

Senior Editors' Note

With this issue of *ILWCH* we link a present moment of fast-moving social change with rarely explored historical antecedents. Guest editors Eileen Boris (University of California, Santa Barbara) and Premilla Nadasen (Barnard College) take on the challenge of how to write histories of domestic labor, a type of work that has often been denied legal and economic recognition. In the past, advocates of improved labor standards insisted that domestic labor was different from other forms of labor under capitalism. As commodified labor, just what kind of labor is it? How have the racial and gender hierarchies of different places shaped the conditions and relations of home-based labor? These are some of the questions taken up in this issue.

With this collection of articles, however, Boris and Nadasen did not want to focus solely on the labor and conditions of household work. Rather, this collection redirects our attention to how household workers shaped their own histories, especially through previously obscured forms of collective action. As readers will see from the Table of Contents, this volume provides a fascinating range of geographical cases revealing the novel ways that, as Boris and Nadasen write, “household workers have organized, resisted, and engaged in labor actions in specific times and places.”

Domestic workers made surprising use of courts, legal reforms, economic cooperatives, newspapers, reform organizations, and trade unions. Henrique Espada Lima excavates the ways in which domestic servants lodged demands for compensation and other entitlements in nineteenth-century Brazilian courts. These cases were brought by former slaves, Portuguese immigrants, and other free women, forcing explicit confrontations over the previously implicit relations of “work and intimacy.” In twentieth-century Argentina, domestic workers also found they could use courts due to the passage of a 1956 domestic labor protections law that also established the Tribunal of Domestic Work. Inés Pérez and Santiago Canevaro examine over 800 cases from 1956 to 2013 to show how over time, workers used different discursive and political strategies before the Tribunal.

Alliances have also been crucial in this story of politics and movements, although they have never been stable. Sometimes domestic workers found middle-class allies, but their means of working together and articulating strategies and objectives were not always seamlessly aligned, as Keona J. Ervin discovered in the politics of the Urban League in Depression-era St. Louis and Laura Schwartz found in Edwardian Britain. Ervin's story begins with the Household Workers Mass Meeting of 1933 to demonstrate the ways in which the 1930s became a pivotal point in African-American women's political activism by linking labor and civil rights struggles. Schwartz offers a richly textured

look at the domestic workers' trade unionism and its use of newspapers in Britain, placing their activism in the context of early twentieth-century feminism.

In other cases, domestic workers engaged in militant organized action by joining with working-class strikers, as happened in the momentous Pilbara Walk-Off among aboriginals in northwestern Western Australia after World War II. Previous scholarship on the Walk-Off of 1946–1949 has focused on male pastoral workers. Victoria Haskins and Anne Scrimgeour show the astonishing breadth of participation by female household workers. These workers marched 100 miles to join the pastoral men and miners on strike and subsequently built a cooperative mining enterprise organized, the authors argue, along gender egalitarian lines. Oral histories of the domestic workers who participated further reveal the politics of race, gender, and colonialism.

Emma Amador's article also provides a look at colonialism, race and domestic labor. Puerto Ricans arrived in Chicago as migrants and citizens of the United States, yet also as a part of a colonial order. In protesting low wages and labor conditions, they challenged both the United States and Puerto Rico.

With Robyn Pariser's article on the capital of colonial British Tanganyika, Dar es Salaam, we see that paid domestic labor was not necessarily done by women. In colonial Dar es Salaam, 97% of paid domestic servants were men. Because it provided cash wages and access to skills, the occupation offered men steady income, masculine respectability, and family and community status. Male domestic servants formed a trade union to protect their control over this labor market, its social attributes, and its meanings in the face of declining conditions in the 1940s and 1950s. After independence, domestic work in Tanzania increasingly shifted toward being women's work and accorded far less status and lower wages.

The development of this scholarship has been accompanied by, or even impelled by, a remarkable, contemporary domestic worker movement. Although once consigned to the shadows, domestic labor has not only been made politically and economically visible by migration and collective agitation, but also has become a subject that demands comparative and transnational examination. In her Report from the Field, Jennifer Fish provides an exciting report on the emergence of an international domestic workers movement. Domestic workers who had organized in different nations came together in Geneva at the International Labor Conference of the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2011. Through extraordinary organizing and solidarity, they won a seat at the table and compelled the passage of ILO Convention 189, "Decent Work for Domestic Workers." Fish traces the strategies of the International Domestic Workers Network, which forged a connection between a "United Nations-level of policy formation" for labor standards and protections and national domestic workers' organizations. Harmony Goldberg hones in on the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) in the United States in her Report From the Field. The NDWA built on ILO Convention 189 by passing a "Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights" in various states. Goldberg's article

enables us to see one of the many examples of the interactions between domestic workers' movements locally, nationally, and internationally.

Beyond the special theme section, there are two articles in this volume on different labor stories: one from the mid-twentieth-century United States and the other from late twentieth-century China. David Witwer explores the politics of "labor racketeering" through a garment industry strike in Northeast Pennsylvania in 1958. The strike took place amid capital flight from New York to Pennsylvania, as well as organized crime influence and ownership within the industry. While conservatives at the time attempted to discredit labor by tying unions to organized crime, Witwer shows how the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) sought its own tactics for confronting organized crime and gangsters through "anticorruption" tactics that would protect the independence and maneuverability of the union. The state and the union had different ideas about how to approach racketeering.

Ju Li's article examines the transition of China's state-owned industries during the era of "neo-liberal reform." Using field research and interviews of workers at Nanfang Steel, a declining state-owned enterprise in Southeast China, Li explores how workers' subjectivity and cultural identity have been bound up with the degradation of work at Nanfang. The article, as Li writes, "highlights the psychosocial aspect of work." Her article deftly captures the social cost of China's transformation by examining the inner realms of social class: feelings of inferiority or superiority, recognition, and abjection. In doing so, she presents new ideas of class *unconsciousness*.

With this issue, we also mark some major changes at *ILWCH*. The journal is moving to a new institutional home at Columbia University. We are excited about working with the faculty, staff, and students at Columbia. We thank SUNY Empire State College for providing an institutional base while we located a more long-term arrangement. We also thank our former Managing Editors, Audrey Campbell and Andrea Estepa.

In addition, after five years of service, Carolyn Brown and Jennifer Klein are stepping down as Senior Editors. Prasannan Parthasarathi will be continuing as Senior Editor, joined by Franco Barchiesi and Peter Winn. We welcome a new managing editor, Nishant Batsha, and a new reviews editor, Thai Jones, both at Columbia. Finally, we bid farewell to our long-time colleague and editor Michael Hanagan. Geoffrey Field has provided a tribute to Mike in this issue.

Carolyn Brown, Jennifer Klein and Prasannan Parthasarathi