employment discrimination; and (3) promotion of equal pay for equal work, occupational safety and health, and equal treatment for migrant workers" (Ho, Powell & Volpp 400). Health and safety, minimum wage, and child labor are enforced in a side agreement for each country.

While women activists in the Progressive Era fought for better wages and to close the gap on gender hierarchies, the United States has installed many anti-discrimination protections like Title VII, while women unions still remain strong in the fight for equality. While underground

sweatshops exist, society's perspective has changed on how clothing should be made. Corporate leaders may benefit from slave labor, or low-wage workers, but a survey in November 1995 showed: "that seventy-eight percent of U.S. consumers would avoid retailers if they knew they were dealing in sweatshop goods" (Ho, Powell, & Volpp 410). International slave labor is addressed by organizations like the International Network for Home-Based Workers, as well as strong activist groups of union feminists, like the Support Team International for Textiles, who fight for women workers against U.S. regulations that may not protect international women workers. Even the 1995 U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing brought together garment workers and authors to China to advocate for fair conditions in the Garment Industry (Ho, Powell, & Volpp 414).

Enforcement of national labor laws and international labor laws are strengthening over time to show that women workers no longer must feel the burden of their fight against gender hierarchies. While Garment Industry abuse for women workers now exists globally, that only means that the fight for political and civil rights is united around the world. The Progressive Era's Garment Industry is an example of how laws were formed based on judging women worker abuse as immoral, and eventually illegal. The lives lost in the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, as well as the more recent April 2013 collapse of the Savar Building, a Garment Industry building in Bangladesh, reminds these unions and fighters that the work has promoted a start to regulate the Garment Industry but, the fight is not finished. The women in New York City striking in 1909 and 1910 were the cries that started a revolution of federal and national laws to change gender norms and provide women a platform for fair and equal work opportunities. *The Ladies Garment Worker* provided a voice that while exposing these conditions of mistreatment also provided a publication to keep track of litigation and news associated with

helping better inform the union members and the outside public. The Union was the vessel for creating a voice as stated in Issue 6: “The trade union movement and its faithful defenders have been kicked, cuffed, abused, traduced, lied about and maligned more than any other movement or advocate in the world, but despite it all the movement is constantly growing stronger. (Digital Commons IRL). As well, J. Finn posted in Issue 7 about the worth of having a union as:

“A few dollars a week more in wages, a few hours a week less work, the abolition of the toll for electricity—these are real and tangible things; but what substantial reality has the formal recognition of the Union? The fact that the bosses have conferred with the leaders of the Union, and that they have offered to make important and far-reaching concessions, implies the recognition of the Union.” (Digital Commons IRL).

The reality of the Union and the recognition of its importance to supervisors and bosses is argued repeatedly as the most important representation for these Garment Industry workers to finally see change. Unionism is not only the topic, or main source of the ILGWU because that is essentially what it is, but the ILGWU represented the *idea* of a Union as a sense of hope that together these working conditions of horror, and the sexual harassment in the workplace could not be ignored if there was a discussion and physically proof in the print of each newsletter; the *voice*, then, for *The Ladies Garment Worker* was having the chance to establish a voice at all where silence could not silence their voices and heads could not be turned away.



## Appendix

Table 1: Term, Count, and Trend of Volume 1, Issue 1

Term	Count	Trend
union	52	0.00666
trade	41	0.005251
work	38	0.004867
strike	35	0.004483
working	34	0.004355
workers	32	0.004098
conditions	31	0.00397
people	29	0.003714
new	26	0.00333
women	26	0.00333
organization	21	0.00269
city	20	0.002561
employers	20	0.002561
general	20	0.002561
york	19	0.002433
vote	18	0.002305
girls	16	0.002049
men	16	0.002049
day	14	0.001793
labor	13	0.001665

Table 2: Term, Count, and Trend of Volume 1, Issue 2

Term	Count	Trend
union	134	0.01516
strike	36	0.004073
members	32	0.00362
trade	31	0.003507
labor	29	0.003281
committee	27	0.003055
mr	27	0.003055
said	27	0.003055
shops	27	0.003055
men	23	0.002602
strong	21	0.002376
work	21	0.002376
general	20	0.002263
wages	20	0.002263
organization	18	0.002036
waist	17	0.001923

president	16	0.00181
unionism	16	0.00181
unions	16	0.00181
business	15	0.001697

Table 3: Term, Count, and Trend of Volume 1, Issue 3

Term	Count	Trend
union	64	0.007781
work	56	0.006809
trade	30	0.003647
hours	29	0.003526
simon	28	0.003404
women	28	0.003404
day	27	0.003283
strike	27	0.003283
cloak	23	0.002796
members	21	0.002553
labor	18	0.002188
men	16	0.001945
new	16	0.001945
benefits	14	0.001702
scab	14	0.001702
working	14	0.001702
workers	13	0.001581
years	13	0.001581
makers	12	0.001459
shop	12	0.001459

Table 4: Term, Count, and Trend of Volume 1, Issue 4

Term	Count	Trend
union	56	0.007208
labor	43	0.005535
organization	26	0.003347
workers	26	0.003347
members	24	0.003089
work	23	0.00296
conditions	18	0.002317
unions	18	0.002317
new	17	0.002188
organizations	17	0.002188
cents	16	0.002059
strike	16	0.002059

women	15	0.001931
working	15	0.001931
people	14	0.001802
say	14	0.001802
time	14	0.001802
building	13	0.001673
day	12	0.001545
international	11	0.001416

Table 5: Term, Count, and Trend of Volume 1, Issue 5

Term	Count	Trend
union	53	0.009991
wages	26	0.004901
labor	19	0.003582
man	19	0.003582
hours	18	0.003393
men	18	0.003393
work	17	0.003205
employers	16	0.003016
shop	12	0.002262
wage	12	0.002262
day	11	0.002074
organization	11	0.002074
power	10	0.001885
trade	10	0.001885
employees	9	0.001697
employer	9	0.001697
new	9	0.001697
become	8	0.001508
good	8	0.001508
hope	8	0.001508

Table 6: Term, Count, and Trend of Volume 1, Issue 6

Term	Count	Trend
union	82	0.009768
people	37	0.004407
girls	35	0.004169
trade	34	0.00405
work	30	0.003574
labor	26	0.003097
strike	24	0.002859
great	21	0.002501

shop	21	0.002501
new	20	0.002382
better	18	0.002144
city	17	0.002025
men	16	0.001906
organization	16	0.001906
working	16	0.001906
mr	15	0.001787
women	15	0.001787
day	14	0.001668
shops	14	0.001668
country	13	0.001549

Table 7: Term, Count, and Trend of Volume 1, Issue 7

Term	Count	Trend
union	73	0.008504
local	36	0.004194
labor	32	0.003728
new	29	0.003378
members	26	0.003029
conditions	23	0.002679
organization	22	0.002563
strike	22	0.002563
general	21	0.002446
movement	20	0.00233
trade	20	0.00233
member	18	0.002097
work	18	0.002097
man	17	0.00198
men	16	0.001864
workers	16	0.001864
great	15	0.001747
membership	14	0.001631
recognition	14	0.001631
time	14	0.001631

Table 8: Term, Count and Trend of Volume 1, Issue 8

Term	Count	Trend
union	84	0.010086
trade	35	0.004203
labor	34	0.004083
trades	34	0.004083

unions	32	0.003842
movement	27	0.003242
new	23	0.002762
workers	23	0.002762
convention	22	0.002642
work	22	0.002642
american	20	0.002402
organization	20	0.002402
international	16	0.001921
federation	15	0.001801
socialist	15	0.001801
york	15	0.001801
general	13	0.001561
great	13	0.001561
like	13	0.001561
members	13	0.001561

Table 9: Term, Count, and Trend of Volumes 1, All 8 Issues combined

Term	Co unt	Trend
	59	0.006659836,0.015160086,0.007781155,0.007208135,0.009990575,0.0
union	8	09767719,0.008504194,0.010086455
	22	0.004866803,0.0023758344,0.0068085105,0.002960484,0.003204524,0
work	5	.0035735557,0.0020969245,0.0026416907
	21	0.001664959,0.0032809142,0.00218845,0.005534818,0.003581527,0.0
labor	4	030970816,0.0037278659,0.0040826127
	20	0.0052510244,0.003507184,0.0036474164,0.0009010169,0.001885014
trade	8	1,0.00405003,0.0023299162,0.0042026895
	17	0.0044825817,0.004072859,0.0032826748,0.0020594671,0.000942507
strike	7	06,0.0028588446,0.0025629078,0.0014409221
	15	0.003329918,0.0013576197,0.0019452887,0.0021881838,0.001696512
new	2	7,0.0023823704,0.0033783785,0.0027617675
worker	14	0.0040983604,0.0014707546,0.0015805471,0.003346634,0.001508011
s	3	4,0.0014294223,0.0018639329,0.0027617675
membe	14	0.0014088114,0.003620319,0.0025531915,0.0030892007,0.000377002
rs	2	84,0.0015485408,0.003028891,0.0015609991
organi	14	0.0026895492,0.0020364295,0.0008510638,0.003346634,0.002073515
zation	1	4,0.0019058964,0.0025629078,0.002401537
	12	0.0020491802,0.0026021043,0.0019452887,0.0007723002,0.00339302
men	1	54,0.0019058964,0.0018639329,0.0012007685
conditi	12	0.003970287,0.0011313497,0.001094225,0.0023169005,0.0013195099,
ons	0	0.0013103038,0.0026794036,0.0013208453
	10	0.0037141393,0.0003394049,0.0008510638,0.0018020337,0.00056550
people	7	425,0.0044073854,0.00093196647,0.0007204611

	10	0.0017930327,0.0014707546,0.0032826748,0.0015446004,0.00207351
day	5	54,0.0016676593,0.0013979496,0.00024015369
	10	0.00064036885,0.0018101595,0.0014589665,0.0023169005,0,0.000833
unions	3	82963,0.0015144455,0.003842459
workin	10	0.004354508,0.00090507977,0.0017021276,0.0019307504,0.00131950
g	3	99,0.0019058964,0.00058247906,0.00048030738
	10	0.003329918,0.00022626994,0.0034042553,0.0019307504,0.00075400
women	1	57,0.0017867779,0.00011649581,0.0012007685
		0.0014088114,0.0022626994,0.001337386,0.0014158837,0.004901036
wages	98	6,0.0009529482,0.00081547064,0.00048030738
		0.0025614754,0.0022626994,0.0006079027,0.0011584503,0.00056550
general	94	425,0.00035735557,0.0024464119,0.0015609991
emplo		0.0025614754,0.0015838896,0.0006079027,0.0009010169,0.00301602
yers	92	27,0.0011911852,0.0011649581,0.0012007685
		0.001152664,0.0007919448,0.003525836,0.001287167,0.0033930254,0
hours	92	.0005955926,0.0013979496,0.00024015369

Table 10: Term, Count, and Trend of Volume 1, Issues 1 and 2 Combined

Term	Count	Trend
union	186	0.006659836,0.015160086
trade	72	0.0052510244,0.003507184
strike	71	0.0044825817,0.004072859
work	59	0.004866803,0.0023758344
workers	45	0.0040983604,0.0014707546
members	43	0.0014088114,0.003620319
labor	42	0.001664959,0.0032809142
working	42	0.004354508,0.00090507977
conditions	41	0.003970287,0.0011313497
general	40	0.0025614754,0.0022626994
men	39	0.0020491802,0.0026021043
organization	39	0.0026895492,0.0020364295
new	38	0.003329918,0.0013576197
city	35	0.0025614754,0.0016970246
shops	35	0.0010245901,0.0030546442
employers	34	0.0025614754,0.0015838896
said	33	0.00076844264,0.0030546442
people	32	0.0037141393,0.0003394049
wages	31	0.0014088114,0.0022626994
mr	30	0.00038422132,0.0030546442

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